Doctorate of Business Administration

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Order of documents:

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Abstract

Based on the experiences and insight of a global conglomerate leader in engineering consultancy focused on corporate storytelling in the workplace, this document provides insight into how interpretation and misunderstanding are shared. This thesis grows out of awareness that, over the past five years or so, the way in which an organisation can use, share and disseminate corporate stories.

We sometimes can take the use of corporate storytelling for granted, in particular, that organisational stories in the workplace are told for the right reasons. But in too many organisations, it can be difficult to decipher an 'official' and 'unofficial' story. An official corporate story that is tarnished by ambiguity will be modified and re-interpreted as the story goes around the organisation. Despite official attempts to defend the validity of a story, there will be times when there is conflict with unofficial interpretations of the story. One of the most intriguing aspects of corporate storytelling is how a trusting working relationship between the storyteller, the corporate story, and the recipients is a key actor. As such, the use of storytelling in an ambiguous working environment can lead to multiple interpretations. There is the belief that if the chain-of-trust is damaged the interrelationship will be hampered. It is time, in my opinion, to focus on the type of storytellers in the workplace that can emerge and manipulate a working environment.

This paper provides an appreciation into the practice of corporate storytellers, and the impact of manipulating other individuals using status and language. The document also draws on how trust and decision-making can be hampered. The paper concludes with some of the research opportunities and ethical challenges that are inherent in this particular research.

Document Five

In Search of the Whole Story: A Reconsideration of Organisational Communication

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CONTENTS

CHARTS & TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

CPD   Continuous Professional Development

GFD   Group Financial Director

H&S   Health & Safety

HE   Higher Education

HR   Human Resources

HRM   Human Resources Management

IM   Information Management

IT   Information Technology

5.0 INTRODUCTION

> *"I am sure if you were to ask anyone in **[A&A]** to explain the 'them' and 'us' story, they will say we **[A&A]** are the 'us', 'them' are **[A&B]**, and the rest of the world are **[Company E1]**, **[Company B1C]** and **[Company B1B]**."*
>
> **Company B1A**

In Document Three of this Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA), I sought evidence from qualitative studies for corporate communication of the ways in which sense-making was sought, evaluated, and used in one particular organisation (Caesar, 2007). Document Four explored how an organisation's culture affects individuals' trust and their behaviour. Both studies were broad and revealed mistrust to be a factor in the organisation's corporate communication. In this document, the intention is to focus the scope of research on a specific area. The aim is to examine organisational stories in the workplace. Assuming these stories exist, they will provide insight into how interpretation and misunderstanding are shared. This study will add to the body of research in the area of corporate communication examining the impact organisational storytelling has on the individual, team, and company.

The purpose of the study is to examine communication between company units working in the same organisation. The research questions seek to investigate the following.

- To what extent and in what way do internal stories shape an organisation and its culture?
- To what extent and in what way do individuals and teams seek to influence others with unofficial stories that are not part of the official corporate communication?
- To what extent and in what way the organisational stories have influenced the perceived organisational culture.
- To what extent and in what way senior management seeks to use stories to manage the organisation's culture.
- Are there circumstances in which one level of storytelling is positive and detrimental at another level?
- What are the perceived factors, which may contribute to the success of emergent stories in the organisation?
- What are the interventions senior management can use to enhance these success factors between professional groups to maintain the organisational culture?

- What are the perceived factors, which may contribute to the competition between the emergent stories of different professional groups to the detriment of the organisational culture?

- What interventions can be used to reduce these conflicts and avoid further misunderstandings in the organisation?

These questions will be answered by focusing on the role of storytelling. I believe that it will be useful to examine the implications of organisational stories for influencing an organisation's corporate communication. The study will also examine the impact of manipulating other individuals using status and language. It will be important to identify these consequences, as there may be a need for senior management to introduce further interventions to reduce these detriments. In considering these, the literature review draws on narratives, trust, and decision-making. Evaluating the idea of storytelling the questions central to the theme will be examined. The main concepts and controversies associated with organisational stories are discussed in Chapter 5.2.

5.0.1 An Overview of the Empirical Study and Findings

This document will provide an overview on organisational storytelling. The stories are associated with corporate communication. My interest in organisational stories will be of benefit to the following groups:

- the researcher as a practicing professional;
- the academic community;
- managers and organisations;
- policy makers and regulators; and
- professional associations, trainers, and developers.

The research questions are identified in Chapter 5.0. Chapter 5.2 evaluates the literature review. This element leads to a set of working definitions of the key concepts used in the study. Chapter 5.3 outlines the social setting for the study. The chapter also describes the research method applied. The methodology is influenced by an interpretative approach. The process consists of semi-structured interviews and participant observation for data collection and analysis. A description of the organisational and managerial context of the research is provided. The conceptual framework used to analyse the data collection are discussed in Chapters 5.4 and 5.5. In drawing a conclusion, Chapter 5.6 provides the findings of this document. The findings also highlight further interventions for the

organisation to consider. Establishing a way forward for the organisation is discussed in Chapter 5.7.

5.0.2 The Role of the Researcher, Managerial and Organisational Support

I have remained impartial within the host organisation for the duration of this research, and the DBA programme. I work for the organisation; and therefore have avoided becoming involved in company politics. This has ensured that I can construct an external viewpoint on the subject.

For the sake of anonymity, the organisation is given a pseudonym, which is discussed in Chapter 5.1. The global economic climate has affected the business with a series of job losses throughout their global operation. The United Kingdom (UK) operation has incurred the highest loss of staff. Owing to the growing business pressures, my regular communication with the Research Champions is sporadic. Chapter 5.1.2 explains the role of the Research Champions.

5.1 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

> *"There is a mentality in the office that **[Company B1A]** gets everything. **[Company B1C]** believes that **[Company B1A]** always gets what they want and they, **[Company B1C]** do not get what they want but that is not **[Company B1A]** fault that is their own **[companies]** fault. Each **[company]** makes their own decisions but I do not think that their managers are reporting on what is going on which leaves staff to make up their own minds."*
>
> **Company F1**

The intent of Document Five is to complete the final stage of the Doctorate of Business Administration Programme. This paper is the next stage of an ethnographic study. Further research plans to support the ongoing development of this study will continue after the programme. The topic has broadened the formative conceptual framework. This has generated potential action points and the recognition to refine the research questions.

The focus during the DBA programme has been within one organisation, Company A1. The global conglomerate is a leader in engineering consultancy offering a broad range of professional services for both private and public sector clients. Section 5.1.1 provides a synopsis of the organisation. The research has focused on the following three parts of the global business.

- Company B1 (UK Division);
- Company E1 (International Division); and
- Company F1 (Central Services Division).

In 2001, Company F1 was formed to integrate the fragmented support functions. The company is not part of the UK division. The company provides business support and financial management services for all the companies in the UK. Company F1 also offers these services to the overseas divisions that make up the global organisation. Company F1 provides a range of services and advice. These include:

- central payroll services;
- Information technology (IT) and systems;
- Public relations (PR) and communication;
- health and safety;
- Human Resources (HR);
- procurement; and
- training and development.

The principal aim is to investigate and understand the problems of corporate communication being experienced in this organisation. There are two stages exploring this: Stage 1 explores communication within and between companies; stage 2 investigates communication within and between corporate Head Office and UK companies.

5.1.1 Who is the Host Organisation, Company A1?

Company A1 is a global conglomerate providing engineering consultancy services to clients across many market sectors. The company was established in the UK in the late 1950s. In the 1980s, the business was listed on the London Stock Exchange. Today the company has grown and has a workforce of around 9,000 people. The business has become one of the largest international consultancy groups. The company operates in the following sectors:

- property;
- transportation and infrastructure;
- environment; and
- management.
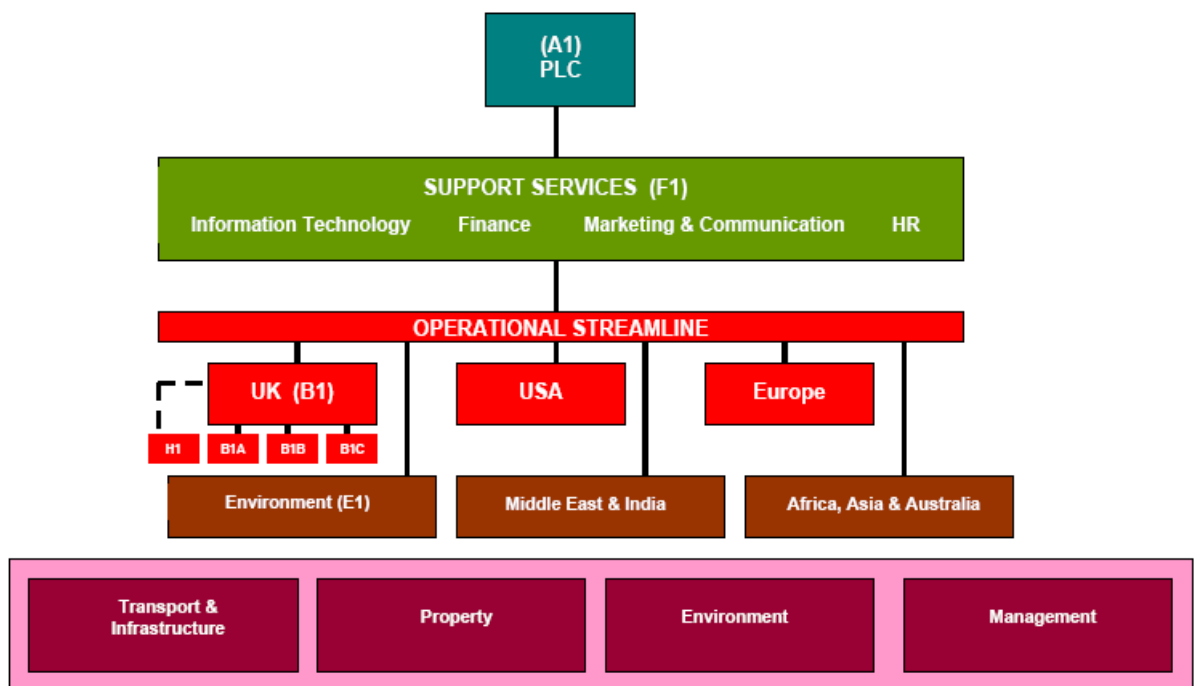
Chart 1: Company A1's Organisation Structure

The company has international experience in America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The organisation works in over 50 countries and 200 offices in 30 countries. Chart 1

illustrates the structure of the organisation. Table 1 provides an overview of the company's history.

Year	Milestone	No. of staff
1950s	Company A1 established as a building services consultancy.	
1980s	The company floated on the London Stock Exchange.	80
1995	Asia acquisitions.	600
1999	South Africa acquisitions.	2,000
2000	USA acquisitions and further expansion into Asia.	3,000
2001	Europe acquisitions	5,300
2004	Middle East acquisitions	6,000
2007	Series of acquisitions in UK, Europe, USA, and the Middle East.	9,200

Table 1: Company A1's History with Acquisitions

The company's vision is to be the lead expert providing a multidisciplinary service in the engineering environment. To fulfil the company's vision their activities are based on their core values. Company A1's values are as follows.

▪ Integrity
▪ Collaboration
▪ Excellence
▪ Sustainability
▪ Innovation

The organisation's vision and core values define the culture of the group. The values are supposed to motivate staff and instil in their clients' confidence that the business can deliver solutions of the highest quality.

5.1.2 Organisational Narratives in HRM and Organisational Cultures

The investigation focuses on stories within the context of corporate communication, both between companies, divisions and through the company's hierarchical levels. The organisation is characterised by the dominance of vocational groups such as mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, public health engineers, structural engineers, civil engineers, infrastructure engineers, fire engineers, environment planning engineers, and project managers. I believe that individuals will assign themselves to their respective professional groups to construct meaning on work situations. This process will provide an insight into management practices, constraints, and challenges faced in ongoing social processes at different levels within an organisation.

During the 1980s emerging interest in organisation studies began. Organisation researchers by their objectives were contributing to understanding organisation and corporate philosophy. They also focused on mythology including storytelling. Between the 1950s and the 1960s, David McClelland's (Boje, 1999) study on leadership examined the theory linking storytelling and leadership. He emphasised that storytelling is the need for achievement and power. He focused on Henry Murray's definition of power to: *'master, manipulate, [and] organise… human beings'* (1938: p.164). The characters of a story will provide an insight into how manipulation is used by individuals in authoritarian roles. Tom Peters suggests an individual will only have: *'his or her language… as a tool'* (cited in Caroselli, 2000: p.12). I believe that the use of language will be an advantage to seek influence over others. This will be important to investigate the role of language to understand the circumstances, which influence the choice of idiom. McClelland emphasised that individuals will take *'pleasure in winning'* (1961: pp.167-168) to determine their own goals. The outcome indicates control and disempowerment (Armstrong, 1995). The choice of behaviour may construct negative consequences (Tepper, 2007), which can undermine internal relationships and honest communication.

The study of narratives provides an understanding of the use of discursive practices. This investigation reveals the variables of behaviour that arise. This involves understanding the language patterns used in a local environment. These attributes will be important to an individual or a group that have accepted the behaviour as norm. Another identified contributing factor is the combination of language as the *'art of persuasion'* (Conger, 1998: p. 84) of others. Seeking to manipulate other individuals to increase communication skills will be dangerous. This process will have the ability to engineer and *'manipulate language to control'* (Fairclough, 2000: p. ix) people's perceptions. If the language chosen speaks the truth, why should it be necessary to inflict control on the internal workplace?

Weick (1995a) and Orr (1996) outline the importance of the circulation of stories. They believe that individuals will learn to understand what is happening in their environment through stories. Tietze et al (2003) postulate that storytelling provides an appreciation of the organisational processes undertaken. They believe that the approach reveals how sense-making is used to interpret as well as create meaning in a potentially chaotic world.
In Clark's view, the: *'element of belief [will be] crucial, for without it the credible story, the events, and persons [may] become history'* (1972: p.178). The repetitive sharing of the same event will cause the story to impact on the company's history. Owing to the existence of multiple interpretations, an event may not be identical as individuals attempt to recollect

it. I recognise that a story will change with time making it difficult to make sense of the event (White, 1987). The interaction among individuals will construct multiple levels of perceptions in the internal workplace. The concerns will be how people represent their different perceptions of social settings and try to get their views accepted by others.

Problems can occur when a congestion of related stories are circulated at the same time (Czarniawska, 2004). Some individuals will be caught out by a new story being conveyed. Building on this insight, Franklin suggests that: *'time and space [will] bring about continuous emergence, growth, decay, and change'* (1998: p. 439). The challenge, however, will be to understand the stimulus by individuals to 'buy' in to hearsay stories. The stories examined for this document focus on some key organisational changes. Demonstrating the issue, an individual will hear official and unofficial stories on how a collective group undertakes decisions and draws the conclusion that success (recognition) means participating in organisational politics. During which time individuals may take an unethical and political stance in defence of the information received.

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Summary – The Key Factors

The preamble to storytelling demonstrates the importance of language in association with telling stories. For an individual to construct meaning of their social world will, over time, create the conditions to maintain a supportive or obstructive acceptance of their social environment. The idea of sharing stories can result in maintaining or provoking different views any opportune time individuals can, and do with intent, distorts information for their own ends. The failure to understand the meaning of the story will be detrimental to organisational communication, especially if unconfirmed by senior management.

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The next section provides an overview of Documents One to Four, and guides the reader through the research on 'corporate communication' as part of this DBA project.

5.1.3 The Chronicle So Far…

The completion of Documents One to Document Four has provided an in-depth understanding to contribute to this next chapter of this research. The following is a précis of Documents One to Four.

- **Document One**

  The UK Managing Director and UK HR Manager identified *'communication'* as a research topic as part of completing the DBA programme. Both the Managing Director and HR Manager were also assigned as Research Champions to me for the duration of

the programme. The topic choice was based on past events, which had taken place within the organisation. The situation had caused internal and external problems for the business. The UK Managing Director explained that some companies had caused confusion in the external commercial market by: *"aggressively competing for work against potentially ourselves, which gives the wrong impression and prove that we do not communicate with each other."* The UK HR Manager also supported these views. These concerns were supported by the organisation's annual company-wide, employee survey. For several years, the annual results on communication received the worst score. Based on these factors I chose the topic of communication.

As discussed earlier, the host organisation (Company A1) is a UK registered business. The company has continued increasing its global presence through several acquisitions as shown in Table 1.

Upon commencing the DBA programme, the UK HR Manager resigned, and a few months later the UK Managing Director retired. The unexpected departure of the two Research Champions provided the opportunity to discover whether senior management shared their views. Discussions were held with the remaining Managing Directors from each company, as well as senior representatives from the various support areas shown in Table 2.

Managing Director	Company B1A	**Company B1 (UK Division)**
Managing Director	Company B1B	
Managing Director	Company B1C	
HR & Communication Director	Company D1A (Europe)	
UK Managing Director and International Managing Director	Company E1 (International)	
Managing Director	Company F1	
Finance Director	Company F1	
Managing Director	Company G1 (International)	

Table 2: Company A1's Strategic Management Level

Company E1, Company G1, and Company D1A are not part of the UK remit. At this stage, it was important to include as many of the companies in the initial data gathering exercise. The outcome of the discussions raised similar concerns, which were:

- ring fence cultures within and between divisions;
- information cascading down, but not enough travelling upwards;
- mistrust between the various divisions; and
- past events and conflicts still unresolved.

The collective responses identified a new area to explore as part of the investigation, which was 'corporate communication'. This overview provided the foundation to undertake a 'Critical Literature Review' in Document Two.

- **Document Two**

  The literature review in Document One had changed the focus of Document Two. This alignment was based on the concerns identified by the key personnel shown in Table 2. To provide a better understanding of the topic further work was undertaken on setting the scene for Document Two. The process and scope of the document drew from the literature associated with corporate communication. Specific areas were:

  - organisational structure;
  - sense-making;
  - informal networks;
  - team briefings; and
  - core values and beliefs.

  The literature review was motivated by a personal interest in human behaviour influenced by the imbalance of gender representation. It was however, important to understand the use of power games of persuading and influencing individuals. The objective was to understand how 'sense-making' influenced corporate communication and gender perceptions within a large multifaceted organisation. This provided the opportunity to investigate whether an organisation's structure affects the cascade of information through the hierarchy. The outcome revealed the extent individuals seek to convince and manipulate others' decision-making process.

- **Document Three**

  The literature review from Document Two provided the framework to conduct an ethnographic study within the host organisation. The group researched in Document Three were the Sector Champions. These senior directors are recognised specialists in their respective market sectors, which are shown in Table 3. They are specialist advisors for the organisation. Staff and clients alike seek their authoritative knowledge internally and externally.

Aviation	Commercial
Education	Entertainment
Healthcare	Local Government
Rail	Residential
Retail	Urban Regeneration

Table 3: Market Sectors

Company E1's international division was in the early stages of introducing Sector Champions into their business. The division had two Sector Champions. A random selection of five virtual team members assigned to support the various Sector Champions were also included in the study. Consequently, twenty people were studied in Document Three.

I work in one of the companies, therefore, it was important to show an unbiased approach. This was demonstrated following the departure of the Champions. I decided to find three new 'Research Champions' within the organisation. They are:

- Managing Director – Company B1B;
- Managing Director – Company B1A; and
- Managing Director – Company E1.

The three individuals are not associated to the Sector Champions. The new Champions were to demonstrate a balance at the top senior management level. The approach was to avoid any scepticism of the outcome with the remaining management board.

The combined research methods of interviews, and attending meetings as a non-participant observer with the above-mentioned Sector Champions provided ample rich material. The methods provided the opportunity to make some cross analysis to validate the findings. The collection of research transcripts highlighted three key concepts that were an influential factor on the corporate communication. They are:

- *trust or mistrust;*
- *structure of the organisation; and*
- *history of the growth of the organisation by acquisition.*

Each of the revealed concepts supported the problems being experienced by the organisation. These views were substantiated with significant 'quotes' and 'stories'. A sample of quotes is illustrated in Table 4.

Trust	Structure	History
"Leadership style hampers communication."	*"Communication has been poor. There has never been anything in place to cascade down from plc meetings to the guys on the shop floor."*	*"Internal issues have not been resolved and still a problem."*
"Relationship with other [divisions] not quite there."	*"How we've been successful in the past has been our culture and values, and our biggest risk was when we grew by acquisition and rapid growth that we could dilute our culture. We are probably seeing that a little bit."*	*"Individuals making decisions on personal interests and not in the interest of the business."*
"Top management can override decisions and not inform you."	*"Different financial set-up within [divisions] hampers working together."*	*"There is still a perception of being seen as a sub-contractor."*
"Cross [divisions] decision making process can impact other [divisions] who do not get a say."	*"Local culture driven by management – they influence how their staff behave."*	*"[Divisions] operate in a silo mentality."*
"Called in to give advice then not taken up due to politics."	*"There is a sort of old boys' network operating out of an office. They communicate naturally with one another – far better than the regional offices and it's in away taken for granted and it does not always work that word of mouth."*	*"Perception of negativity of involving other parts of the business."*

Table 4: Samples of quotations – Document Three

In making some comparisons with the findings, three external interviews were undertaken. The three companies (Company X, Company Y, and Company Z) are not part of the host organisation. The companies were chosen for their similarities with the business. The connections were:

- management structure;
- global presence;
- sector focus on their delivery of work; and
- competitors working within the same industry.

The external interviews provided an insight on how things can be conducted in terms of similar working practices. The external discussions revealed that working in the same

industry, and gender bias, were not the cause of the corporate communication problems. I believe that the external companies' processes are aligned with the organisation's structures, and culture. In consideration, this view is to propose that the existing organisation setting is unsuitable for effective communication. The host organisation revealed that they were at risk from their own cultural domain. Their historical journey acquiring several acquisitions to accomplish being recognised as a global leader could have influenced its inter-divisional communications. This has affected the behaviour of the workforce to be mistrusting and competitive so that it no longer supports the company's 'core values':

- *Integrity; and*
- *collaboration.*

The findings demonstrated that the organisation's culture could be influencing the problems occurring with its corporate communication. These factors also could have caused the core values not to be embedded and practiced in the organisation.

- **Document Four**

  A structured survey-based research was undertaken in Document Four. The objective was to review the company's annual employee survey results. This included Company B1 and Company E1. The aim was to determine whether the results supported the previous findings identified in the ethnographic study in Document Three shown here:

  - *trust or mistrust;*
  - *structure of the organisation; and*
  - *history of the growth of the organisation by acquisition.*

  The above-mentioned themes may be the reasons why the company could be experiencing problems with its corporate communication. The main issue in the findings was the lack of trust within the organisation.

  The employee survey results supported the findings in Document Three. The results showed that the lack of trust was a major factor in the disengagement at the individual-to-individual, business unit-to-business unit, regional office-to-regional office, and company-to-company level. The results demonstrated that not sharing information between parties would construct an ambiguous, and mistrusting working environment. This premise suggests that the organisation structure and the measure of team

performance could contribute to the internal business competition and mistrust. There appears to be a lack of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to evaluate managers' people management skills. However, the matter of KPIs is not dealt with in this study. In general, managers are measured by how much work they win and profit they make. This approach would be a political advantage to some individuals helping them control communal groups within the organisation. For the majority the idea that people can work in a negative environment will create unnecessary barriers.

A brief example illustrates the point. A company unit who experienced financial difficulty revealed that management took measures to overcome their problems. It appears management put pressure on their staff to work harder and made promises that everyone would be rewarded. A Director (Division E1) confirmed management did not fulfil their promises.

> *"In 2006, the UK business experienced financial difficulty. When any part of the global business does not reach its target – the UK business has to cover that financial gap. This was a major problem for the business. All UK personnel were put under extreme pressure to help bridge the gap. However, once the problem was resolved – there was no reward on offer for the staff hard work."*

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Director, Company E1 (October, 2007)

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This incident influenced the workforce to mistrust management and change their behaviour. Meeting the challenge may have caused the core values to be ignored. The event created a *'them'* and *'us'* situation between management and staff. This mistrust among the staff caused conflict through the management structure. The reason for mistrust may have had a different meaning for each professional group with the idea that team leaders may have communicated inaccurate information to reach their financial targets. It also showed that the exchange of inaccurate communication could influence the internal environment.

5.1.4 Motivation for the Empirical Research

Over the duration of this study, I have focused on a collection of narratives. These compilations have provided an appreciation of corporate communication problems experienced in this organisation. The empirical material collected for Documents One, Three and Four consists of individuals' stories gathered within the company. Many of these anecdotes will have had a historical influence on the organisation. Some of these stories will be unresolved historical events, which continue to affect working relationships. These

stories will be rooted in the core of the organisation. These stories may dominate how people engage with other personnel that do not work in their company.

Document Five will be used to test, and deepen the findings of how organisational storytelling can affect corporate communication and trust between individuals. Factors such as the organisation, the culture, the management structure, and organisational stories will reveal why this particular organisation is experiencing problems. If the findings corroborate the previous documents, it will support the proposal that the company can influence, and improve its corporate communication.

5.1.5 Definition of the Research Questions

The broad objectives of the research questions are to explore the following propositions:

- To what extent and in what way do internal stories shape an organisation and its culture?
- To what extent and in what way do individuals and teams seek to influence others with unofficial stories that are not part of the official corporate communication?
- To what extent and in what way the organisational stories have influenced the perceived organisational culture.
- To what extent and in what way senior management seeks to use stories to manage the organisation's culture.
- Are there circumstances in which one level of storytelling is positive and detrimental at another level?
- What are the perceived factors, which may contribute to the success of emergent stories in the organisation?
- What are the interventions senior management can use to enhance these success factors between professional groups to maintain the organisational culture?
- What are the perceived factors, which may contribute to the competition between the emergent stories of different professional groups to the detriment of the organisational culture?
- What interventions can be used to reduce these conflicts and avoid further misunderstandings in the organisation?

I have concentrated on one aspect of corporate communication namely, the role of storytelling to answer these questions by collecting a series of stories associated with one of the regional offices. Each story had to contain a distinctive meaning in which the participants were able to conceive an opinion. The circumstances in which these stories

may have influenced the participants' behaviour and decision to communicate with other individuals were to be researched.

This study aims to identify how stories can lead people to ascribe, *'cause and effect, accept or refuse responsibility and allocate blame'* (Tourish & Robson, 2006: p. 723) for an organisation's failed communication. Senior management say they feel responsible for resolving these paradoxes. They try to resolve them by disseminating their own stories. As with the problems caused by the structure of the organisation, these stories will be interpreted differently by the listeners and can make the problem worse.

5.2 A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW – NARRATIVES, STORYTELLING AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

> *"I believe people tell stories that are mainly bad ones because it makes people feel better about their own position and abilities. On the other side, we can sometimes hide behind others abilities to shadow our own inabilities"*
>
> **Company B1A (Specialists)**

Any institution or organisation with autocratic or bureaucratic control systems can experience blockages that will contribute to the breakdown in organisational communication. These attributes can affect how the decision-making process is undertaken across the various management platforms. In these circumstances, self-contained offices will create different commitments in pursuit of their own success. An internal workplace can be shaped by the development of these projected images. Having created the image individuals will adjust to accepting the changing environment.

To understand theoretically a managerial process it will be important to appreciate how an organisation's *'structure, function, negotiation, [and] power'* (Collier & Esteban, 2000: p. 207) are shared. Several authors (e.g. Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Block, 1993; Greenleaf, 1977) believe that to retain coherence, maintain consistent communication and respond to environmental demands requires collaboration, and trust. Parras and Silvers (1991) argued that the conditions and circumstances would influence an individual's level of trust. If there is a lack of fit between teamwork and trust, it may be difficult to sustain the organisation's structure to ensure honest communication.

Cassell and Bickmore claim that to maintain a collaborative relationship a level of trust should be demonstrated through the exchange of dialogue. They believe that an individual's use of language demonstrates trustworthiness, which may affect: *'how we act and converse with one another'* (2000: p. 50). They claim that it will be difficult to maintain a relationship if there is no trust. They conclude that to trust someone an individual will have to make themself vulnerable to the other person. It is my opinion that individuals, in certain organisational circumstances, will create opportunities to exploit others to fulfil their self-interests. The absence of trust may form resistance that could make future efforts more difficult (Bridges, 1980). Does trust need to be part of a working relationship to impact on the effectiveness of individuals, teams and the organisation? These factors may undermine *'staff's motivation, morale'* (Ford and Ford, 1995: p. 565) and reveal conflict.

Wenger (1998) argues that to share commitment there will be an: *'allegiance to the organisational ethos, and compliance to group or organisational norms'* (pp. 192-3). However, Senge (1997) and Anonymous (1998) suggest that individuals can influence and shape their own future to create something new in the world. The extent to which our own beliefs can affect the present, and potentially the future, will be important to consider. The complexity of an individual's vision will encourage others to construct meaning in a pragmatic way to reflect a shared coalition.

Many organisations are *'vehicles for bringing about'* (Kofman & Senge, 1993: p. 6) change. Some changes will be used to ensure people share a mutual understanding. Organisation members may achieve consensus for *'the good of the organisation'* (Collier & Esteban, 2000: p. 211). This will bring about change, which may discourage apprehension in the workplace. A lack of consensus could result in miscommunication. The existence of misunderstanding may affect trust being mutually demonstrated in the workplace. In light of this Albert (1983) and Bridges (1980) postulate that people should be allowed to resolve their past issues and move forward; failure to conclude the past may reveal resistance in the workplace. People will resist change because they may not understand the reason for it (Ford & Ford, 1995). Some individuals may find it difficult to acknowledge closure. The process should involve everyone negotiating the stimulus to move forward. This will highlight how individuals' assumptions and perceptions can affect an environment. Some individuals' behaviour will *'hinder [the] future success'* (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994: p. 61) and may dominate the internal workplace.

Everyday practices, routines, habits, rules, and procedures will maintain an organisation. How these corporate practices are managed, maintained, and communicated will distinguish one organisation from another. These practices will formalise the culture and provide insight into the organisation's core mechanisms. Sustaining these practices will involve investing time to make regular communication throughout the organisation. This approach will complement and *'enrich the development'* (Liedtka, 1999: p. 7) of the organisation's culture, or if not done well, hinder it. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that the mode will allow individuals to give meaning to what they do.

The organisational structure in which individuals' *'interpret and reinterpret'* (Collier & Estaban, 2000: p. 211) could reveal and make worse how apprehension can create tension between people. Wenger believes this will construct the individual's: *'own personal histories of becoming'* (1998: p. 5). This idea suggests multiple interpretations can occur. It is impossible to envisage that every person will share the same view of the organisation

and its vision. It is uncertain if these views will be sustainable and contribute to the continuous development of the organisation's life. Selznick (1992: p. 237) warns of the *'emotions and apprehension'* that this will trigger. It may be appropriate to keep: *'both aspects [emotions and apprehension] in play rather than opting for one'* (Collier & Estaban, 2000: p. 212). This viewpoint will provide awareness into the emotional connotations of the internal environment. These attributes may also reveal how individuals observe the world to achieve understanding. There may be a variety of emotions entangled in any working relationship. These may range from contentment, confidence, anger, frustration, and apprehension. The influence of this idea will construct negative conditions of bureaucratic regulations and rules, which may create inappropriate behaviour.

5.2.1 Challenge the Methodologies

This section provides an overview of the main theories, models, and concepts associated with storytelling. The concept is appraised to allow the reader full engagement with the initial conceptual framework, which relates to the question of organisational communication. This section offers the opportunity to visualise the linkages between the key concepts. In the current discussions, the three key influences of interest associated with organisational communication are:

- narratives;
- trust; and
- their importance to sense-making.

The essence of the 'story' may not end here. It will be important to consider how individuals seek to: *'make sense of what is happening around them'* (Weick, 2001: p. 5). This perspective will depend on the individual's awareness and experience that helps create a sense of judgment. Tourish and Robson (2006) describe that efforts to sense-making can be expressed through stories, which will be exchanged with other individuals. This will help to understand why individuals may feel satisfied or vulnerable by the circulation of these stories. Some individuals will be expected to recite these stories, and try to make sense of their social world.

As the idiom goes in many languages: *'Living is like writing a book'*. Czarniawska (2004: p.5) believes this signifies that people will: *'tell stories as they please, and in so doing shape their lives as they see fit'*. She claims that people tell stories to entertain, teach, and learn to help provide understanding. Every interaction either by email or by face-to-face contact will be based upon creating a story to be told, shared, and exchanged with others.

In 1977, Barthes claimed that stories could be present in every age, in every place, and in every society. He believed that narratives could be a part of our world, regardless of class, nationality, and cultural background. Mishler describes that: *'telling stories [will be] far from unusual in everyday conversation'* (1986: p. 69). The exposure to stories may: *'encourage others to accept [and] value the use of storytelling'* (Vance, 1991: p. 52). Storytelling may be an effective way to communicate principles and togetherness (Armstrong, 1992). Neuhauser (1993) argues that the stories people tell may be negative for the business and the people. Creating such a misinterpretation of the internal workplace will hamper the: *'coherence in decision-making'* (Nonaka et al., 2006: p. 1199).

The use of stories will have the ability to shape an image or create a set of values to disseminate throughout an organisation. Telling a story will change when told by different people at different times (Kelly & Allison, 1998). As stories are used to persuade others the stories will be adjusted to the circumstances. This suggests that stories will be used to *'overcome resistance'* (Jacques, 1996: p. 141). There will be issues associated with this because: *'two individuals [may] never share exactly the same viewpoints'* (Nonaka et al, 2006: p. 1183). Devins et al claim that an organisation's culture will: *'shape their [internal listeners] views'* (2005: p. 542). Whatever meaning these stories hold suggests that people will create their world through practice. The challenge is to recognise that different people can have different conceptions, which may hinder rather than promote cooperation.

Marchington claims that people will be: *'confronted by situations that are not of their own making'* (1995: p. 54). This creates stories that may be manufactured on uncertain information. The purpose of these stories will be to help people make sense of their ambiguity. Some stories may undermine the working environment rather than enhance it. He argues that those who re-tell stories will gloss over the existence of any known conflicts in the organisation. He believes that uncertain economic times will provide an individual with: *'greater room for manoeuvre'* (Ibid: p. 59) to take advantage of the situation.

Revealing only part of a story serves to present a better conceived account than the original story. These stories could give rise to a number of inconsistencies and tensions. The complexity of a large organisation with different divisions will result in interpreting these stories differently. The key question for consideration is why organisations describe themselves to the external world as a single entity, but will act internally as if they are a series of small businesses? The competitiveness between the different divisions may create tension. Each division may experience being in the driver-or-passenger seat of a story. Entangled in a story may be a 'hero', 'villain' and a 'victim'. This is how a story will

begin. Joseph Campbell says that in a heroic story there will be steps in which an individual seeks to make sense of their experience (cited in Boje, 1999: p. 4). This may lead someone from an ordinary world to undergoing ordeals, and engaging with other characters such as mentors, allies, and enemies. Each person's personal experience could change the organisation's internal environment, culture (including local, regional, and national), which may modify the abilities of knowing whom to trust.

Collin states that as individuals we all have our: *'own stories to tell with their own unique characteristics'* (2004: p.113). He believes that people can be: *'storytellers by nature'*. A view shared by Ibarra and Lineback, who claim that: '*all of us [will] tell stories…'* (2005: p. 66). They posit that stories will define us. Therefore, to know an individual well is to know their respective story – the experiences that will have shaped them. They claim that storytelling will be a powerful way to pursue the goals set. This suggests that the person's story will be a good one in which the listener will have a level of trust for the storyteller. These stories may be good or bad, true, or false; the storytellers will tell stories to capture minds and win hearts (Bennis, 1996). This is an assumption raised earlier by Hardy who stated that, as individuals, we will: *'plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative'* (1978: p. 13). Everyday influences faced by individuals in the workplace will make their decision making biased. Boje (1999) goes further, and suggests that by nature, we are storytellers. Paula Wehmiller (1998: p. 96) makes a strong argument that: *'when there are walls of ignorance between people, when we don't know each other's stories, we substitute our own myth about who that person is. When we are operating with only a myth, none of that person's truth [will] ever be known to us, and we [may] injure them – mostly without ever meaning to…'* (cited in Balderrama, 1996). The power that this will exert may be detrimental to the individual. The challenge remains whether it is easy as an individual to answer the following question raised by me:

> *What story did we disclose recently to others in the absence of knowing the original storyteller's true story?*

The question suggests that we will never be the sole author of our own stories. In every conversation, a positioning may take place, which will be accepted, rejected, or improved by the individuals in the conversation (Davies & Harré, 1991). Czarniawska (2004) supports this claim that people can concoct stories for others without including themselves in the conversation, which exerts power. There is the view that people will tell stories to make sense of events, and gain political advantages over others (Boje, 1991). Boje (1991) argues that stories can be told to different listeners, which will become inconsistent. Our

personal experiences help us to understand what we hear and observe. He believes that how listeners' react to the stories they hear will influence their subsequent dialogue.

Peters and Austin claim that the telling of stories can be more: *'frequent in turbulent settings'* (1985: p. 330). A view shared by Mitroff and Kilmann (1975). They state that stories will be told to make sense of the impact of turbulent events. This suggests that people will distort, bias, and even fabricate information to help to maintain their persona. Such practices will be searched for in the findings of this document. Some stories will be divulged to manage the struggles within an environment (Boje, 1991). Eisenberg proposes an alternative interpretation. He states that this will introduce *'multiple interpretations'* (1984: p. 236) for the listeners to understand. The meaning, then, suggests a change to the hierarchical influence. This may be a power strategy manoeuvre to create mystification (Fisher, 1984).

Vance (1991) acknowledges that an internal environment can help support new and competing stories to relinquish old ones that are no longer relevant. He goes on to recognise that this will affect the stories and storytelling as being non-structured, informal communication. He believes that storytelling will be a powerful influence on organisations. This persuasive aspect may create an imbalance of exchanging trust between individuals. This view may reveal an unsettled and untrustworthy social environment. Storytelling can contribute to the success of organisational change and performance. The formal and informal storytelling processes could work to support and enhance each other's objective. Many everyday encounters will allow people to engage and exchange their stories. The practice of informal storytelling will continue to exist so long as the organisation is in operation.

Silverman, in his study of 170 business leaders in over 80 organisations throughout the world, believes that business communicators' will understand the importance of telling a story. He continues to suggest that there will be more to a story than just the telling of it. From the research, he suggests that: *'stories [can] have strategic importance'* (2007: p. 38). The findings of his examination state that stories may already exist in abundance within organisations. How can these stories be moved to the public domain, and why would we want to?

Summary – The Key Factors

The use of stories can help to make sense of our lives. Our own emotions and experience will hinder any form of coalition to share understanding. Any attempt to change an environment by coercion will affect trust to be part of a working relationship. The justification of sharing stories will be to gain power over another person. The organisation could lose foresight and fail to adapt to a harmonised environment, and instead create ambiguity in the workplace. There is a possibility that prominence becomes a priority, which could challenge the essence of the organisation. Understanding the internal environment may reveal the characters who tell these stories.

5.2.2 The Idea of Narratives as Storytelling

Narratives and storytelling have entered the terminology of many fields of study. The narrative theory has its roots in the philosophical issues of ontology (Fisher, 1985a, 1985b). The narrative concept focuses on human beings as social storytellers. The use of symbols can be communicated as stories to help human experience and to persuade others to dwell on the story as a way of living in harmony. Living in communities with the approval of a story can reveal how individuals seek to mould, shape, and instil preconceived understandings. Whether or not individuals share their views, a story could be a: *'tangled web of truths [and] half-truths'* (Gabriel, 1995: p. 484). In a fast-paced environment where time is paramount, the dispersion of power and authority will be widespread. An individual with the intent to divulge a story in a constrained environment could create an outcome of their choice.

Boland and Tenkasi (1995) regard the use of narratives and storytelling as the basic organising principle of human cognition. This will depend on a form of trust between the parties to help exchange mutual expectations. The circumstances for stories can be defined as: *'narratives with simple but resonant plots and characters, involving narrative skill, entailing risk, and aiming to entertain, persuade, [and] win over'* (Gabriel, 2000: p. 22). A view shared by Czarniawska, who states that people will tell stories to: *'entertain, to teach, [and] to learn'* (2004: p.10). The term narrative and story will be used interchangeably (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1987; Weick, 1995a). Weick suggests that stories should be part of the wider sense-making process. He believes that stories can be a: *'history for an outcome'* (1995: p. 128). A sequence of events may provide a chain to the particular meaning that exits. Czarniawska (2004) believes that everything can be a narrative or at least be treated like one. She states that a narrative can be a verbal or written transcript giving an account of an event/action. Todorov argues that a narrative can begin with a: *'stable situation which [may be] disturbed by some power or force'* (1971 /

1977: p. 111).   This illustrates that there is not one accepted definition of a story or narrative.

It may be true to say that we all have a story to tell and everybody tells a story. The extent and occurrence with which a story can be told will be never-ending. Every fragmented conversation will be categorised as a story to tell. Individuals in organisations then become storytellers.   These storytellers can create the *'categories-in-use, [and] histories-in-use'* (Boje, 1994: p. 435) that will construct influential relationships. The *'categories-in-use'* can be used to emphasise a particular professional group that share preconceived ideas or beliefs. This is particularly important in a company such as the one studied here in which divisions are the home of different professions. Whereas *'histories-in-use'* can also be used to control how people interpret meaning to the story. Gabriel (1998, 2000) challenges this perspective.   He criticises the trend in organisation studies to label every conversation, snippet of narrative, every text, every cliché or sign as a story or having a story to tell. This differentiated use of the term 'story' he argues will result in the elimination of any comparison between stories and other types of texts. He believes that stories should not be identified as: *'clichés [in] which meaning disappears'* (1998: p. 86).   These pieces of narratives may be unsuitable as tools for social research.

Several researchers (e.g. Martin, 1982; Martin et al, 1983; Wilkins, 1984; Wilkins & Thompson, 1991) began to gather stories on myths, rites and rituals, and language. These researchers collected organisational stories as told by organisation members.   The development of the understanding of narratives has entered the field of organisation studies in several ways. Organisation research can be written like a story (case study). However, they can also be accounts accumulated for training (e.g. Czarniawska, 1997a; McCloskey, 1990; Sims et al, 1993; Watson, 2000, 2001b). Watson experimented with the narrative form. He considered that use of fairytale-like accounts could create a stimulating, complex argument in seeking to formulate a *'memorable'* (2001b: p. 394) experience. He believed that this method could link the genres of creative writing and social science (Watson, 2000). Some academics may continue to hypothesise cultural processes based on their investigations.

In practice, elicited or overheard accounts by organisation members continue to be collected by researchers (e.g. Boje, 1991, 1994; Boyce, 1995; Brown, 1992; Gabriel, 1993, 1995; Hansen & Kahnweiler, 1993; Mallon & Cohen, 2001; Salzer-Mörling, 1998; Taylor, 1999; Wilkins and Thompson, 1991). Over a seven-year period, Gabriel (1995) collected 400 organisation stories. These stories were ranged from unstructured conversations with

employees accumulated in five organisations, and 250 stories from undergraduate students. These stories will be ideal to provide an understanding of organisation members including internal and external stakeholders. The power of these stories will be useful to structure a company's image, organisation learning, and strategic development. Using stories as a conceptual tool provides the process to interpret and create understanding.

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Summary – The Key Factors

The intention of stories is to share our experience. This will be in the form of entertaining and persuading others. This notion may step over the boundaries of manipulation once the practice of empowerment has been confirmed. This ability could present itself by the factual evidence of its collective admirers to their respective social world. There are no constitutional rules about how creative these stories can be. The key point here is that the person who tells a convincing good story to prevail over others will create an image and trust boundaries of their own choice.

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5.2.3 The Interpretation of Shared Narratives

Narratives can be used as a communication tool. The type of narratives shared may reflect the organisation's culture that may support or challenge the organisation's official values and vision. Avoiding any misunderstanding these organisational narratives should be positive and allow for open interpretation of their meaning.

Anthony (1994) and Willmott (1995) postulate that the culture of an organisation will be something that management create or, at least, manipulate. It is, then, not inevitable that managers would argue that they do manipulate the organisation culture. In short, managers are there to direct the business. The shaping of a culture will include the framework for a behavioural code of conduct. This approach will help an organisation to be: *'more effective'* (Watson, 2001a: p. 392). In a workplace, there will be nothing wrong with this as an approach. Understanding the stories meaning there may be: *'pretentious language getting in the way'* (Watson, 2001a: p. 391). The influence of these stories will provide a great deal of learning for an organisation. One of the ways in which knowledge may be transferred (Wensley, 1998) is by stories.

Gabriel claims that: *'organisations do not appear to be a natural habitat of storytelling – after all most people in organisations are too busy appearing to be busy to be able to engage in storytelling'* (2000: p. 240). Lanham (1991) argues that storytelling can take place in organisations. Gabriel (2000) contradicts his previous views suggesting that stories could give us access into what lies behind these stories. He also points out that it

may not make sense to check the reliability of these stories, and instead, to treat them as myths. A view also shared by Landau (1984; 1991). Key people within the organisation will carry these values and reinforce their importance (Connerton, 1989). These individuals will provide an insight into the organisation. It is important to note the need to differentiate between the organisational structure and the personal structure built by the staff. The latter could have a stronger influence on how effective stories are.

De Certeau (1985) claims that stories will be produced (concocted, fabricated), sold (told, circulated), and consumed (listened to, read, interpreted) – all in the same performance; a view shared by Boland and Tenkasi (1995). They believe that stories do not keep still, but will be concocted, circulated, and contradicted. Different individuals will disseminate these stories. These accounts having their own identities will be difficult to stop. As individuals, we will: *'listen selectively, remember fragmentarily, and re-count in a way that suits'* (Czarniawska, 2004: p. 45) our purpose.

Karen Dietz of the National Storytelling Network defines a story as: *'an act of communication that provides people with packets of sensory material that [will] allow the listener to quickly and easily internalise the material, understand it, and create meaning from it'* (cited in Silverman, 2007: p. 38). The idea to maintain understanding proposes repeating: *'the narratives to members of the* [same] *community'* (Orr, 1996: p. 161). The process will create an all inclusive attitude to the communal members. This indicates how a story may become embedded in team(s) and in the organisation. Marsick and Watkins (1990), and Weick (1995a) claim that the way in which individuals make sense of situations (stories) they encounter in their daily lives will be based on their experience. Beckett (2001) argues that this approach can be undertaken inadequately, impetuously, and inappropriately. In organisations storytelling can be the: *'preferred sense-making currency'* (Czarniawska, 2004: p. 38). Czarniawska (2004), states that individuals will use the process to interpret and refine their new and ongoing stories. She also believes that as old stories continue to unfold they will be compared with new stories to ensure that no bad choices will be repeated. This may be difficult to appreciate because individuals will retain particular stories for a specific reason, which can relate to their involvement.

Sartre suggests that: *'man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories'* (2000: p. 61). This indicates that the telling of stories will be important to sense-making. Lieblich et al. (1998) and Riessman (1993) concur that people will tell stories to tie together significant events in their lives. The individual will have an understanding of the information to: *'construct personal interpretation'* (Boje et al., 1994: p. 186). Wolfe (1991) argues that

the individuals' meaning may be aligned with that of the organisation. If there were different meanings, this suggests that it may be difficult to appreciate how this approach could enhance effective communication across individuals and organisations (Boje & Wolfe, 1989). This statement now contradicts Wolfe's (1991) earlier presumption that the alignment will be between the individual and the organisation. Some management may exercise greater powers on to individuals.

Schütz (1973) believed that it would be impractical to understand human intentions while ignoring the settings in which they make sense. Some settings may be institutional, a set of procedures, or some other framework created by people. These stories can be central to the sense-making process (Ardley, 2006) because they capture the perceptions of people in organisations. Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott (2001) would argue that our understanding of the world is derived from the stories we hear or read. As such, these stories will be shared to help bring others into the respective world. Weick (1995a) claims that people will use stories to provide meaning to help guide their behaviour by using an individual's story powers. Watson (1994) proposes that telling and listening to stories can be the basic human process of making judgements about the world. The stories we hear can provide the language for how we talk about the world and how we behave towards it. Whoever controls the stories control the language of the organisation and hence its values and culture; it may be claimed. Wallemacq and Sims (1998) posit that we will remember in stories. They propose that storytelling can be used for strategic and tactical purposes. A view also shared by Johnson and Scholes (2002). Ardley (2006) also acknowledges that people will think in narratives. He goes on to suggest that we will tell stories about our experiences to help make these experiences manageable.

The constant challenge on the demanding environments to improve communication and to ensure co-operation and understanding can be recognised as a positive process. Consideration should be placed to create an organisational practice through the narratives of actors (Hopkinson & Hogarth, 2001). This method will allow people to interpret the experience through their involvement, which can be created by the use of language and rhetoric (Ardley, 2006). By reconstructing the sequence of events frames the situations that will generate meaning. This depends on the capability of the storyteller to convey a convincing story (Brown, 2001). Brown goes on to suggest that storytellers should be imaginative to help influence the intended listener to accept the individual's views. This idea suggests that there will be a measure of trust to support the relationship.

Boje (1994) states that storytelling is about a communal dynamic that will provide organisational learning. O'Driscoll and Murray (1998) believe that storytelling will provide an insight into how decisions are made. They claim that most researchers doing investigation work may ignore it. The personal and sensitive nature of the subject may make it difficult to be discrete when gathering data in the workplace. The idea could lead participants to feel that they may be challenged on the management style. Some participants will not feel comfortable to *'drop their guard'.* Instead, some individuals will *'put their barriers up'* to protect themselves. Storytelling will have the potential to be a framework for analysing and implementing action (Seely Brown et al., 2004). Historical experiences can be the basis to use descriptive stories and scenarios (Mintzberg et al., 1998). These views are also conveyed by Piercy (2002), who advocates that stories can be used for strategic purposes.

The use of stories can provide: *'mutual influencing, bargaining, [and] coalition building'* (Barker, 1997: p. 351). Collier and Esteban argued that stories would not remain: *'stable in chaotic situations'* (2000: p. 209). People collaborate to share goals, but values and ideals will be different. Mutual interaction between people may involve conflict (Kets de Vries, 1996). The challenge then faced by individuals will be to accept each other as they are. Collier and Esteban propose that individuals should: *'recognise the right of others to create their own views of reality, to interpret experience in their own way, and to express their views in dialogue'* (2000: p. 209). They believe that this approach will provide sound ethical judgements and decisions to be undertaken. Barker (1997) argues that the weight of influence will change and be unequal as different people assume alternative roles and responsibilities.

Summary – The Key Factors

The way in which stories are collated, framed, and shared will be based on the setting and the environment. This will include the persuasion of the relevant personnel involved. How stories are interpreted will be different to the understanding of the chain of storytellers reciting the account. How individuals share these segments of events will ensure their validity of acceptance through the various social environments.

5.2.4 Understanding Narratives Through the Use of Language

There is an evolving body of research examining language in organisations (e.g. O'Connor, 1994). The language used in conversations both verbal and written will: '*create the organisation's culture'* (Ford & Ford, 1995: p. 563). Boje et al. (2004: p. 571) believe that language can be used as a: *'vehicle for analysing and exploring organisations'.* They

contradict their claim and propose that the primary focus should be to develop an appreciation into the nature and complexity of organisations, rather than insights into language. There will be more than one way of interpreting any organisational event or situation (Boje et. al., 2004). Different understandings will be arranged through socially constructed language. The use of power may manipulate people through discourse and language practices (Boje et. al., 2004). Foucault (1972, 1979) states that power and control will be inevitable. Gold (1998) supports Foucault, stating that people will shape and share understanding of their stories upon which decisions will be made. He believes that people will tell stories to make themselves knowledgeable to others. He continues to suggest that the telling of stories will contribute to make others understand. There will be different meanings imposed between and within different parts of an organisation that could deflect from the truth of an event. Such practices will be searched for in the findings of this document.

Bateson (1995) postulates that to experience successful communication; it should be based on a shared understanding of the: *'rules of the language game'* (p. 93). Habermas (1981) argues that not all communication will be based around understanding.   Bateson acknowledges that some communication will aim to: *'annoy, mislead, offend, infuriate, [and] humiliate'* (1995: p. 95). He proposes that the use of *'codes, symbols, and semantics'* (Ibid: p. 123) will help to share the rules of interpretation.

The use of discourse (choice of vocabulary and rhetoric) *'theatre of language'* (Geertz, 1988: p. 3) could be an important factor to appreciate how individuals create persuasive impressions by using the art of language to convince others. Language will be produced with the aim of revealing a story. People make promises, set deadlines, and during the task will change their minds. In an attempt to dictate, their decisions may cause uncertainty by changing the order of the actions to be undertaken. The intent to influence an outcome will be to construct a new story by moving *'words around'* (Garfinkel et al., 1981: p. 133). A crucial feature is that the storyteller will have the power and the knowledge behind the story. Gergen (1994) and Shotter (1990) claim that language will be central to the way we describe and explain our world and practice in it. As stories unfold, they may help us to make sense of the world. Gold argues that language will be: *'used to achieve certain actions'* (1998: p. 109). He emphasises local communities could by influenced by the individuals who wish to create a specific sense of meaning. He further explains that each locality will carry alternative understandings, which will be used to *'argue, persuade, discuss, accuse,* [and] *judge'* (Ibid: p. 109) between the competing stories. He continues to imply that there will be some common agreement towards the meaning shared within each

of the communities. Each community having their own story will cause conflict between them as they seek to force their respective version of events. Such practices will be searched for in the findings of this document. If it is as Gold states, the clash of events will lead to a series of attacks, defence, tit-for-tat actions, and endless interpretations of a story. This demonstrates that people will be: *'driven by the power of [their] own story lines and [will] block out each other's claims'* (Ibid: p. 110). Local communities will not *'trust or give and take'* any individual not part of their social world's construction of events. There will be levels of defensiveness and suspicion (George et al., 1998), which will lead to the rejection of an alternative story.

Butler (1991) and Devins et al. (2005) believe that organisations can be constrained by their environments. This will be due to the lack of awareness and the desire to be independent (Gray, 1998). Different divisions may not be aligned, and therefore, employee influence and power (Garrahan & Stewart, 1992) will not be consistent. Some individuals will seek ways to: *'capitalise on this power'* (Silverman, 2007: p. 41). Exploiting the situation will involve some social exclusion to discourage any possible challenges.

Storytelling can be a core component part of a culture. Cooper and Burrell (1988: p. 26) remark that *'the will to know'* shapes what we will be interested in and, influence what we see. The essence of stories will: *'represent, reflect, and confirm cultural values'* (Tietze et al, 2003: p. 50). Boje argues that a: *'story can change depending on the stakeholders performing the story'* (1991: p. 122). A view shared by Franklin that as individuals, we will: *'explain the world from our own experience – from our own standpoint as stakeholders'* (1998: p. 439). The key idea here is that individuals will have their own personal interests that may not be associated with the well-being of the organisation. This will hamper the development of corporate communication. Ford and Backoff (1988) identified that what will be said at one level of the hierarchy and what may be said at another level will create contradictions. There is, however, the opportunity to construct and use a story in differing ways. Some individuals will always be at the tail end of an event and never at the beginning. Frost (1987) argues that this will lead to individuals: withholding, overloading, circumventing, and deception. Those individuals who hear the story may not have the ability to distinguish the various interpretations being generated. Boje (1991), claims that there are rules in storytelling, such as, who can tell it, to whom, and where. This idea depends on everyone being aware of these unspoken rules, and acting accordingly. Hannah Arendt believed that the key challenge is that individuals will have to use their experiences to shape a story that changes the mind in the future (cited in Boje, 1999: p: 4). Any unresolved issues should be reduced or removed (Albert, 1983) to improve

communication. By *'disengaging from the past'* (Jick, 1993: p. 197) may improve employee commitment. What if these rules should be broken and unacceptable stories are told?

All verbal speaking communication could be performative in that they consist of speech acts (Searle, 1969). Individuals will seek to get others to pay attention to what they are saying (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Framing and reframing stories will influence: *'what we observe and what we say we observe'* (Franklin, 1988: p. 439)*.* Watson (2000) supports Franklin (1988) who states that as individuals we will make our own sense of what we see before us. Explaining sense-making will require a *'good story'* (Weick, 1995a: p. 61). There is the danger that this may lead itself: *'halfway between fact and fiction'* (Czarniawska, 1998: p. 14). The perception of a 'good story' may encourage individuals to construct fictional accounts. The language may be used as a tool to: '*describe and report on reality'* (Boje et al., 2004: p. 571). Individuals can impose a shared common grasp of their world. The language used to engage with others may distort and provoke underlying problems not previously identified. Bertens: *'rejects the empirical ideas that language can represent reality'* (1995: p. 6). The role of language exerts power in achieving consent and transmitting ideologies (Fairclough, 1995). Armstrong (1995) supports Fairclough stating that stories will be a means of control and disempowerment. If true, this will place organisational actors at an advantage on how open people will be to both message sending and message receiving (Dansereau & Markham, 1987). Socially constructed language practices will produce and reproduce with the intent of fragmenting the internal workplace. Antonio and Kellner (1994: p. 145) argue that the use of *'power [and] knowledge relationships'* will be used as a means of recognising the views of the social world.

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Summary – The Key Factors

The way in which people use language to construct and engage their social environment will be a powerful tool. It will create the intention to influence and manipulate by any means necessary. This may encourage inaccurate information to help create uncertainty and mistrust between the different social environments.

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5.2.5 The Exchange of Recursive Internal Narratives

The predominant use of stories within any social environment in particular and the use of stories with ambiguous endings may lead to negative circumstances. Can a story have as strong an impact when delivered through the grapevine? How will people get their stories around the formal organisational obstacles? In such situations of *'divide and conquer',* the internal location will offer the individual(s) the opportunity to take advantage of the ambiguous setting. The absence of any senior management, being invisible around the

business, will provide an individual an opportunity to impose his or her own rules, values, beliefs, and behaviour without being challenged. A further concern relates to the internal politics. Such as an individual's aim may be to create a personal status upon which to construct stories that may be inaccurate and misleading.

Bateson (1995) claims that the same characters identified in one story will be mirrored in another. There will be a sense of overlap, which may incur a series of multiple interpretations. He suggests the use of recursive stories may cause distortions to occur as they double-loop around the various social networks. An individual will be aware that they are responsible for images, and feelings of perceptions. This element will *'enhance their own position'* (Nord & Jermier, 1992: p. 215) to increase their power over others. Bateson viewed: *'recursive patterns of communication as the basis of order in both natural and human domains'* (1995: p. 1). He claims that all individuals and social groups can learn about the world through understanding about the contexts in which those events take place. Through the process, habituated behaviour will change. This may produce a conflicting outcome to the internal setting. He goes on to suggest that the use of power will influence individuals' *'social behaviour'* (Ibid: p. 44). A cause and effect reaction in the social interaction will give rise to more power to the individual. People will encounter difficulties when engaging in a different environment. Having highlighted how social and organisational changes can affect the pattern of interaction, he argues that people will use their *'powerful interaction'* (Ibid: p. 45) to control the flow of information. This may only affect the individual within their relevant level of responsibility. He argues that individuals will attempt to pull together all the truths about what appears to be the whole story. In constructing a series of stories people will engage in: *'maintaining, strengthening or revising'* (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: p. 626) their story. It is uncertain how individuals will be able to identify who: *'speak[s] [the] truth?'* (Grey & Mitev, 1995: p. 76). The outcome of the stories should be to achieve and ensure cooperation. Watson argues that some people will: *'talk about these [stories] in language which few people [can] understand'* (2000: p. 390). Therefore, an individual who recognises that they can influence those who do not converse in the same language will encourage an uncritical acceptance of the storyteller's point of view.

Tietze et al. posit that stories will be used to: *'shape a particular image or to create a particular set of values'* (2003: p. 49). They continue to suggest that stories should represent a continuous process of how meaning is made, and values will be shaped. Unaware of the possible implication: *'different departments or sections [will] be working to different interpretations'* (Marchington, 1995: p. 63). Tietze et al. propose that stories will

convey: *'attitudes, values an effective and persuasive way of communicating ideas about how people in organisation can make sense'* (2003: p. 144). Gramsci (1986) disagrees that people will be coerced to concede power and control to another group or an individual. The individual will convince those people to accept their claim to power. This method influences the way in which individuals': *'think, feel, and behave'* (Tietze et al., 2003: p. 149). Silverman and Jones (1976) support Tietze et al. (2003) stating that it will manipulate and shape people's emotions. It is uncertain whether this will generate an *'inclusively or exclusively'* (Fairclough, 2000: p. 36) collective identity.

Summary – The Key Factors

The variance of a social environment can be an advantage on how a story can be distorted by an individual. This action will cause an internal setting to fragment. The presence of divisional politics and the individual's associated in constructing these stories will enforce multiple interpretations in an attempt to encourage uncertainty. This motion may influence the internal environment and the behaviour of those in the proximity. This will cause instability and conflict on a wider dimension.

5.2.6 Summary of the Literature Review

This chapter provides an appreciation of the phenomenon of storytelling. The view that a troubled environment can be an ideal location for stories to be created, shaped and shared between people. The use of stories and the style of language will influence how individuals communicate with each other. It will also illustrate how management practices linked with corporate communication can aid or obstruct communication. It also shows how staff will put management under scrutiny. Differences in how individuals observe the dynamics of others' behaviour will be an important factor. Individuals who recognise the differences will: *'change the rules of the game'* (Chattell, 1995: p. 7). Therefore, to suggest that communication can be contained will be an inaccurate statement. Research has confirmed that the relationship between the use of language and the stories shared within an organisational setting will offset the making of its supposed culture. The core of the business may be changed to new domains, which will change the culture.

Individuals who have a fluent vocabulary will have the power to manage the social environment. The importance is to identify the differences and understand the impact that this will have in the workplace. The circumstances will demonstrate the strengths and limitations in the use of stories. The use of inappropriate hearsay stories will explain why people do not engage in communication. The power behind a story will be *'what is not said, and not yet shared'* (Boje, 1991: p. 107) to help gain acceptance. These emerging and

changing fragments will be influenced by management practices. This will lead to a multitude of misinterpretations that has no clear benefit to the organisation.

The political influence that circulates around an organisation will seek to create an advantage edge by the storyteller(s). These stories will be used to persuade individuals that may lead to disempowerment, mistrust, and demoralise an environment. These supposedly shared understandings, will be accepted, or refuted by managers.

This research should be considered and treated as a catalyst to change the way in which stories are conveyed in the organisation. Resistance to change the existing environment will require management and staff to change. This will be a long process, and it should not be anticipated to be a quick turnaround. The implications will manipulate a change in the organisation's culture. This will change how people behave and engage towards each other. Directing the process will involve managing the exposure of the internal politics. The aim will be to restore the social environment and culture ready to move forward. In consideration, this aspect will help to achieve the organisation's goals and objectives. Some individuals will be unconvinced that the problems are the result of these internal stories. The ability to distinguish between the types of stories being circulated will indicate what is effecting the corporate communication. The fixation on the content of a story contributes to the distribution of mistrust and apprehension between the working relationships. There will be causes obstructing the efforts to sustain and foster *'trust'* in the workplace. For trust to prevail in the workplace, people should be managed so they feel safe to collaborate. This will allow management to lead the organisation to a better outlook, and therefore, may improve corporate communication.

5.2.7 The Role of the Literature Review – Its Association with the Research Questions and Objectives

This section summarises how the literature review is connected with the research questions on storytelling. Focusing on storytelling, trust, and sense-making reveals how a local community will apply understanding to its social environment. The relationship between storytelling and corporate communication illustrates the way in which people are unaware how their thoughts and actions can shape the internal environment. The literature shows that people incorporate stories into a communal dialogue. These collective contributions of anecdotes will introduce inappropriate competitive *'power relations'* (Boje et al., 2004: p. 575) throughout the management hierarchy. This inconsistency will cause the local language to become threatening. Shared understanding will lead to pockets of resistance

within the social environment. This situation encourages individuals to *'transfer blame'* (Boje et al., 2004: p. 575) and further obstacles to the internal workplace.

In an organisational setting individuals will interpret their assumptions based: *'on their observations of the world'* (Nonaka et al., 2006: p. 1181). An action will not be undertaken in isolation. The possibility that a local environment will be perceived as fragmented without warning will change its setting. As an illustration, a company makes an unforeseen announcement about job losses. If there is any doubt concerning the communication by management; staff will interact with individuals from other divisions to compare information. Therefore, the critical choice to change the behaviour and communication pattern may not be motivated by management but by their staff. Such practices will be searched for in the findings of this document.

Corporate communication can be seen to work best when people are similar, or at least on a similar wavelength (Thompson, 2003); a view also shared by Scollon (2000). Scollon remarks that communication works better: *'the more participants share assumptions and knowledge about the world'* (2000: p. 21). Helping to achieve this social consent suggests that the local community is coherent, and simple to construct a shared commitment. It will be appropriate to understand the strengths and limitations of the internal conditions. Therefore, to *'share and question assumptions'* (Franklin, 2003: p. 8) will develop a shared understanding, and appreciation. These internal conditions will include individuals having the ability to express their genuine selves in the workplace *(*Schreiber, 1996). For an appreciation on how people communicate, it will be important to learn about the influences on their behaviour. The thought to *'look at recent incidents when the rules [could] have been broken or disrupted'* (McLean & Marshall, 1988: p. 13) will be significant. An organisation's history can construct and obstruct people's behaviour even after they have lost their benefits (McLean & Marshall, 1988). It is argued that it will be possible to identify the key factors that played a part in the manufacturing of the organisational culture (McLean & Marshall, 1988). The literature and research questions illustrate that the combination of an internal environment and an unexpected event will influence the corporate communication.

5.2.8 Looking Forward to the Research

In the next section, the objective is to determine whether an organisation's internal stories can affect its corporate communication. A story will have several meanings for different people. The view is that these anecdotes will shape an individual's interpretation and behaviour. These variations may never be openly revealed and these elements will remain

undetected to the majority of the organisation's community. A consideration on how an internal workplace influences corporate communication will be important to understand. These views are supported by the collection of stories illustrated in Chapter 5.4.

5.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & METHOD

> *"That particular meeting has created a breakdown in trusting our peers in the team because everyone will want to keep their house in order, and not be tarnished again. But you do go in yourself and focus on protecting your own area, which is wrong to do but you have no choice."*
>
> **Company B1C**

5.3.1 The Setting for Document Five

The location for this participant observation study is one of the company's regional offices – the West Midlands office. The office was chosen for the following reasons.

- It is one of the largest regional multi-disciplinary offices and has 200 employees, and with representation from all the companies outside of London. This is shown in Table 5.
- I am based in the West Midlands office. As such, I am able to undertake a series of participant observations and carry out interviews whilst conducting my day-to-day duties.

5.3.2 How were the Stories Collected?

Method

As a participant observer, I collected a series of workplace stories in a workplace setting that made up the discourse environment of a large multi-disciplinary office of 200 staff. These stories were accumulated through one-on-one semi structured interviews. Other approaches to gather these stories included spontaneous conversations in communal areas (kitchen, print room, and meeting rooms), during lunch breaks, and in the car park. These further methods were used to communicate with the same interviewees.

Location

Over a seven-month (September 2008 to April 2009) period, a series of organisation anecdotes were taped.

Company B1A	Company B1B
Company B1C	Company E1
Company F1	Company H1

Table 5: Divisions based in the West Midlands Regional Office

The interviewees were selected randomly by using the company's Intranet employee listings page. The aim was to select a mixture of representatives from all disciplines across each of the companies. An email was sent to each selected interviewee outlining the

purpose of the communication and asking if they would be willing to participate in the study. Out of the 40 invitations issued within the West Midlands office 31 agreed to take part in an interview with me. The vocational groups that participated in the research are shown below in Table 6. Company B1B was the only company that did not participate in the study. The selected interviewees later advised me that because Company B1B are a new team working in the West Midlands office, their tight deadlines to bring in new project work prohibited them from taking part in the interviews.

Administration	Business Development & Marketing
Civil & Structural Engineering	Commercial Management
Development Planning & Infrastructure	Environment
Fire Engineering	Geotechnical
Information Technology	Intelligent Buildings Group
Mechanical & Electrical Engineering	Project Management
Sustainability	Transport Planning
Vertical Transportation	

Table 6: Participative Research Group

Procedures

All the participants were interviewed individually for approximately 1½ to 2 hours. The data set consists of over 60 hours of tape recording. Where tape recordings were not feasible, briefing notes were used as a supplement. Each of the interview recordings was transcribed. All the transcripts were analysed to find any story embedded in the conversation.

The characteristics of a story chosen to be part of the analysis in Chapter 5.5 were:

(1) a chain of event;

(2) a storyline, and

(3) characters, which the storyteller could interpret as to what was happening.

I was keen to understand the individuals involved in the story. Each participant was asked to tell a story about a work-related event and then discuss the key story elements (i.e. the plot, and the main characters) that framed their supposedly beliefs and assumptions. The interviewees were told that it was not necessary to reveal the name of the character(s) in the story. It would be useful, however, to know the individual's position and the company. The person's position and which company they work for were important because this would reveal that *'power, trust, and status'* were the influence behind these stories. I sought to define what constitutes a 'story'. I believe that all stories have a beginning, middle, and an ending. The links between the segments form the structure of the story. Framing these

segments (information) so that it is understandable, meaningful, and memorable by the listeners. Segments will develop during the 'life' of the story.

The majority of the stories collected were rich in detail. I was reluctant to use any terse stories that left too many things to the imagination. Having established the fundamental elements to analyse a full story, I next turned to the use of incomplete stories. These stories were defined to be incoherent, presented in bits and pieces, and interrupted by too many pauses. These stories would prevent the listener(s) from being able to understand because of the use of someone else's abbreviated codes. Czarniawska (2004) argues that a story should have a series of events that allows the listener(s) to construct a visual picture and make sense of the event. It was not my intention to decipher the basis of the missing information, and shift the meaning. The interchange in between stories will only provide fragments of an event that Weick (1981) refers to as extended glosses. This method of retelling a piece of a story that is similar to minor notes, which the storyteller will use as gloss to highlight an episode, leads to the exaggeration of the sequence of the events.

The Approach used to Analyse the Stories

To analyse the rich material each of the stories was recorded onto 'Post-it' notes. Any repetitive stories were also noted on the 'Post-it notes exercise'. This preliminary exercise was carried out to capture all the stories told by the interviewees identified in Table 6.

By examining the sequence of stories from the interviews, it was possible to connect significant events and key relationships within the organisation. All the interviews were re-read to search for themes that may have remained hidden. Any recurring themes emerging from the stories were also searched for. The outcome of the analysis was the identification of five main categories. All of the categories were found in the majority of the stories. It was possible to verify what percentage of the stories fell into a certain category (**see Appendix One**).

The Process of Narrative Analysis

To construct a clear understanding of the narratives it was important to analyse these stories using a defined group of categories. These codes are explained in more detail below. The focus of these stories is the main characters in each of the events. As discussed earlier I am interested in the use of *'power games'* to influence others' decision-making in a working environment. The approach taken was not merely to recount the events, but to instil them with meaning. I was interested to understand how the facts-as-experience (Benjamin, 1968) could influence each individual's daily activities.

To understand the underlying meaning of the story there were options available to analyse the material. Gabriel (1995) and Boje's (1999) contribution to storytelling were reviewed to compare the type of storytellers in the workplace. These are shown in Section 5.4.2. Based on the work of Gabriel (1995) and Boje (1999) the four types of storytellers were evaluated by the proposed framework, which I adopted (see Table 7).

Boje	Gabriel	Researcher
Superman/Superwoman Leader	Hero	Tarnished Hero
Heroic Leader	Heroic Survivor	Heroic Survivor
Princely Leader	Victim	Victim
Bureaucratic Leader	Object of Love	Villain
		Them & Us

Table 7: Compare and Contrast Internal Organisation Storytellers

In Table 7, the comparison between the type of storytellers shows that Boje's headings and definitions do not fit Gabriel's or my proposed framework. Boje's definition of a *'Heroic Storytelling Leader'* (1999: p. 4) could be a person who likes to be the centre of attention. Eugene Jennings suggests that this individual will never withdraw from a situation until they feel that they are *'no longer needed'* (cited in Boje, 1999: p. 4). Gabriel's interpretation of a *'hero'* (1995: p. 485) will often be perceived as a resourceful, imaginative trickster (Gabriel, 1991a, 1991b). The hero will be a common character in many organisational stories. These individuals can recover from a difficult situation, outsmarting and corrupting their social environment. Their approach to managing other individuals will include instilling charm and spirit into their day-to-day life. These characters will refuse to admit defeat to threats even while pretending to do so. Gabriel's definitions on storytellers were more aligned with the characters identified in the next section. These stories have determined and shaped the above-mentioned framework used to analyse the rich material. I have also introduced three further characters the *'Tarnished Hero'*, the *'Villain'* and *'Them' & 'Us'*. The next section provides further clarification.

5.4 ANALYSIS & DISCUSSIONS

> *"Our guys have been banging their heads against a brick wall for years and years trying to get into clients that **[Company B1C]**, **[Company B1A]**, and **[Company B1B]** have got, and they are very much a closed door reception. But it is only certain people and personality driven, and trying to find a way to communicate with them or go around them or try and work along side them on some projects or just wait until they leave."*
>
> **Company E1**

5.4.1 Who Dares Wins the Game

In an organisational setting, the existence of official and unofficial stories will be part of the social context. These anecdotes will reveal tension and conflict between the official and unofficial communication. As people interact, some individuals will take: *'delight in sabotaging the wishes of the dominant regime'* (McLean & Marshall, 1988: p. 4). Some stories may be more influential than others. The use of these stories will aim to convince the wider audience. The reason to tell and share stories will be a fundamental device of human social sense-making (e.g. Barthes, 1966; Bruner, 1986; Czarniawska, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1988; Weick, 1995a). The nature of such stories and the reason why they are constructed will provide corporate information or political advantage. The outcome will seek greater decision-making control for the storyteller(s). Martin remarks, that if a story is to have a maximum impact then it should be as: *'concrete as possible'* (1982: p. 296).

This document will focus upon aspects of internal stories, which illustrate conflict between official and unofficial stories within the organisational setting. The approach draws upon how people interpret internal stories that they hear. As individuals, we will see things differently, and have our own points of view. What happens when an unofficial story conflicts with an official story or visa versa? There will be times when there is no official story to offset the unofficial account. Therefore, if an unofficial story cannot be confirmed then why is it disseminated? This practice may reveal the power of the office grapevine.

Chart 2 illustrates the five categories, which emerged from the organisation stories. These groupings are explained in more detail in sections 5.4.2 and 5.4.3. McLean and Marshall (1988) identified similar individuals that will be found within an organisational setting. These members were: *'heroes, heroines, villains, and fools'* (McLean & Marshall, 1988: p. 14). They believe that these characters in the stories will illustrate certain aspects of an organisation's culture. These characters may also have implications on an organisation's corporate communication.
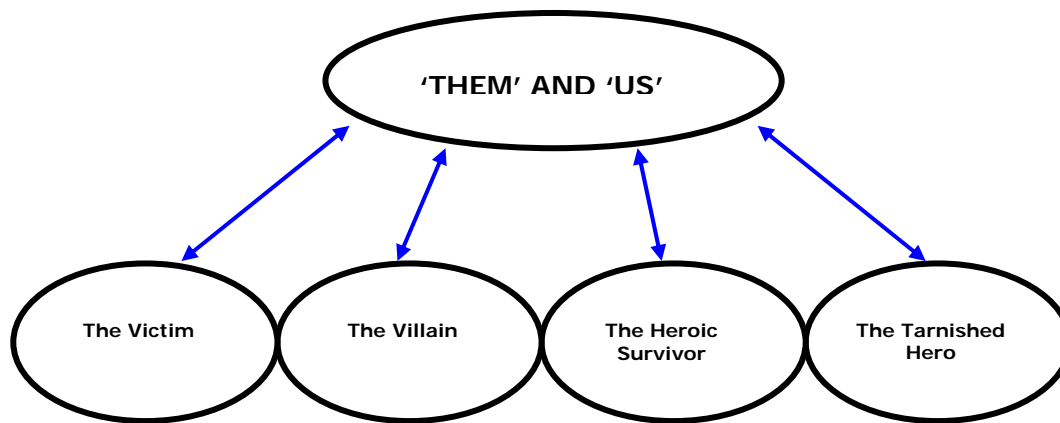
Chart 2: The Five Emerging Characters

Section 5.4.3 provides extracts (*in italics*) from the transcripts, which are cited to illustrate points of interests. This will help the reader to evaluate my interpretation. To preserve anonymity, a combined numeric, and alpha coding refers to each participant.

5.4.2 The Findings and Analysis

The 'Post-it notes exercise' highlighted a rich collection of narratives from the group of interviewees. This is shown in **Appendix Two**. The next stage of the analysis was to arrange the stories into groupings. It became apparent that all the stories had a common theme of 'them' and 'us' that were linked with the structure of the business (see **Appendix Three**). These stories revealed ongoing conflict between each of the companies based in the West Midlands office. The 'them' and 'us' stories were re-grouped to show that where there were conflicts four characters (the Victim, the Villain, the Heroic Survivor and the Tarnished Hero) emerged (**see Appendix Four**).

In the next stage of the analysis the stories gathered were rearranged into sub-groups **(see Appendix Five)**, and in the next section, a collection of the stories describe each of the characters. The objective is to identify what happens when two aspects of the same story conflict with each other. This approach provides an understanding of the type of language used to convey these stories. The purpose is to show the consequences for the organisation for those individuals that have been categorised in the four characters.

5.4.3 The Meaning of the 'Big Five'

The following sections provide an appreciation of the meaning of the five themes. This is illustrated by a series of stories told by the participants. The intention is to draw upon the different interpretations of the stories and the meaning ascribed to each of the events. This will reveal how stories become embedded in the organisation over time. From the

perspectives held here, these stories could change the behaviour in the workplace. This means that I cannot identify which, if any, of the stories are objectively true. To seek if these accounts were true, I would have to have examined multiple participants of the same story. Given the sensitive nature of the data collected, the issue of confidentiality of any interviews would have to be assured. This research, however, studies the way that stories are formed, changed, and interpreted and for this, the objective truth does not need to be known.

The next section provides a sample of extracts from the collected transcripts. I chose the following quotations because these excerpts indicated a common theme of the proposed characters identified in Table 7. This allows the reader to appraise my interpretation of the five characters ('Them' & 'Us', the Victim, the Villain, the Heroic Survivor, and the Tarnished Hero). The following stories provide the opportunity to see the similarity that the stories reveal. These accounts support the central ideas of some of these arguments.

5.4.3a 'Them' & 'Us'

The stories collated relate to unresolved issues between each of the companies. The stories demonstrate how perceptions can be hidden if the matter is not resolved. The following selection of events provides a cross-section perspective from each of the companies.

Company B1A v Company H1

Story N° 1   *"**Director A** in **Company H1** will not move his team out of that little corner and because of that 100 **Company B1A** staff potentially has to move. We could get another 16 people in that corner, but he will not move because he has extra space, which he will not give up. It was suggested that his team could move up onto the mezzanine because they are not in the office very often. It has still not been resolved, but now we have missed our slot to get it sorted before Christmas. **Company E1** and **Company B1C** are not expanding their work areas, but retracting slightly. **Company B1A** has been trying to resolve the problem for months with '**Director A**', but he is holding out. The incident has been circulated around **Company B1A** and has caused mistrust between the two businesses."* **(23X)**

Company B1A v Company B1C

Story N° 2   *"One thing that I can think that probably does get said in a off-the-cuff remark, which is I guess historical is one of the reasons for moving to this office is because we (**Company B1A** and **Company B1C**) did not all talk very well to each other on the two floors, so we all sit here on one floor-plate. But to a certain extent, we are*

still doing the same thing nothing has really changed. The move to here has helped the interaction with all the other [divisions] but I still think we do not do it very well between us." **(29W)**

Company B1A v Company B1A

Story N° 3   **Specialists v Company B1A (AA)**

*"There is still tension between **B1A-SA** and **B1A-SB** against an **(A&A)** Technical Director because he does not ask for help on areas that are unfamiliar with him and leaves us specialists out of the loop."* **(7G)**

Story N° 4   *"I have known it to be 'them' and 'us' within **Company B1A** between **A&A** and **A&B**, when it was just the two cost centres. The **A&A** team based at **Road A** and **A&B** was at **Road B**, and that was certainly a 'them' and 'us'. Even when we all moved into **Road A**, we were split over two floors and the tension was still there."* **(2B)**

Company E1 v Company B1A

Story N° 5   *"There is certainly still a 'them and 'us' feel in the office, which has not changed since moving to these offices, and that is because the perception is that **Company B1A** feel that they can do everything and really do not need to have the assistance from **Company B1C** and **Company E1.**"* **(4D)**

Story N° 6   *"It has improved a lot better since we moved here, but there are still them and us, and there always will be. I think certainly that the **Company E1 (A&C)** side of it has a very good relationship with other people in **Company B1A (A&B)**. However, the same cannot be said for **Company B1A (A&A)."** (***19T)**

Other divisions v Company E1

Story N° 7   *"The 'them' and 'us' do exist, but the 'them' in the office is **Company E1** against the rest of us. If you want to be pedantic about it, it is because they are not part of **Company B1,** but everyone else is."* **(8H)**

Company B1A v the other divisions

Story N° 8   *"I do not sense there is a 'them' and 'us' between **Company B1A (A&A)** and **(A&B)** because they are pretty much part of us! The 'them' and 'us' are the people on the other side of the grey-brick road."* **(5E)**

Story N° 9   *"**Company B1A (A&A) + (A&B) v Company E1** is similar to **Company B1B**. We are along way down in their priorities because they do not do a lot of work with us, and what we are asking of them is probably quite small value wise. However, I think that needs pushing a little bit within our organisation, because if we are going to get **Company E1** and **Company B1B** involved they cannot afford to have the*

5.4.3b Interpretation and Analysis of Stories

Each of the stories illustrates the lack of understanding between the companies, which has developed into deep-rooted conflict. Employees have told and retold these stories. Each company has a repertoire of such stories. There is an unwillingness to close these past episodes and to move forward. There is also an attitude to focus on negative historical stories. These stories reveal that the working environment is so complex that the communal behaviour can affect the daily life of the office. This means, in a real sense, that the storyteller is controlling other individuals' behaviour. Still, it is important to recognise that these stories are infiltrating hearts and minds over time, and they have changed the working environment. It could be argued that individuals are *'supposed to handle their own affairs'* (Boje, 1994: p. 189). That said there are no working procedures in place to encourage people to change their behaviour. The stories, however, show how a single company office can transform in to a multi-disciplinary office without considering how to ensure that the integration is correctly undertaken. The following accounts (stories 10 and 11) provide a perspective from Company B1A and Company B1C on the change in the West Midlands office.

Story N⁰ 10   *"The way in which we have acquired people and the people we have acquired recently has improved the way in which the whole acquisition process and also the coordination across the [divisions] and the integration and that sort of thing has improved. Whereas, in the **'Smith & Smith'**, **Company B1C** day when it was seen as a hostile takeover and we were in their offices and everything else. I don't think it was – it was a merger, but it was seen to individuals because we (**Company B1A**) were in **Road B** and they (**Company B1C**) were in **Road A** – we moved into their office. So, there is a bit of history in the sense of us coming into their office. We (**Company B1A**) were given some space within their office – so that's why there is this whole business of this kind of our school kid desks – where this is my half of the desk and that is your half of the desk, so sit on your half of the desk and do your work."* **(17Q)**

Story N⁰ 11   *"I know some of the history anyway because I use to work for **'Smith & Smith'** (**Company B1C**), so I was part of the company that merged for one of a better word with **Company A1**. But the story on the cards in them days I guess was **'Smith & Smith'** did not have any money so it was not really a merger I think **Company A1** just took us over."* **(29W)**

It is clear that there has been a problem with how Company A1 acquired Company B1C. People in Company B1C who were interviewed for this study have the view that the merger with Company A1 was a hostile takeover. This event has created a misinterpretation, by those affected, in the way that they construed the merger process. I was unable to confirm if any attempt (local level or senior level) was made to integrate the new business into the organisation. This omission may have caused the apprehension.

5.4.3c The 'Victim'

The stories here illustrate how an individual's treatment can be based on being *'guilty by association'* for one reason or another. The following stories show how a group or an individual can be labelled unfairly. The stories focus on one division, Company E1.

Story N° 12   *"Obviously, being in Admin you get to know lots of different people in the office, and you might make a comment about something, and they may joke back with 'oh yes, well you are the naughty corner. Everybody knows that **Company E1** is naughty and loud…' I try to look at it from other people's point of view and I suppose we are – not naughty, but we just get on. The naughty corner comment generally comes from individuals in **Company B1A**, and I think that is because they are the biggest. I think out of all the companies again, my perception from what I have been told is that they are quite serious. So, whether it is for that reason I do not know. The comment about **Company B1A** is more serious came from a member within **Company B1A**. I do not know why that is. I think it is perceived that if you are laughing then you are not working, and that is not right. I mean you can come to work and have fun."* **(10J)**

Story N° 13   *"I do not want to use the term **Company E1** bashing but there is a little bit of that that goes on occasionally from certain people and some of those people can be quite senior. We do not get it from the junior guys at all because I play on the office football team, and we do not hear it at that level. But there can be some negative stuff fed down and those opened my eyes a little bit to then look more at what some of our guys including senior ones say in **Company E1**. Again, I have been to the **Company E1** conference this year, and the Business Unit Managers' Away Day is in a few weeks time. There have been many other occasions where I have sort of listened to that and there is still some friction between some people at that level. Again, it did seem to point to be personality driven. You just have to be careful that negativity is not spread down to the teams."* **(19T)**

5.4.3d Interpretation and Analysis of Stories

These stories reveal that individuals working in other companies such as Company B1A have prejudged Company E1 because they do not fit in with the rest of the business. It is uncertain what it is about this company that makes them the victim. The way in which a

company can be treated unfairly may tell us about the culture of the organisation. Perhaps parts of a company will: *'be more powerful than others and its culture [may] have a more pervasive influence'* (McLean & Marshall, 1988: p. 11). The animosity continues to affect the relationship between the two companies. In Document Three senior members of Company E1 highlighted similar concerns.

> *"Tend to be treated like sub-contractors and not equal partners."* **(13M)**

> *"Perceived as second class citizens within a multi-discipline business."* **(15N)**

> *"Relationship with Company B1A – treated like a sub-contractor. Less valued relationship."* **(11K)**

The above responses show that misunderstandings continue to be experienced throughout the management structure of Company E1. This will also have affected the individuals involved. The results are supported by the language used to describe Company E1 remain in practice.

Story N° 14   *"Company E1 is a distant cousin, where you only meet up at weddings, christenings, and funerals."* **(9I)**

Story N° 15   *"Company B1A engineers very seldom have anything good to say about Company E1 who are nothing more than tree huggers."* **(13M)**

Story N° 16   *"Company E1 is on one side of the shop because they are very young, shy, insular and probably weak in character, and this is why you can tell at around 3pm the 'tub-aware-club' will be in the kitchen. I must confess that I called them the 'tub-aware-club' and now it is stuck."* (**15O**)

Story N° 17   *"I have always found relationships with Company E1 quite hard. I feel that they are very cliquey and hard to get to know them. I do not know why that is. I get the feeling that they are all stuck up."* **(26Z)**

These excerpts highlight that Company E1 is aware of the perceptions held by the other companies. One of the elements shows that people in Company E1 revel in the attention, especially as they are referred to as the 'naughty corner'.

Story N° 18   *"I know there is certainly an in-house joke within Company E1, that some of the other companies see us coming in wearing jeans, and there is an in-joke that we are the 'naughty corner."* **(4D)**

Story N° 19   *"We have kind of made our own bed by having been called the naughty corner*

because we now just thrive on it! We are kind of a victim because if anything happens in the office the fingers automatically point in our direction." **(14N)**

Owing that Company E1 is the 'naughty corner'; they are blamed for any mishaps that take place. The next account shows how opinions can be expressed against the company without corroboration.

Story N° 20   *"I was in a cross company meeting recently and there were all sorts of levels of people discussing the basement car park. Every [company] was represented at this meeting. The primary discussion was the car park because in recent months it has been untidy with litter. There was this one time recently where a bag of gravel was spilt, and there was this comment made by somebody in **Company B1A** who jumped to the conclusion, 'and of course, **Company E1** always has to sweep up the mess down there…' But, it was just once, and I took offence to the comment, and took a deep breathe to say, 'that it was only a one off, which was quickly resolved and swept up…' We would never leave equipment or anything else in the car park. However, because I was representing us, I did not think I was in a position to defend us because of the level of management it was coming from. I did come back and mention it to my line manager, but I just thought, 'oh, here we go again the naughty corner being pointed out, can't behave themselves, 20-lines detention…' It is my company; so of course, I am going to defend it. I know we are not angels, but everybody is equal on that score. This playground behaviour seems to run a mock in this office, because no one thinks about finding out the facts before passing judgment."* **(10J)**

The difference between Company E1 and Company B1 (UK Division) may be the root of the problem. The main difficulty is that Company E1 (International Division) is a separate business and not part of the UK remit. There is no consistency across the two divisions. Company E1 promotes itself as not being part of Company A1. Staff interviewed from Company E1 support the 'arm's length attitude' from the rest of the business. The international organisation depicts a one-stop-shop culture. However, Company E1's only association with the rest of the organisation is the company name.

*"Oh we are a global business; we have nothing to do with you." (*22W**)**

Company E1 have their own website separate from the rest of the UK business. As part of the group information the UK website incorporates all the companies that form Company A1 including Company E1. The international business site only mentions their global integrated division. The site states the number of people as:

'1,100 people across 65 locations.' (Company E1)

Some individuals can be pigeonholed just as simply as can a division. The following two stories show how another person treats an individual unfairly by the use of their position.

Story N⁰ 21 *"There always seems to be a lot of criticising against us (**Company B1A**) from **Company B1C**. Perhaps I hear it from people. I tend to hear things from people. Let me give you an example, the small kitchen as in keeping it stocked up with tea, coffee, and sugar. Now it has always been **'Staff A' (Company B1C)** perception that **'Staff B'** should do that and I have to say this overflows from **Road A**. I think he use to do it at **Road A** just to try to keep the peace, he said to me. However, at this office we have the delivered milk go into the main communal kitchen. Recently, there was a complaint made that the paper keeps running out for the printers and the refreshments for the little kitchen. Obviously, being **'Staff Bs'** line manager, **'Manager A'** got me involved and **'Manager B'** was involved because there was an official complaint sent by email from **Company B1C**. I did not receive a copy of the email as his line manager. I said that I understand where they are coming from as in **Company B1C** admin was not very happy that they always have to fill it up and fetch paper. So I said, let us go for a compromise. I said, I would ask **'Staff B'** to ensure that there is paper by the printers at all times for them, but someone else is going to have to take on responsibility for the kitchen. I know it sounded very petty but at the end of the day why should it be **'Staff B'** doing all these little odd jobs. The reception girls stock their own kitchen up and they do not complain. Perhaps I am in a lucky position to use the main big kitchen and it is there for me. So, we went for a compromise and I spoke to **'Staff B'**. He said that he was happy to do the paper, but had I have asked him to do the refreshments then he would not have done it for the simple fact that **'Staff A' (Company B1C)** had been telling him for months that it was his job. On the day that this email of complaint went out saying this there had been a bit of a run-in on the morning with **'Staff A'** and **'Staff B'**. So, I would say that sparked it off. **'Manager B'** said that **'Staff B'** could do the paper and he would get the reception girls to ensure the stocks were kept up the small kitchen. I did say, not that I wanted to point the finger because I do not like to feel that you are pointing the finger, especially when we are all in the same office. I asked **'Manager B'** why we could not ask one of **Company B1C** admin girls to do it. However, he felt it would cause too much repercussions and complaints that it was not worth the hassle. He felt that if the **Company B1C** admin girls were to stock up the small kitchen, that it would be construed as belonging to them only.*

*Therefore, that is where we got to in this particular event. To me that was so silly because I think this has been a bee in **'Staff A'** bonnet that **'Staff B'** should do this, and that. However, at the end the day, he is not the odd job man and he actually does do things outside of his remit. He also does the recycling, which he does not*

have to, but he just does it. I think there has always been a problem with 'Staff B' and Company B1C. However, what I cannot get my head around is that goes back to 'Staff B' and 'Staff A' days, which is years before I started. Although, how come the staff that come in new now still have that same attitude towards 'Staff B'. I know this sounds silly, but where upon the line is this information being passed to say putting it bluntly, 'it is him and us'. Those two is like a red rag to a bull, and I do not think that will ever change. I do not know when that relationship started because when I started with Company A1, he was in Road B. Therefore, it could only have started when he was transferred to Road A, and they have obviously clashed from day one." **(21V)**

Story N° 22   *"Certain people in the building treat 'Staff B' very badly, and they are particularly from Company B1C. They treat him like something they have stepped in. On more than one occasion, I have stood between them and him, but its people that I did not expect to behave in such manner. As my mum always tells me, 'you are never judged by how you treat your superiors or your peers, it is how you treat people who are beneath you...' I know people may see his job as not being of high value superficially. However, nothing would be done if he did not do the post, binding and photocopying. Superficially, his job is much more low level and some people treat him as though he is scum and it is not fair. I have had to step in sometimes. Then people will use another route, because 'Staff B' will not bring the milk up to all the kitchens. These petty items are raised at the cross-company meetings that 'Staff B' will not fill the printers up over the other side of the office although he does provide paper. 'Staff B' is a shared-resource, but he is kept in Company B1A almost for his own protection, because at least he has people in Company B1A to look after him. In addition, the sooner that 'Staff A' retires the better, because she is the main one. She is very old school, and expects everyone will do as she says, and will not bend an inch."* **(23X)**

These stories indicate how a person influences other people's behaviour towards another person. The stories reveal that little effort has been made to resolve this problem. This habitual behaviour by staff in Company B1C has created a group attitude. This way of thinking by Company B1C will affect the behaviour within the local setting. It is uncertain how this attitude began and why it continues to affect the individual. The same person named for this story (Staff A) said,

Story N° 23   *"In regards to internal stories, if they are historical and have no bearing on newcomers into the business then what is the point of telling them? If it is a story that is 'well we use to do this way but now we do it that way' then maybe that is important. However, being someone with history like me, I tend not to dwell in the past. I do not think about Road A, and I never mention Road A. The only time I*

would talk to somebody about the past is somebody who was in that past with me and we were reminiscing. I cannot imagine me ever reminiscing about anything to do with work apart from the odd thing or two. I think it is important not to." **(16P)**

The conflict between the two individuals continues to take place. Other personnel have observed a similar manner towards 'Staff B' by other members of staff working for Company B1C. The story disapproves that 'Staff A' has stopped the discussions about 'Staff B'. The event also shows how an individual can influence other personnel to behave towards another person who is less appreciated.

Some individuals, females, will use the victim-card to influence other personnel within their own company that the other females exploit them, which are illustrated here.

Story N° 24   *"Obviously, I was introduced to some people, but not everyone and I knew a couple of people from when I did my work experience, which were 2-years prior. It was not really stories, but just feelings and you would get bits of discussions about they have not done this or they do not want to do that. These stories were filtered from different individuals, in particular the (**Company B1A**) admin team. I obviously know how we work, how we work as a team, how we work with the admin team, and what we can get them to do for us. The general things that we would do, they (meaning, **Company B1C**) would not do or do not want to do. Obviously, they are going to work differently because they are a different [division], but simple things just seem to be… like, our admin girls now book travel for us, train tickets etc., but certain people in **Company B1C** and **Company E1's** admin team do not want to do that. So, what is happening is they are coming back over to us, as in **A&A**, which stems back from **Road A**. **Company B1A's** admin team will do 'xyz', but **Company B1C** will only do 'x', which I understand each company works differently and recently we have had to think what roles we would want the admin girls to do. We had team meetings and it was proposed that a switch around would be necessary, which included having dedicated admin staff for the various teams. We did already have this before, but it was raised, what else we would want the admin girls to do for us. We had to put forward suggestions to help the team, but that is obviously our side in terms of **Company B1A**. Nevertheless, I am not too sure, what they do for **Company B1C** and **Company E1** side. However, I did not think they, **Company B1C** and **Company E1** had any impact to the **Company B1A** admin team, but that is the story they have told me."* **(20U)**

Story N° 25   *"I do worry, not worry... I do sometimes think that the **Company B1A** Admin girls, our girls are put-on because they do a lot of work and then you have the girls in **Company B1C** who have only a few people over here. I think our girls; I must sound over protective do a lot more because they literally look after the building.*

*They do not just look after **Company B1A**. If anything goes wrong in the office, it's always our girls that sort it out. I think that is why the **Company B1A** girls do not do the office fire drill as they have made the others take it on."* **(2B)**

These accounts demonstrate how the administration team has been able to use their position within Company B1A. The administration team is not a shared resource between the various companies. Each company has their own support team for their respective personnel. Company B1A's administration team; however, have avoided carrying out their duties for the teams by telling inaccurate stories. Using these stories has created power for the administration team. Their actions provide further tension, and misconceptions of 'them' and 'us', between the other companies, Company E1 and Company B1C.

5.4.3e The 'Villain'

The next two stories illustrate how a person's position and power can make others vulnerable and mistrust the social environment.

Story N° 26 *"We have a regular Health & Safety (H&S) review meeting. Management always refer to other offices, and for us I think that maybe **'Regional office A'** is the kind of key office that you have to try to aspire to, and that is the sort of thing that is always communicated to us at every meeting. There is no kind of evidence to back that statement but after hearing it mentioned at every single meeting then you do change your mind. However, they are the aspiration office that is being drilled into us. That story is generated by the monthly profit reports from each office that is communicated throughout **Company B1C**. However, it is promoted because we have **'Director B'** obviously, **'Director C'**, who were both based originally from there, and they have turned it around to be a successful office. So, there is a strong influence between those two Directors. I guess that is kind of positive but when you constantly hear it quite a bit and it always happens that you think 'oh it's them again why could it not be another office…' Then you get the flippant comment like 'Regional office A is not doing so well this month so keep that up…' Therefore, that is the yardstick to keep the hope that we [West Midlands] might get a better result. Though may be they are perfect in everything, and that is what we have to achieve. I do not know, but there must be other things. I mean, we are not even the same size office. **'Regional office A'** is twice the size of the West Midlands office and the aim now is to get us on the same par as **'Regional office A'**. Ever since I started which is now 8-years ago **'Regional office A'** has always been a big office, whereas the [West Midlands] office was much smaller than what we are today. Both offices have grown over the years, but we will always lag behind them. It is nice always coming second to **'Regional office A'**. But maybe it is the same in **'Regional office B'** and wherever you go – management maybe using the same line at all the offices to get the same reaction.*

I bet if we went down individually and worked in **'Regional office A', 'Regional office B'** *or any of the other offices for a week I bet there is not a great deal of difference in terms of working and the attitudes to the work. There may be other factors why they are doing better in certain areas but until you see if for yourself you really do not know. This is a classic example, because* **'Regional office A'** *has held on to the number one position for so long that there is obviously something to be learnt or shared amongst other offices but why is it not being shared to the rest of us? Now, all we hear is that they are doing this, but you never hear why or how, and no one is elaborating on their success. Considering this is a good story it is not being cascaded to the rest of the offices. In terms of* **'Director C',** *he is seen to be maybe the one that has the secret. He is coming to us and trying to disseminate and spread it around without divulging what it is."* **(18S)**

Story N° 27   *"I think in [West Midlands] that we feel like we are classed a second rate office. There are offices within* **'Company B1C'** *that you feel are rammed down your throat about how brilliant they are like* **'Regional office A'** *– 'oh they are so great in* **'Regional office A'** *- they are a brilliant office…' So, there are stories like that that gets bantered around. I personally hearing them makes me feel hacked off."* **(29W)**

5.4.3f Interpretation and Analysis of Stories

These two stories reveal how two senior personnel used a story to undermine other regional offices and reinforce the perception that they cannot be as good as 'Regional office A'. The use of this success story is intended to create a label that will differentiate the other offices. The story seeks to share the secret of success but the views of the interviewees disagree over their reasons. To repeat the same story will create an insecure working environment. These individuals' status can be recognised as a tool, which encourages the story to be embraced in the various regional offices. This social phenomenon reflects a collective interpretation by the intended listeners. There has been no attempt by the receivers to confirm if the understanding is accurate. Individuals have interpreted the story based on their own experience and the observation of their local management. This story has created a communal symbol to explain its meaning. The anecdote has created a pattern of perceptions to a real-life event. The rhetorical technique to influence the listeners will be to repeat the same story.

This 'success story' (symbol) could be a perfect hook because there is little evidence to say otherwise. This story was used as a deterrent tool against the other regional offices. The two storytellers (Directors) have the satisfaction of reaffirming the success of the regional

office – though they are no longer based there. The reason to share this story will be to demonstrate both the directors' loyalty to 'Regional office A'. The story revealed the determination to protect the reputation of a successful office, and the assurance to do anything to maintain their *'championship league title'*.

Manipulating others by the use of an elaborate story will have an affect on the intended listeners. The following story draws upon the Resilience Plan (redundancy process) undertaken throughout Company B1 (UK Division) and Company E1 (International Division) from February to May 2009. The outcome of the redundancy process shows how a fictitious story will affect the level of trust between management and staff. The following commentary is based upon my personal experience during the announcement of the Resilience Plan. This perspective is on the actions taken by the management of Company B1A.

This event began with an official story presented by the management from each of the companies. The first communication by email (Friday 13 February) informed all staff that there was to be a staff meeting on Monday 16 February. The following week each of the companies (Company B1A, Company B1C, and Company E1) had a staff meeting with their respective personnel. The only company not to have a meeting with their staff was Company B1B. It was not until later that staff was informed of the exclusion. At the meeting all personnel were told how the economic downturn was affecting the organisation, and that currently management were seeking to make some cost savings across the business. The emphasis in the staff meeting, which was repeated several times by management, was that: *"people are the most valuable assets of the company."* Anyone who heard the communication will have known that people are the prime operating cost for an organisation. Each company representative said: *"management wanted to include staff in this difficult time"* and suggested that staff had a week to put forward any ideas that could help save the company money, and the meeting would re-convene in a week's time to discuss the submitted ideas in more detail. The following stories offer an insight of the views of three individuals on the actual sequence of events. I should highlight that this event was the first time that I had witnessed collaboration between the companies. To help compare the official stories received from the respective management staff began to talk openly with each other.

Story N° 28   *"Our core values are supposed to demonstrate how we are to behave and work with one another and it is not working. I mean, we have just had a classic with the redundancy process. A meeting was called over a week ago to inform staff that they were looking to having to make cuts. They wanted staffs suggestions on what*

we could do. Everybody was asked to go away and think about it, and we would meet again the following Monday to talk about it and see what suggestions had been put forward. So, everyone went away, and had a week of worry. They came up with thoughts and ideas, and turned up the following Monday. Staff put all these suggestions forward and all of them were dismissed or they had already thought about it, and already considered it. However, not one suggestion was taken up or even attempted to discuss with staff, and management announced that they were going to have to lose staff, and some of us will have to go under consultation, and we do not know who you are yet. So, we all walked out of that meeting thinking what the heck was last Monday all about it was a scam! It was a cover-up. I think the company has done it with the best intentions but actually, it backfired because people are not stupid. Now that it is all out, they know and feel a bit cheated because nobody likes bad news but sometimes bad news delivered out-of-the-blue is a kind of way of prolonging it because they had a week where everybody was worrying when 90% need not to have worried. It was extended for another week of deceit and worry to circulate the business when it was clear the management had already made their mind up which was clear from none of the suggestions even considered. It was clear that they were not even going to look at the suggestions put forward, and now straight away there is relief with people but now an element of distrust is in the air. I do not think that is good because the atmosphere has been tarnished." **(16P)**

Story Nº 29   *"The whole redundancy process, oh sorry, the resilience plan was one big joke. The first I heard about these redundancies was when my line manager rang me to say that she had to speak to me face to face urgently. However, before she could see me I had already found out because of the first staff meeting had taken place. When my manager eventually did come and see me she was very cagey at our meeting – even after I asked her if I was at risk. If she had just been more up front then I would have respected her more, but to travel all the way from London to the [West Midlands] and still not be open and honest with me… then that just takes the biscuit. What made it worse was these so-called-inclusive meetings with staff and making us feel part of the process when in fact they had already made their minds up weeks or even months ago. So what happened to our bloody core values? Oh let me guess they were on sabbatical."* **(24Y)**

The event should have communicated a cohesive 'state-of-the-nation' message and proposed measures to engage staff in the consultation about a cost saving exercise. The outcome of the process was hampered because the decisions appear to have been finalised prior to meeting staff. An atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion prevailed and people began to spend time sharing stories. The following account (No. 30) from a senior staff member confirms that the feelings expressed by the above mentioned were accurate.

Story N° 30   *"We (**Company B1A**) had two meetings prior to the first resilience announcement to staff. We already knew and had the list of job roles that were at risk within our company, but was sworn to secrecy. We were told that all the companies were doing exactly the same thing. Oh, except for **Company B1B** they are the only company not in the same position as everyone else. In fact, they are looking to recruit because they have so much work on. So you don't know how stressed I was in having to still conduct my duties and at the same time knowing that I was going to have to let go some of my team. So yes, the whole performance of the staff meetings was just a protocol because we had to."* **(17Q)**

During the redundancy process, the need to demonstrate understanding was disregarded by the management team from Company B1A and Company B1C. The idea that management made the decision to delay meeting with staff appears to have been inconsiderate.

5.4.3g The Official Internal Announcement

Between the first and second staff meeting held during the Resilience Process there was no official communication from the UK Chairman, although according to one interviewee:

> *"I believe there was supposed to be an announcement by the UK Chairman initially but that never happened."* **(30V)**

A few weeks after the second staff meeting had taken place the following two messages were published on the Company Intranet. Table 8 shows sections of a statement from the Chief Executive informing staff of last year's successful financial performance, and Table 9 is a message from the UK Chairman.

We announce a successful year, but challenges lie ahead

This morning we announced our Financial Results for 2008, reporting on a good year for Company A1. Revenue increased by 36%, we successfully integrated the new businesses that joined the Group in 2007 and started to develop our new division – Management and Industrial.

However, it cannot have escaped anyone's attention that we now find ourselves in unprecedented and very challenging times. 2009 will be a difficult year. Despite the positive achievements of the last year, we are not immune to the developments that have hit the markets in which we operate.

While some of our markets, like Transportation and Energy, are holding up well, others are suffering from the global economic downturn, with clients forced to put projects on hold or delay investment.

Last year's excellent performance leaves us in good shape, and now we must protect our current strong position. In the next few weeks, we will publish a strategy document to explain our plan for addressing the current challenges. This will focus on the operational priorities of providing the best service to clients, maintaining a healthy cash flow, and ensuring we match costs to revenue.

Thank you all for your hard work and support during 2008, which has placed us in a strong position to overcome any challenges that the coming year will bring and respond rapidly when markets improve.

                                                                                          2 March 2009 – Company A1

Table 8: Corporate News by CEO, Company A1

This message (Table 8) from the Chief Executive was the only official communication received informing staff of the state of the business. It is anticipated that the relevant senior directors will already have been aware of this information. The message talks about keeping external clients happy to ensure that the budgets will be maintained. There is no mention of the Resilience Process or staff well-being. The proposed strategy mentioned was to downsize the number of personnel in the business to reduce the salary bill.

Communication from UK Chairman

Early last week the **CEO**, with **Group Financial Director** and **International Managing Director, E1**, announced the Financial Results for Company A1 for 2008. In the context of the past few months, which have not been easy for any of us, some of you may have been surprised to learn that on paper 2008 was a good year for Company A1, with a 36% increase in revenue compared to 2007.

Whilst some businesses are affected more than others, the impact has not just been felt in our business units but applies to support areas as well, across all levels of staff, from our UK Executive Committee downwards. The process is difficult for all concerned, especially those of us directly affected, but I can assure you that the steps we are taking are absolutely essential to ensure that we remain resilient through the recession and emerge stronger in the longer run.

I would like to thank you all for your continued dedication and hard work and remind you that client care, both internal and external, is the key to our future success. Communication on the measures we are taking to further streamline our Business, reinforce our market position, and differentiate our products, will follow in the next few weeks.

9 March 2009 – Company F1

Table 9: Corporate News by UK Chairman, Company F1

This communication (Table 9) is the only official announcement from the UK Chairman after the initial two staff meetings. The message is carefully worded so as not to mention the redundancies. There is no reference to staff welfare or acknowledgement of the cost saving ideas that were suggested by staff, and no explanation as to why they were rejected. The emphasis of the communication focuses on maintaining client care.

Chairman's Statement – People

At the end of the year, we employed over 10,000 people and we are continuing to recruit personnel to handle work in sectors where we have a growing presence, such as energy, sustainability, water, process engineering, and rail.

However, we have also had to make reductions to staff operating in the private sector and it is likely that further cuts will take place as we adjust our resource to align with our revenue. It is with a natural reluctance that we have to release some of our valued workforce and we are conscious of the need to handle these both professionally and sensitively.

Chairman, 5 March 2009

Table 10: Chairman's Statement, Company A1 Annual Report 2008

The précis in Table 10 is the Chairman's Statement from the Annual Report (Company A1, 2008: p. 4). The statement provides an honest explanation compared to the internal messages communicated to the staff. This statement was published prior to the UK Chairman's communication. It is unclear as to why the language used for the communication to staff should be indirect and vague while the communication to the external business market is clear and precise.

5.4.3h Keeping Up Appearances

Company B1A staff received an email (Table 11) from the Managing Director asking them to participate in an external opinion survey for the 'Good Employers Guide Award'.
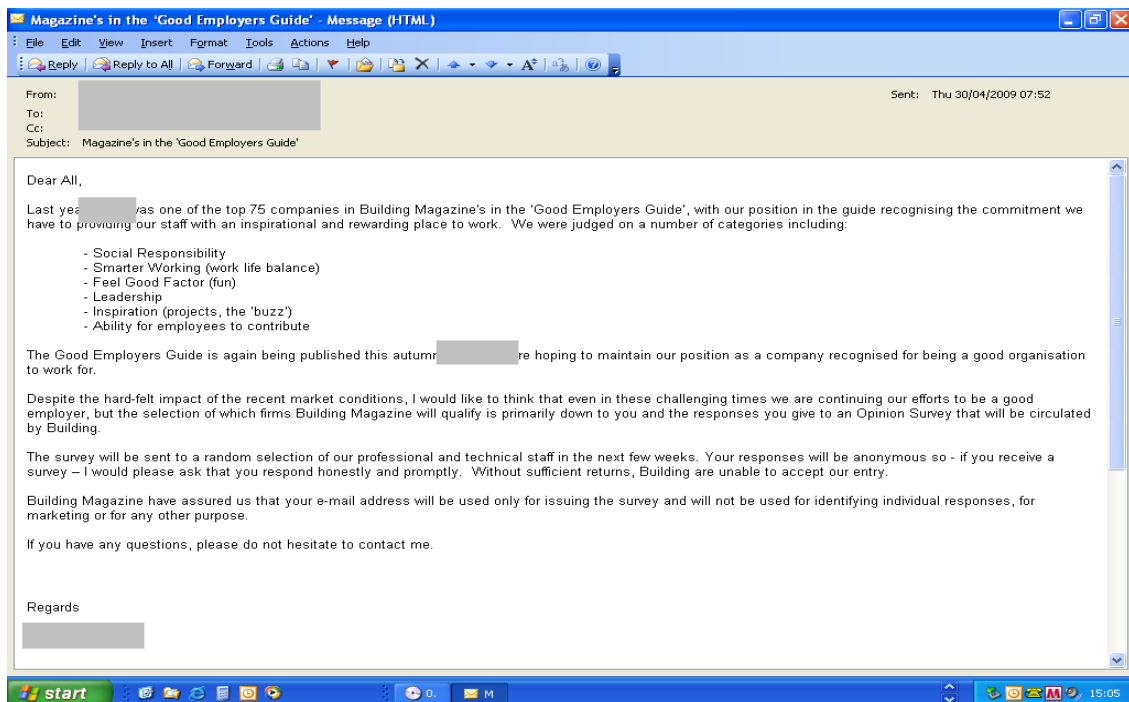

Table 11: The Good Employers Guide Communication

There was some discontentment when staff received this email. Staff members throughout the disciplines in Company B1A echoed this sentiment. As one director said:

Story N° 31   *"We've not seen **'Managing Director B1A'** since these redundancies started and he's made no attempt to visit any of the offices but now finds time in his busy diary to send this email asking us to basically lie about how good the company is when motivation is at a low because staff are apprehensive about losing their jobs."*

(**Director D**, Company B1A)

5.4.3i The 'Heroic Survivor'

The stories selected demonstrate how a group or an individual can be blamed when an incident that results in an unacceptable outcome cannot be resolved.

Story N° 32   *"You obviously want to be the best unit you can be and in the [West Midlands] office, we think, yep, we are doing really well here – we're making lots of profit, and we're doing well our clients like us. Then the hospital job came along and because we gave a portion of it to the **'Regional office C'** they not necessarily cocked up the job, they didn't cock it up at all, but they did not hold the Client's wishes and didn't keep the client informed about the job. They didn't design really,*

what they should have designed. They kept the Client out of the loop, which was **'Word & Word'**, *so they kept them out of it. They didn't do a brilliant job and* **'Word & Word'** *all this time was always talking to our office saying,* **'Regional office C'** *is rubbish, they're not doing the right things, they're not doing it correct, all this is doing wrong. So, all that was falling back to us, but because we were employing them – we then had to feed that back to* **'Regional office C'** *and tell them they were not doing the job right. The* **'Regional office C'** *was then saying, 'that we are doing a good job… we are doing all this and all that…' protecting themselves. In the end,* **'Word & Word'** *– the Client got annoyed with* **'Regional office C'** *and said, 'right – give it to [West Midlands] to do…'*

Now there is a conflict there – is that [West Midlands], particularly the **'A&A'** *team, which I work in; we perhaps don't like* **'Regional office C'** *as much. We don't particularly enjoy working with their engineers. The trust has completely gone now because we don't trust* **'Regional office C'** *ever to do any work again. As a consequence of that,* **'Regional office C'** *has ruined what relationship we had with* **'Word & Word'**. *We now have to forge decent relationships there again. It is a shame that happened because it has really made the project a lot more difficult – I think. However, I think it has been partly driven because they didn't do a very good job with the Client, but also because of this forged competitiveness, which is put into each of the companies. Therefore, you want to outperform that company and that company. Everyone wants to outperform London because they are seen as the world's headquarters and they always get the best jobs. We [West Midlands] don't want that to happen, but they [London] don't always deliver the best project. The [West Midlands] is working with the* **'Regional office C'** *again on* **'Project A'**, *which is not in my team but in* **'Manager Cs'** *team. Both offices are working on parts of the design. So it will be interesting to see if any of the guys on* **'Project B'** *have talked about this relationship between [West Midlands] and* **'Regional office C'**, *and it will be interesting to see if any of the* **'Regional office C'** *team who worked on the* **'Project B'** *is on the* **'Project A'** *job. That will be interesting to know."* **(1A)**

Story N° 33 *"The only issues I have working with other offices, not just in Company B1A, but also Company E1, is we do not necessarily get a 100% commitment from the other parties for our respective project. That goes back historically, particularly, with the Company B1A's* **'Regional office G'**. *They did some work on* **'Project C'** *for us and they made a right mess of it. They started with all guns blazing but they ended up doing nothing. So now the* **'Regional office G'** *is now closed, which affect reminisce that it has now gone to* **'Regional office C'**. *Most of the personnel from* **'Regional office G'** *have transferred over to* **'Regional office C'**. *I personally do not have any more dealings with the individuals from the* **'Regional**

office G', but some of my team colleagues do. I am not sure if they have improved on their work delivery. Only time will tell if we were right to trust them again." **(5E)**

5.4.3j Interpretation and Analysis of Stories

These stories show how an office will attempt to protect its own reputation against another office without considering the long-term consequences. The competitive culture has instilled and created a silo way of thinking between the project team members. The evidence suggests that this behaviour will have damaged the relationship between the regional offices. It could not be confirmed that 'trust' existed prior to the event taking place. The growing awareness of the unresolved incident between the three offices (West Midlands, Regional office C, and Regional office G) has not helped to restore the relationships between the various personnel involved in the project. A director points out that:

Story N° 34 *"We [West Midlands office] were left booking time to a **'Regional office C'** job number to sort the problems out on a job because there was not the willingness for people to role their sleeve up and rectify the problem. Therefore, trust goes completely out of the window when you have those sorts of problems. It was a lack of people wanting to roll their sleeves up and solve the problem out. When that happens, we do not like to use that office and wash our hands off them."* **(17Q)**

The challenge is the reluctance to move forward and work as a team because of this one episode. This incident shows how one group alienated another group because of one mistake. In this story, the West Midlands team appointed to resolve the issues did not share with their colleagues in the office why they had taken over another office's project. The incident has not changed the minds of the West Midlands team to work again with 'Regional office C'. This idea of working with only certain offices seems to be a common practice used by other staff within the office. This approach is illustrated by the following story:

Story N° 35 *"There was an incident recently over the last couple of weeks about a job we have on in Scotland, which is about 40 minutes from Glasgow. As you know, we have a **'Regional office D'** and a **'Regional office E'**. This job is going to involve some site visits by an **A&B engineer**, just to go and have a chat with the staff on site, which is like a design team meeting. Obviously, it is not economical for us to travel up from [West Midlands] because it will cost us several hundred pounds per site visit. So, it has been proposed that someone from the **'Regional office F'** will*

*attend. So, I said to my line manager 'what is wrong with the **'Regional office D',** or **'Regional office E''**, which he replied, well there are only key people that we trust. This I found very strange because I have always thought that **'Company A1'** from the time I have been here are quite selective about the staff they employ, they just do not have anybody. The lads on our team are all very good with very high standards. I also know some of the people in **'Regional office E',** one Associate who is very good. I was little bit annoyed at this because you think well, **'Regional office F'** – we might as well go because a train from Newcastle to Scotland is going to be comparable in cost that might be an hour less. However, I can be in Glasgow in 4 hours by car or train. It was a very odd thing to say by my line manager, there are only key people that we trust, but we are all **'Company A1'**. We are not **'Company A1'** [West Midlands], **'Company A1 Region D',** and **'Company A1 Region F'**. I know we get some work in this office from **'Regional office F'** in the past, and I just wondered if it was they scratch our backs and we scratch theirs. I thought that was not economical for the job. I believe the work is going to be done out of the **'Regional office F'**. I appreciate there are some very good people in **'Regional office F'** but it has never been mentioned to me again. It is just sort of gone away without any opportunity to negotiate. Whether that has come from a level above and they have just been told that they will use a particular office because that's the way it is. I do not really know."* **(11K)**

This story indicates that *'this is how things are done here.'* Decisions are made at senior level without the opportunity to discuss the reasoning with other grades of staff. However, this will have created misunderstanding by the staff involved. There has been no consideration given to the use of language to convey the message. The following story shows how the misuse of language can be detrimental for an individual's integrity.

Story Nº 36   *"The story that I was told which sprung to mind was **'Director E'**. Before I met him, I heard from **Manager D** that he was moving to this office. She warned me that a 'trail of destruction' seemed to follow him around on his projects. So, I was expecting to meet somebody who was a scatterbrain. When I first met him was actually when we were both in Belfast for a meeting. The meeting was with **'John & John'** looking at their project – **'Project D'**. We had a tour around the site before the meeting took place. Straightaway I noticed that the amount of people from **'Project D'** – the people who were managing the shopping centre were very keen to get hold of **'Director E'** all the time. He was sort of their go-to man when they had a problem that needed fixing. So, I was expecting him to be a bit more flowery and not committed. However, I thought that was interesting because these people obviously got a lot of confidence in him and he had delivered. I mean just listening to the way he was dealing with them and talking to them on the phone he*

was calm, sorted out the problems and moved onto the next thing. I was pleasantly surprised, which is probably a common feature in a lot of my stories." **(13M)**

This particular occurrence may have had an alternative ending if the storyteller had accepted the stories about the other person. The individual took the view that they would observe the 'character', and find out if the story could be false.

5.4.3k The 'Tarnished Hero'

This selection of stories illustrates heroic accounts. From the listener's perspective they were not the hero as envisaged by the storyteller.

Story N° 37   *"The story that I heard when I first started working in the [West Midlands] office for about a month or two was about this great director **(Director F)** we had. He is excellent in what he does and could get money out of people because I think at that stage the **'Project E'** was in full swing and we were invoicing a lot of fees. I had heard about this magnificent guy who single-handedly is responsible for our bonuses and running the company kind of thing. When I met him although I never worked in his team so I did not really deal with him much on a one-two-one basis, but I saw the way he dealt with people. I was very surprised by his style. His style is very confrontational, very aggressive and he does not have a problem saying something very critical about a person who is right there in front of a load of people. However, this picture I was painted about this great guy – though I was surprise that this kind of stuff was considered good management practice. Over the years, he has been fine with me. I know there are a lot people who have an issue with that but luckily I have not felt the brunt of it, and probably because I do not work in his team. It is interesting that he is viewed as a good characteristic from a business perspective – but that does not necessarily translate into good characteristic on a personal kind of level. There are a few people that I think did not like it and left, which you can easily draw your own conclusions."* **(30V)**

5.4.3l Interpretation and Analysis of Story

Senior management were prepared to overlook inappropriate behaviour because of the individual's skill at bringing in additional profit to the company. The outcome of staff leaving the business because of this director's management style has not prompted any action to change behaviour or training to be taken. This individual may have the approval of the business unit director. The other senior directors will be cautious in raising the subject because they may encounter criticism from the business unit director or the cited director. The following account is from a team member about Director 'F', which highlights an insight on how others perceive his management style.

Story N° 38   *"**Director F** is kind of a strange character. Some days he is fine to have a giggle with and other days he is not. The consensus a few months ago when we did have a few team meetings was for us to get a telling off! We would walk in to the meeting, and be told off from start to finish. However, it would be nice to have him in a good mood when we are having our team meetings. But sitting in a room and told by senior staff that you are crap is not the sort of thing you expect to hear, especially when nobody has come to you and said anything. We have not had a team meeting for a while so team spirit is up, because we have not had a telling off. It is believed that people cannot speak openly because I know it is free speech and team meetings are for that. Therefore, if you have any comments whether general or specific you cannot do it in the meeting. You have to do it in private even if it is not personal. There is a lack of trust within the team to be open in the team meetings. To ask a question that is not project-related is a big no, no. I think that could possibly be because of the reaction we would get from senior staff."*
(20U)

The management style will have influenced the team members. It will also have caused the team to be on their guard. The lack of trust within the team appears to have created an unsafe environment in which to have open discussions with Director F. The undermining of the team's confidence will have been utilised to the director's advantage. Telling stories in such a way can confuse genuine authority. It is uncertain what benefit this will have for encouraging and improving the performance of the team. Bearing in mind, that this director was described as a *'magnificent guy'* to a new member of staff – the story seems to have tarnished this laudable title. This person is supposedly a financial asset of the West Midlands office and protected by management. The managing of the team, however, seems to be secondary, and that is a sacrifice management is willing to accept. Another director stated that he had observed how this particular person interacts with his team.

Story N° 39   *"This is a somewhat bizarre story. There is a 'p' word that cannot be mentioned in '**Director F'** team, which is promotion. Well, in his team if you look around no one has been promoted in that team for over seven years. I have set '**Staff C'** a task to find out if anyone has been promoted since I have returned to the company. I disagree when management say to people that you cannot be promoted because you will put someone else's nose out of joint. It is not a right answer for refusing promotional opportunities to upcoming staff. It is either if that other person thinks their nose is going to be put out of joint – then you must have a serious chat with that person and sit down and say these are the reasons why you are not there and these are the things you need to do to get there. Therefore, the other person has*

demonstrated this, this and this – and as such this person will be promoted. I am trying to get 'Director F' to make sure he at least promotes someone this Christmas." **(17Q)**

The other directors have noticed the director's behaviour. This indicates that other team members working for the other directors will observe with interest. Some individuals may not make their feelings known openly about a colleague over whom they have concerns. With no clarification from the other directors this will cause uncertainty between the teams.

A similar story was told about another director. This story was shared between two countries, the UK and South Africa. In 2000, Company A1 acquired a new business in South Africa. As part of the transition period, the UK division sent a senior director (Company B1A) over to South Africa to ensure that the integration was completed. Prior to the director's secondment the new South African business received word about the board director, which is illustrated below.

Story Nº 40   *"**Director D** came over to South Africa for two years. He came over from 2000 to 2002. Before he came over we in South Africa was warned about this big director coming over – big meaning physical. He is coming to sort us out and going to be strict, and going to do things the **Company A1** way. That pre-warning happened exactly how we were warned about his transfer over. I'm sure that **Director D** must know because the thing is as in any company at the higher levels the older directors tend to be set in their ways and are use to their way of doing things and now this relatively young guy was coming round and saying that we were not going our way anymore. Basically, he turned the layout of the office upside down. Obviously, that did not go down very well with the senior people. I do not know many of the directors there who were particularly fond of him in a kind of business sense.*

*In that situation, the preconception for most people was accurate. I always have got on well with 'Director D' – and in fact, we got on really well in South Africa. I know there was another **A&A engineer** in our team an older guy, and he did not get on with 'Director D' at all – they just could not see eye-to-eye. 'Director D' was quite ruthless when this engineer decided to go stating that he had no future in the company and was happy for him to go! Again, that was business and it was his choice to go. I do not know what went on for 'Director D' to make such a statement but it was clear he would have made the engineer's life hell! I mean 'Director D' did have a lot of standard procedures of doing things. For example, if you wanted to ask information from a client – you used a request information form, stuff that we do over here but in South Africa, we would just pick up the telephone.*

I remember another engineer was just not happy because there were so many forms to complete – but 'Director D' was not particularly sorry to see him leave. His experience was more common to the office than mine was. Even nowadays, if I happen to be in the Head Office in London and my ex-boss happens to be over – we do try to see each other, and he always has a little joke asking how it is going working with 'Director D' because we all really miss him! I mean these guys are in there 60's and I am sure they were very happy once the transition period was over." **(31U)**

This story illustrates that the new business had been warned about the director's reputation. Individuals perceived that this director would make some changes, which turned out to be true. His forceful manner was not accepted and caused conflict with the existing cultural setting. The UK director did not seek to negotiate with the senior directors including the Managing Director of the new division. His main objective would have been to make sure that the newly acquired business understood the Company A1 way. It is uncertain how the process was supposed to be accomplished. The presence of the UK director and his uncompromising management style may have been perceived by the new business as a hostile takeover instead of a merger.

5.4.4 Summary of the 'Big Five'

The collection of internal narratives from the West Midlands office provides an indication of how stories cannot be removed overnight. Some individuals have learnt to remain quiet. Relationships between people will be strained and keeping one's distance may be the only solution to avoid open conflict. These occurrences illustrates that the longer the stories remain unchallenged the greater the possibility that conflict and misunderstanding will play a role on the organisation's corporate communication. It confirms that time does not stand still. Many of these accounts can be compared to vintage vehicles; they hold their 'value' over the years. It also reveals how an internal environment can transform from being open and transparent to creating mistrust between each of the disciplines.

The company is predominantly made-up of one gender. The majority of the stories collected were from the male perspective. The collections of accounts received from the female counterparts were similar. The findings revealed that the use of gender persuasion and emotional language could influence others. These stories were made powerful and effective by the validity in which the storyteller created by providing specific details of the event. This means that stories can also have a negative effect if used to oversimplify an occurrence. Awareness and an appreciation of the size of the office will be the perfect platform for misinterpretation to occur. It is believed that a small office provides a perceived

close-knit family atmosphere. These feelings will disappear as the family unit increases in size, which will lead members going their separate ways to form new groups. This appears to be what has happened within the West Midlands office.

The circulation of organisational stories shows how people perceive the meaning of a story. It also explains why individuals will be labelled. Some individuals will be recognised as a 'hero' but instead may be a 'villain' based on their behaviour. An element of a person's character may be disregarded because they can make up for the inappropriate behaviour in other areas that will be more valued by the company. Some individuals can be perceived as 'untouchable' because they may have other personnel to protect them. The influence of the individual will be a sign of manipulating others. The use of these stories has influenced the participants in this document.

The framing of stories by its listeners will affect the corporate communication. Some listeners will feel a *'positive emotional attachment'* (Gruen, et al., 2000: p. 37) to these stories. The problem is that these anecdotes may conceal *'more than it reveals'* (Hall, 1959: p. 53), which raises concerns to understand the nature of the business. It is one thing to know the facts of a story, and another to share it. Stories can be accurate without being positive or essential. Victor (1992: p. 4) suggests that we can draw our *'own conclusions'* to interpret these events. This idea may not be possible because of the: *'powerful force[s] that holds everyone captive'* (Jameson, 2007: p. 199). Some stories will discourage open communication between the internal communities. There will be times that individuals may not need to: *'share vested interests'* (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003: p. 26). The question of openness may be distorted by conflict, misunderstanding and misinformed communication.

5.5 THE STORYTELLING ORGANISATION: WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH MY ORGANISATION

> *"The other thing that drives me insane, I suppose and makes it I think difficult to communicate is this decision by committee. Every single person has to have a say, like, 'yes, you can say those words…' A little tri-fold, every man, and his dog in* **[Company B1C]** *will have an input into that. I do not know why because there are more important things than a tri-fold. I mean, you do your job and I will do mine, but that does not happen and it is decision by committee and that is a strangle hold on business."*
>
> **Company B1C**

The main theme of this study has been the use of corporate storytelling. Exposing people to the way in which the organisation uses stories in different ways has enabled me to construct a more complete picture of my place of work out of this pool of material. It is at this stage of the process of making sense that my research takes on more life and will include further clarification of my initial interpretations. These are as follows.

5.5.1 The Conceptual Framework: The Cause and Effect for Corporate Storytelling

Chapter 5.4 provided an appreciation of how I analysed the collected organisation stories using the 'Big Five' (**see Chart 2**). The following sections will illustrate in more detail the conceptual framework. The framework also explains how this is linked to the main story characters (Them & Us, the Heroic Survivor, the Tarnished Hero, the Victim, and the Villain), which emerged from the organisation stories.

The company prides itself on fulfilling their corporate vision. To fulfil the company's vision their official culture is based on their core values. These values are supposed to define what the company stands for. The conceptual framework (Fig. 1) illustrates the links to the key themes identified in the thesis and how corporate stories flow through the organisation. Using the conceptual framework, I will provide an insight into how the organisation draws upon these values to disseminate their corporate stories.

The components in this conceptual framework were developed from the literature review undertaken for documents three and four. In document five, I expanded the literature to explore the use of corporate storytelling. The contribution of Gabriel (1995) and Boje's (1999) work on storytelling, with some adaptation, influenced my conceptual framework. Their work provided an insight into the type of storytellers in the workplace. It also instigated the idea of seeking the cause and effect of corporate storytelling. Gabriel's definitions of storytellers were aligned with the characters highlighted in my thesis. These tellers included the 'Hero', the 'Heroic Survivor', and the 'Victim.' In addition to my

reconsideration of Gabriel's work, I introduced three further story characters. These individuals were the 'tarnished hero', the 'villain', and 'them & us.' In this study, I had identified that as narratives go round the organisation they are modified and re-interpreted. This occurrence can be repeated a number of times. On each occasion, the setting of the social environment and the use of power were reciprocal attributes. These influential factors emerged from the research undertaken in documents three and four. Their importance was reinforced from document five's research material. The literature review and the accumulated research material (documents three, four, and five) provided the concepts to formulate the conceptual framework.
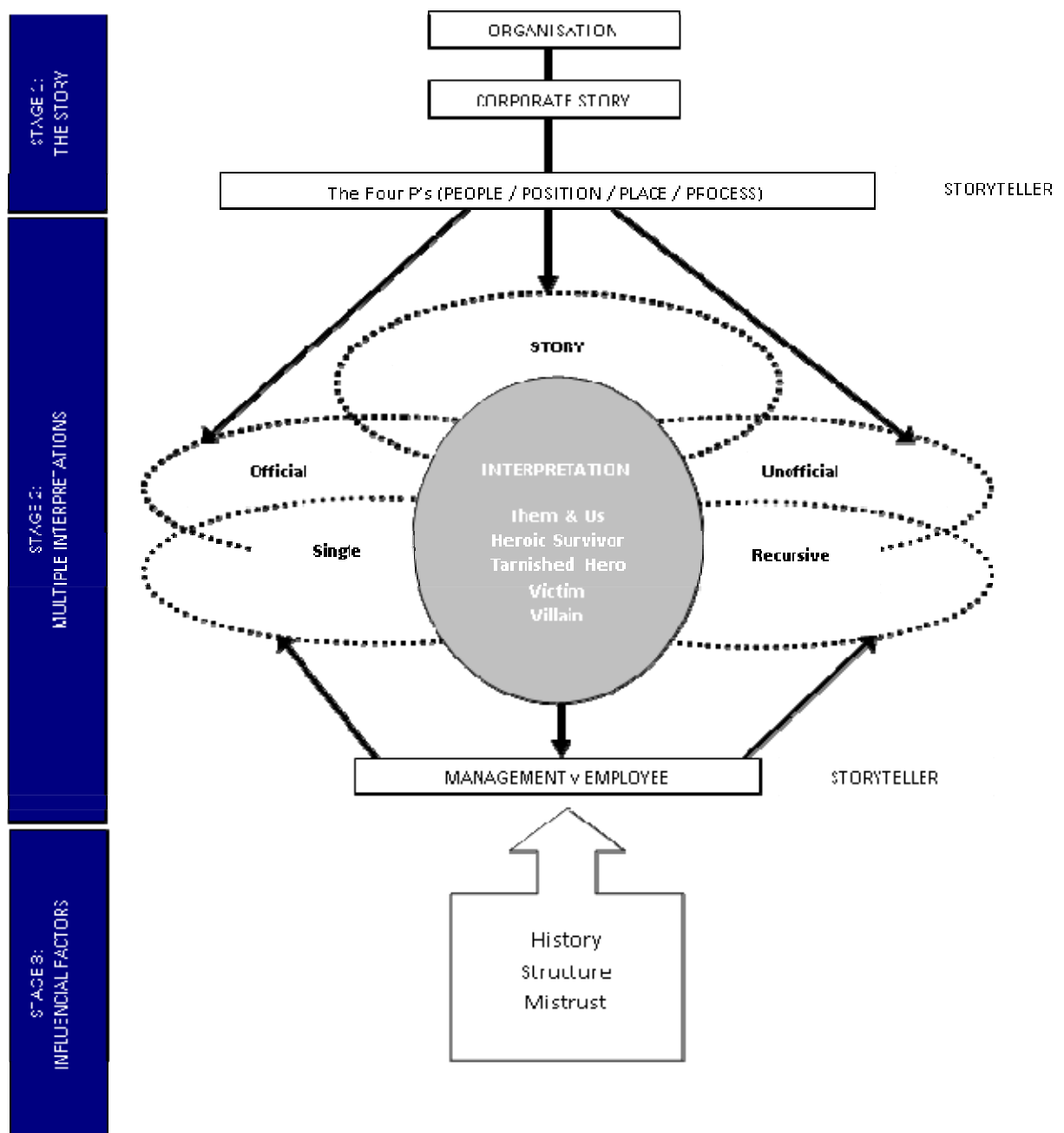

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework: The Cause and Effect for Corporate Storytelling

The following sections provide an appreciation of the meaning of the framework. The proposed framework is divided into three segments. Please refer to Section 5.5.2, which illustrates how the conceptual framework is used to describe the critical incident.

Stage One

An official corporate story has a tendency to be set in motion by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO cannot be everywhere at once to deliver the same corporate message, although, in an ideal situation, this would be the best approach. The view is that by a single action such stories could be shared with everyone in the organisation. It is, however, the participants who construct meaning. The introduction of a new story will generate a series of storytellers to disseminate the contents of the story throughout the hierarchy. In this study, the primary storytellers were the managing directors and their respective board of directors. Here, we are introduced to the Four P's (people, position, place, and process) mechanism. I will provide further clarification. These individuals hold key senior management positions and they are in positions of authority and responsibility. Upon receipt of an official story from the CEO or a managing director, these individuals will convey the story to their staff. These tellers are not provided with a carefully worded script to recite. Therefore, how this task is undertaken will be based upon their interpretation.

Stage Two

These initial storytellers will have been authorised to disseminate the official message. An official story can carry a single message. In most cases, a corporate story will stop at the first stage and will have a single uncontentious interpretation. This could be because of the limited shelf-life of the story. Alternatively, the stories may simply be routine in nature, and customary within existing business circumstances. These stories will have served their purpose. Therefore, they do not go through recursive cycles of unofficial re-interpretation within the organisation.

Non-routine stories, however, are likely to go through recursive cycles of interpretation. Engaging with a story also means engaging with the storyteller. Despite official attempts to defend the validity of a story, there will be times when there is conflict with unofficial interpretations of the story. Two elements can cause this inconsistency. In this investigation, the importance of choosing the right moment to tell an unofficial story was apparent. There were challenges when these narratives were treated with some scepticism and suspicion. Where did this action leave the storyteller and their story? Such debates lead individuals to seek to untangle the story to make sense of its meaning. The 'official

single story' therefore, was no longer stable in the social environment. Instead, the account was challenged. The anecdote then progressed to the next stage, the recursive cycle. Because the story was repeatedly retold, its meaning underwent an array of re-interpretations. This process can put the official story through a multiple filter of different virtual voices. These diverse interpretations can go unchallenged. Communal sharing of these stories can encourage a range of unexpected consequences. In these circumstances, management may not be aware of these conflicting stories.

For the official storyteller, the objective could be to construct a distorted story. Such moulding of events can allow the storyteller substantial scope in convincing the listeners. If, however, the criterion of the truth of the original intention is displaced, then it may generate challenging organisation issues. This approach can also be used effectively to convince the organisation. It is difficult, however, to determine how truthful the objective of the original official message was. The official story could have been constructed in such a manner as to mislead or to be economical with the truth. In the absence of management to confirm these stories, then these events can change the attitudes of the communal network. There is a risk that these unofficial stories will not travel in the same direction as the official story. With the right components, these retold accounts could flourish in a manner that can influence the social environment. The ability of these stories to import multifaceted misinterpretations can allow the introduction of uninvited storytellers. The alignment of tellers with their espoused story can be a persuasive way of fostering conflicting assumptions.

In all of these stories, each identified character will be played out in a different way. Individuals (the listeners) will have their own understanding of the same story. They will be told a story and seek to interpret it. They will decide whether they perceive the characters in the story as heroes, villains, heroic survivors, or victims. Sometimes, one listener can identify a victim in a story, while another listener hearing the same story may interpret this 'victim' as a tarnished hero or even a villain. In all the stories, there will be winners and losers. For some of the listeners interpreting a particular event, there is a sense that the story is fragmented. Still, these chosen stories will have been *'sparked by the one told formally'* (Tyler, 2007: 582) by senior management. The significance existing in these accounts will shape a community to reflect a cohesive shared meaning. Far from retelling these stories several times over, the implication is that these archive accounts could effectively challenge the organisation's status quo. The divergence between management and employees will be a key factor.

Stage Three

Where an unofficial story becomes separated from the official intention of the story, it will cause the organisation problems. In the context of this study, three influential factors were identified. These issues were 'history', 'structure', and 'mistrust.' These features were acknowledged in documents three and four. These factors contributed to the way in which unofficial stories were disseminated, distorted, and re-interpreted. The social environment was already discouraging open communication between the divisional communities. Unresolved historical issues between the divisions were causing these unofficial narratives. The configuration of the organisation had also influenced these divisional stories. The divisionalised hierarchy had encouraged unofficial stories to remain self-contained and protected by each regional management's power-base. This power-base is not only held at the senior board. This control could have also filtered through to the various levels of management. The combination of historical issues and the multifaceted structure of the organisation will lead to mistrust within the internal environment.

It is perhaps not surprising that these concerns can take time to rectify. Storytelling within a variable environment can encourage stories to be negative, and ambiguous. It is also important to note that this approach can provide access to perceptions and reactions to organisation tales. The complexity and contradiction of these accounts will provide greater misunderstanding and resistance in the social environment. In such settings, unofficial stories might not be rebutted. Storytellers will construct a story with the intent of dressing up the contents with the appropriate attire for the occasion. Dominicé claims that *'the world of interpretation is dependent on the dialogue that takes place'* (2000: 63). It could be argued that individuals who share specific stories will tell them in a way that appears to be compatible with the social setting. Even when these unofficial stories enter the public domain, they will deviate *'out of the comfort zone'* (Tyler, 2007: 573). This approach can have the added benefit of bringing the story into closer contact with obscured issues in the organisation. Expanding the story supply network can be an effective way of distributing and disseminating them to a wide captured audience. Whether the strength of these accounts is strong enough to retain a monopoly on the internal barriers will be a key element. When such a setting is observed, it can provide the teller with the freedom to decide how and when to orchestrate the social environment.

5.5.2 The Effectiveness of Corporate Storytelling: Exploring a Real Life Experience

The conceptual framework (Fig. 1) illustrated in Section 5.5.1 will be used here to explain the critical incident – the resilience process (pp. 59-63), which is identified in the thesis. I will also examine the incident using Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking.

The global economic climate had put a significant financial constraint on the organisation. If the organisation was going to get through these difficult times, it would have to make some strategic decisions. The management communicated an official 'state of the nation' story to the UK division. The announcement was delivered to all the regional offices on the same day and at the same time. The workforce was advised of the difficult market trading the organisation was facing. The official story was supposed to provide an insight into the organisation's problems at large. There were two key elements to this corporate story. The primary focus was on the future growth of the conglomerate. The second part of the story reinforced the importance of people as the organisation's greatest asset.

The official 'state of the nation' story would have come from the chief executive officer (CEO) and been conveyed to each of the divisional managing directors. The storytellers-in -charge of disseminating the corporate story to all the offices were the board of directors (regional divisional heads). It is uncertain, however, whether the managing directors compared their proposed 'scripts' before sharing them with their respective divisional heads. Following the communication to staff, it was clear that there was a discrepancy between what management had said and what they were reluctant to say. Management were concealing the deeper story. This two-stage approach taken by the regional heads could have been deliberate, to delay the unavoidable news that was to follow later on.

The official corporate story was supposed to carry a single and unambiguous message. In terms of the message, I will explain the Four P's (people, position, place and process), which is illustrated in the conceptual framework (Fig. 1). As part of stage one, the Four P's demonstrate how the storytellers-in-charge of conveying the message to their respective staff delivered the story.

At the first meeting (*place*), management (*position*) provided a sense of inclusiveness. Staff (*people*) were advised that during these challenging times, everyone would play a part in any decisions made by the organisation. To illustrate this, staff were granted a week to put forward any cost-saving ideas for the organisation to consider. This was an unexpected invitation (*process*) from management seeking help from their staff. This 'carrot and stick' manoeuvre could have been the reason why people initially bought into what they had heard and observed.

When staff met with management a week later, the narrative had changed. The workforce were advised that the ideas put forward had already been considered by management, but

were rejected. Management did not offer an explanation or provide any examples of the suggestions submitted. The 'correct' story was then announced. Staff were advised that some of them would be made redundant.

Once the staff had absorbed the official story, people began retelling the supposedly corporate story. However, an element of confusion developed with the construction of these divisional accounts. As these stories travelled round the various social networks, they were modified and re-interpreted. Each division cascaded their own re-interpretation of cynical stories. The social community took on the role of surrogate storytellers. Equally, however, the staff sought to disentangle each of the divisional official stories by seeking to understand them, questioning them, and comparing them.

Recognising that everyone could be a storyteller, whether in pole position or further down the hierarchy chain, was a key factor. Individuals were willing to exchange divisional narratives. However, whether the information was inaccurate was not an important element to the social community. The primary objective was to construct the most influential divisional anecdote within and between the working environments. The significant path along which each story unfolded demonstrated how the chain of events evolved. These stories had established a common ground. The narratives collectively provided a sense of belonging for the non-managerial staff. The view that a collective social community could suspend their differences and come together because of a shared occurrence was apparent.

The public sharing of these stories encouraged a new dimension of trusting working relationships, whether individual-to-individual, discipline-to-discipline, or company-to-company. Considering the circumstances, this event demonstrated a trusting place of work. This occurrence could have created more effective collaboration and dialogue in the workplace. The competitive nature of some parts of the organisation below top management level had been diminished. The circulation of these unofficial stories was a significant mechanism for sharing and disseminating information.

The formation of the event influenced the nature of the five characters. Depending on the modified story, these characters were played out in different ways. The initial staff meeting revealed the first character - the 'victim'. The social community was made to believe that the organisation (management and staff) were together going to make the decisions about how to resolve the organisation's problems. The notion provided a 'comfort blanket' for staff

to continue to trust the organisation. The second meeting however, hampered the relationship.

The second official story had created mistrust and scepticism in staff's attitude towards management. The reaction that followed the communication had incited a divide between management and the staff. The organisation was no longer seen as a victim of circumstances and the management as heroic survivors struggling to keep the organisation afloat. Customarily fragmented communities had changed their attitude towards each other. The event had persuaded the social community to foster a collaborative, think-tank. The situation had stimulated staff to reveal and share their interpretation with their divisional counterparts. Individuals equipped with their respective adapted stories were applying them to the organisation's situation.

The story's characters' roles had evolved in light of the second meeting. These attributes were 'them and us'. Staff believed that the demeanour of the management had changed. The organisation was no longer a 'victim'. Instead, the unofficial stories perceived management as a 'villain', or at least tarnished heroes. By comparing these re-interpreted unofficial divisional stories, staff sought to gain a better understanding of the *'values they* [supposedly] *live by* (Bill and Boyle, 2009: 79). The corporate core values, however, did not appear to shape the meaning of these shared communications. There were fundamental differences between the divisional narratives that could have influenced the official story. It was uncertain whether either of the management stories were the official version. As these stories were repeatedly re-told, their meaning would *'shift and change without warning'* (Barker & Camarata, 1998: 446). The organisation was faced with the challenge that staff can interpret the same story in multiple ways.

The outcome of the second meeting had caused the official narrative to encounter unofficial interpretations. The event demonstrated that there are great lengths an organisation will go to in order to conceal their true intentions. The way in which these stories were told might have been an advantage to the organisation. In times of uncertainty, all management communications can be scrutinised for their validity. Management's plan of spinning stories had led the community to seek alternative realistic stories. As Denning (2006: 42) suggests, *"there is no single right way to tell a story"*. However, he also highlights that *"using a story with negative tonality will generally fail to spark* [positive] *action"*. Some of the adapted stories construed the senior executive board (managing directors) as 'tarnished heroes'. The organisation's pretence was to consult with its workforce, when management had already made their decision prior to the two staff meetings. All of the divisional

managing directors were reluctant to communicate with their staff. In addition, they were not visible around the business. Furthermore, the lack of explanation from the UK Chairman could have provoked the situation. The senior board's decision to keep silent throughout the process was unacceptable. The decision, by contrast, to communicate a clear and precise 'state of the nation' message to their external stakeholders could have given cause for apprehension to the staff. There was a disparity between the internal and external communications. The external story was made attractive to ensure that it provided an appropriate explanation. The organisation was more interested in maintaining the confidence of its stakeholders than of its workforce.

The 'heroic survivors' who had not been made redundant at the end of the process continued to share their unofficial stories. The event had tarnished the organisation's cultural values – in particular, trust. On a positive note, however, the occurrence had prompted the social environment to collaborate with each other.

The 'resilience event' influenced and shaped the interpretations of the unofficial storytellers to fruition. The idea of dealing with uncertainty caused the communal management to engage and display attitudes that would have been frowned upon in normal circumstances. A fear factor was imposed on the social environment without thinking of the short, medium, and long-term effects on the workforce. These unofficial stories were likely to make a systematic impression on the organisation's culture and behaviour. The mass of surrogate storytellers were fluent because each staff member's reaction in dealing with the bad news provided that individual with the power to maintain control over his or her domain.

The Seven Properties of Sensemaking

The analysis of the incident using the conceptual framework identifies an ongoing process of sensemaking as stories are told and retold. It might be anticipated that aspects of Weick's seven properties of sensemaking (2001) might be found within these processes. The aim of this final section is to identify any of the features that might be operational in this incident. The analysis is summarised below.

- **Social Context**

    The presence of unofficial stories had influenced the staff's *'everyday social interaction'* (Walsh and Ungson, 1991: 60) and interpretation. In the context of these shared modified accounts, individuals could *'generalise these ideas such that they become part of the culture'* (Kahlbaugh, 1993: 80, 99). This approach was not carried

out in isolation. That is the whole point of acquiring an audience. The unofficial storyteller has the advantage because, as the audience changes, so can the stories.

- **Personal Identity**

  The official story was supposed to promote a clear self-image of the organisation. The social community, however, modified that story, and so challenged its intended meaning. Through these unofficial interpretations, individuals were able to shape and influence the workplace, and observe the consequences. Management's behaviour in focusing on their external stakeholders may have provoked the situation.

- **Retrospect**

  The divisional structure of the organisation had introduced multiple interpretations of the sequence of events. This was influenced, however, by the retold, re-interpreted story. Each division viewed the event in a cynical way. Everyone had the opportunity to remember their experience and reveal his or her feelings. Because each divisional individual could have a different awareness of what took place, too many connotations could be exaggerated and clarity might be lost.

- **Salient Cues**

  The situation had provided the workforce with communal indicators to help them make sense of what took place. The various social networks interpreted and modified the official story through collective perceptions to determine the event. The release of these unofficial stories indicated that there was inconsistency in the official story told by management. It is clear that management underestimated that the workforce would monitor what they did, and not what they (the organisation) envisaged should have happened.

If I return to the organisational setting, I can presume that the changing mix of the social networks, the modified stories, and the accompanying problems, meant that the organisation could not guarantee the promise of telling the truth. The continuous changing of the unstable external environment can alter the decision-making opportunities available to the organisation.

5.5.3 The Ethical Challenges in Collecting Organisational Stories

This section examines and addresses key features of being a researcher and a practitioner within my place of work. The difficulty in finding out more about my organisation also

Being a researcher and a practitioner within my organisation raised some ethical issues. This investigative study was the first of its kind to be undertaken by a member of staff in the organisation, and I needed consent from my divisional board of directors before I was authorised to undertake the study. This request, however, was met with a barrage of scepticism and apprehension. My initial application to enrol on the DBA course was denied. A number of HR partners and divisional boards of directors thought that this academic qualification should be reserved only for senior staff. With the support of my two line managers (senior board directors), my last hope of obtaining approval to enrol rested with the UK Managing Director. My line managers submitted a business case. In addition, I had to attend a meeting with the UK Managing Director. My application was accepted. This approval, however, came with a non-negotiable clause. I would be assigned three senior personnel (HR Manager, Marketing Manager, and Business Improvement Manager) to oversee my work. This so-called group was supposed to monitor my progress and have access to my research material. I am uncertain why management thought this approach was necessary. I will elaborate further on the matter of the management. I assumed that the final decision by the UK Managing Director was not made in isolation. He would have sought advice from other personnel from around the business before making his decision. I was not given an explanation as to why I needed a troupe of *'shadow-partners'.* Each member of the group, however, may have wanted to maintain the interest of their respective division, or requested that a caveat be included. I also could not rule out that they might be protecting their own personal agenda.

The review group was supposed to have full access to my interview material and background information. This was an area of concern, given that my research was to be based upon my own understanding, without input from other individuals trying to give multiple interpretations. I could not expect that each individual would appreciate the findings or like what had been written. This plan would have been problematic. Each piece of my research might have been scrutinised and amended to suit the relevant individual's say-so. I would have been overwhelmed by unnecessary meetings. These unwarranted sessions would have posed a significant risk of my being intimidated and manipulated. However, when the three individuals left the company, and the UK Managing Director retired before I commenced document two, I was not assigned a new group of observers.

As a member of staff, I needed to understand that, because of my new dual-status (as researcher and practitioner), I might be perceived as a threat to other senior employees who had been with the organisation much longer than I had. I was aware of these delicate inter-organisational issues. In addition to the review group, I also attracted several admirers wishing to be my *'best friend.'* However, these new relationships came with a high price tag.

My immediate concern was over the collaboration with a specific vocational group, the HR community. These individuals included the Group's HR & Communications Director, the UK HR Director, and the HR advisors. A previous coalition with the HR partners had not been fruitful. The perception that my role as a Personal Assistant was the issue continued to cast doubt on whether I would ever be accepted by this group. Several attempts to demonstrate that I was on the same side as this cohort were met with a wall of silence. The group repeatedly used their professional roles to the keep me at arm's length. There was a potential minefield here, so I had to use my position to sidestep these barriers whenever the group were reluctant to provide assistance following a request to their managing director. Although I did receive approval to receive the data needed for my research, these individuals were averse to keeping their promise to provide me with the material, and the speed at which the information was released was slow and deliberate.

In addition, the network vetted which data I could have and use. In the circumstances, this was to be expected and understandable. When some of the data received were indecipherable and contradictory and I sought clarification, I received a hostile reaction. I had to set myself limits and decide how far to push the bar, beyond which point I would not go. To avoid jeopardising any future support from this group, I decided to be content with the information supplied. I was conscious, however, that any further encounters would need to be handled with care. These individuals might have been fearful of being criticised or concerned that I might disclose something that I was not supposed to. I did not overlook the possibility that apprehension was a key factor, especially if the intention was to *'suppress the [un]published'* (Lee, 1993: 128) information. The behaviour of the group indicated that the information might have been called into question if I had attempted to undertake any further cross-analysis. This could also have been one reason for keeping any potentially adverse data concealed.

From my observations, the group provided a significant insight into how a professional community can exert power and control by using their positions. Although I was an *'insider'* outside the group with credentials, it did not make any difference to the way that I was

treated by the members. The concept of teamwork between the group and me did not appear to ignite the idea of engaging our communal strengths. It is perhaps for this reason that there was such unwillingness among the group members to *'[speak] the same language'* (Cork, 2005: 140). I was aware that the disproportionate power base could have influenced the expectations in terms of behaviour of both the group and me. The standoff relationship was missing one key factor that could be manoeuvred to support a collaborative approach. This was trust. It would have been beneficial for sharing organisational concerns and ideas. My endeavour to understand the organisation's issues could have been a way to develop a positive experience for all the group members. Instead of considering some degree of cross-vocational working relationship, the group maintained an attitude of separateness.

Although they were perceived as 'sleeping partners', senior management's request for copies of my final work to be circulated (via electronic mail) around the organisation raised some ethical issues. I had to seek advice from my university supervisors, as well as my line managers. In the end, I emailed the new UK Managing Director (who has a PhD) in the hope that he would support me and understand the difficulties from my perspective. He appreciated my position and apologised for the indiscretion.

It was essential that I maintained a balance between the demands arising from the search to understand the subject matter and the moral dilemmas of seeking to remain detached from the internal organisational politics. From the outset, I did not envisage that these issues would pose a threat to my research project. While many of these issues could have arisen due to the nature of the research itself, at the time I was naive about their possibility. In the context of this research, my reflective notes revealed that most of the ethical issues were about decisions concerning the use of information disclosed by the participants. This was particularly challenging with the creation of my *'shadow-partners'* and the uncalled-for *'admirers'.*

For instance, in the interim meetings with one of my 'champions' I was regularly faced with compounded probing questions. The content of these brief meetings was focused on explaining the *'codes of practice'* for undertaking such research, and it was not easy to decline to answer questions from a managing director, or to explain that every employee, regardless of his or her position within the company, had to be respected, as trust and confidentiality were a key factor not only for this research programme but also for the company's reputation. Ensuring that I did not leave any uncertainty, I repeatedly had to clarify my position, stating that certain behaviours, such as revealing confidential

information, would be open to ethical criticism. Being bombarded with power and status was a systematic encounter that I had to endure with my 'champions' and other senior personnel.

Because I was, firstly, a full-time member of staff and, secondly, a researcher. I might have given the impression to management that I was a *'puppet-on-a-string'* to be controlled by any master-of-choice as and when required. My earlier meetings with a number of senior representatives at the beginning of this journey also included the HR & Communications Director, who pointed out in our interview that *"once I had finished my studies there would be no role in HR for me..."* This overtly negative response did not go unnoticed. My gender may have been a contributing factor to generate this unwarranted tension. Because I work in a male-dominated environment, I thought that I would be accepted as a non-threatening partner. But I could see that, given her professional positioning as the only senior female on the board of directors and my new role, her behaviour might be aimed at protecting her interests. This clearly had implications for the way in which I was perceived, and the effects of the power dynamics. I believed that her decision was taken due to my presence, which caused the director to take the necessary actions.

Managing the expectations that my research might have raised amongst the staff was a major factor. As part of the negotiations to participate in the research, each interviewee was provided with the opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of the study. The main concern of all the interviewees was that their identity would not be disclosed in my thesis. In addition, any stories that were used should not enable anyone to identify the storyteller. For this very reason, any explicit, sensitive information received was not used. Addressing these factors to deter any apprehension from the staff was also important. To reassure all the participants, I gave them the chance to tell me if I had met their expectations. Their views were captured in Chapter 5.11.

Having to deal with power issues was not an easy task. My repeated encounters with senior management were not without their challenges. As previously mentioned, my role might have been a factor. As a non-senior employee and a woman, management might have seen me as presumptuous. I was not even a recognised core member of the organisation, as a result of which some senior personnel had rejected my application to enrol on the course. This was perhaps a chance for these individuals to use their position to make things complicated for me.

It was therefore essential for me to use diplomacy when engaging with senior personnel. Sometimes, I had to portray myself as being the submissive partner to permit senior and influential individuals the freedom to retain their power. By persistently focusing on the good things, I was able to *'present their own role in events in a favourable light'* (Walford, 1994c: 225). Role-playing was a significant part in obtaining access to interview individuals for my research. There were several changes to my approach, depending on whether I was meeting a male or female interviewee. For the most part, I had a better reception from the male interviewees than the females. I assumed that it was a matter of having to *'prove oneself'* in a strong male environment. Even though women were in the minority, I sometimes had to rise above their aggressive behaviour. I envisage that some of them might not realise that they depict them self in such a negative manner.

On occasion maintaining *'control'* was a like a game of tug-of-war. The display of arrogance was a common characteristic that was demonstrated when engaging with individuals from across the various vocational groups. I would include senior staff in the same category. Each of the camps had a unique sense of their own supremacy, and sought to explain their importance. This provided insight into how our behaviour can be dictated by our professional backgrounds. I could not exclude myself from that statement. From an 'administrative' perspective, I had stepped *'outside the box.'* It could be perceived that I should not have taken the *'ark out to sea.'*

I became accustomed to associating these situations with scenes from the story of Noah's Ark (everything happened in pairs). To provide a coherent and systematic awareness of the above, I was converting these scenarios into metaphors. The frequency with which power-associated words were used pointed to *'power-control'* as a contributing factor that could influence the outcome of such decisions. The major learning is regret that seeking to meet the needs of the organisation created ethical dilemmas. In this respect, it could be said that some individuals may have felt that they had not been fully informed, that consent had been obtained but without their contribution. As a rule, however, seeking permission is a significant principle. There are other aspects to consider. First, I should have consulted and sought permission from those responsible for the respective areas. Second, I could have engaged their views earlier in the process. Objections, for whatever reason, would have been duly respected. Upon reflection, I believe that I took those essential steps but they were declined or ignored.

As a way of counteracting negative outcomes, I sought to ensure that adequate feedback at the end of the research was provided. Even here, however, there are issues that were

endemic to this particular research. Kelly (1989a) notes that in qualitative research, researchers should be aware of the traps that lie in wait. Of course, I had a responsibility to the study community. These included not jeopardising the reputation of the regional office or hampering the opportunities for further research.

The next chapter provides the findings of this investigative study.

5.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

> *"I would hope that if someone heard a story about me that was in relation to them that they would come to me direct because that is how I would respond because if there was gossip going around about me then I would hope that I would have the opportunity to defend myself. People are funny. It is like a bad experience at a restaurant you will tell 10 people that it was rubbish but you go to a restaurant that was great and you will probably only tell one."*
>
> **Company E1**

The main theme for this study was to discover why this company was experiencing problems with its corporate communication. There were three primary elements to the research conducted. The first was to gain an insight into what has become a serious problem for many organisations, namely corporate communication. The second was to examine a controversial topic, namely organisational storytelling. The third was to seek to resolve to what extent the controversies identified during the overview of the subject were valid, and to see if my study could contribute to the debate.

The findings of this study support the views that an organisation's internal setting will influence the way in which communication is undertaken. Using the idea that power will affect individuals' understanding and decision-making in the workplace, the studies undertaken in Documents Two, Three and Four respectively established that a number of internal factors could affect communication. The complex structure of an organisation will make the espoused organisational culture difficult to implement operationally. This situation, when allied with intense work pressures, will increase ambiguity in the organisation, and this in turn increases mistrust.

These results are based on observing, participating, and having access to corporate confidential information. The key concepts repeated throughout the study are trust or mistrust, structure, and history. The validity of the method used supports that an organisation's internal workplace will influence the organisational culture. This will also alter the openness of communication. By presenting the internal workplace as a conflict of management structures, it was found that individuals were reluctant to engage with their counterparts owing to historical events that have not been resolved. Their behaviour towards each other had changed, and been replaced by mistrust.

Research into organisational communication has raised many areas of study that had to be investigated to complete this academic journey. Addressing these issues faced by me along the way has provided me with the opportunity to investigate themes that were not

previously considered. This document provides an awareness of how internal storytelling will influence corporate communication. It is clear that corporate stories are told for a specific reason. Although some stories can disclose more than the storyteller intended. An element that is considered is how meaning is attributed to a story in a communal situation. A relationship between the *'organisation, the environment, the manager's personality and style [will] all affect'* (Devins et al., 2005: p. 542) corporate communication. These aspects may fail to provide the basis for improving the internal working environment of these problems. The next sections provide the reader with the following summary of the findings in this document.

<div style="background-color:blue; color:white;">

Determine how people interpret, and share organisational stories told in the workplace

</div>

Document Five – The analysis undertaken in this document illustrates that organisational stories will be used to influence others. These emergent stories will be circulated within the social environment. It could be argued that there is a deliberate storytelling culture within the organisation. There is a purpose to stories being created, shaped, and shared. There could also be a conflict between knowing and the unintentional telling of stories. The intent for sharing these stories will be a: *'powerful process that [will] lead to spontaneous changes inside organisations'* (McLean & Marshall, 1988: p. 18). These events can reveal *'the conditions'* (Hardy & Clegg, 1997: p. 13) of the working environment. This idea provides an insight into how working relationships can fail due to tension, and breakdown in communication.

It is unknown what stories the interviewees were reluctant to reveal to me and why. However, every individual was given the opportunity to tell: *'her/his own story'* (Collin, 2004: p. 123). They were willing to talk about a broad spectrum of stories, which adds to the credibility of the findings. These stories are a *'crucial way of unmasking the politics'* (Crawford, 1995: p. 180) that exist in the organisation. There was a lack of cooperation and teamwork within the internal environment. This fragmented setting provided the opportunity for stories to develop. It should not be taken for granted that these stories will not affect the business and the core values. There is conflict between the companies of the conglomerate. The structure of the organisation has caused harmful stories to remain a problem within this business.

The stories have provided an insight into how individuals interpret an organisation's core values. The company values do not state that a person has to enact them with their

neighbour. Some of these problems may have been caused by the way in which the regional offices are set up as financial cost centres. A person's allegiance will be to their respective office and ensuring that their financial targets are met. It is uncertain whether everyone will want to change the internal structure because it will affect the power-line within the management structure. There will be the potential for less authoritative positions in a new structure. Power is a prime feature, which provides communal meaning. There will be the well-hidden power that will be intertwined in the structure of the organisation. The question of openness (or the lack of it), between the companies provides the opportunity to distort communication and affect the behaviour of a targeted group. These disparities in perception will lead to: *'employees withhold[ing] their opinions and concerns about potential organisational problems'* (Van Dyne et al., 2003: p. 1364). Within this internally fragmented environment, the view is that those who express concern will be punished (Perlow & Williams, 2003). These assumptions encourages individuals to *'shield themselves from the inevitable conflict and pain'* (Clark, 1965: p. 75) and not speak out. People maintain unbearable working relationships to seek to breakdown internal barriers. Individuals create a common ground to provide a level of stimulus. Some individuals will engage in inappropriate behaviour to improve the discomfort associated with understanding their social surroundings. The expectation of appropriate behaviour will be undermined. People may not contribute: *'time and attention to collective goals, sharing useful information, [and] helping others'* (Webster & Wong, 2008: p. 45). This increases: *'social conflict, differences in the values, attitudes, and modes of thought of groups'* (Merton, 1973: p. 8). This lack of purpose will affect trust and cause challenges to management as social conflict will be: *'regulated by the [respective] community'* (Merton, 1973: p. 57). Rather than admit this management may construct narratives that may or may not have a degree of truth. Management will also protect *'the vital interests'* (Staw et al., 1981: p. 502) of their respective area(s) of responsibility. The stories and practices associated with these collections of events will create the office's culture.

5.6.1   To Reduce the Barriers is to understand the Internal Workplace

The recurrence of the organisation's structure as an issue signifies its importance to the internal issues. It has been mentioned several times but I have not provided a detailed explanation. It is not an easy task to describe the formation of the organisation with one definition. From an external reader's perspective, it can be hard to explain the structure of the organisation in a brief statement. For the duration of this study, I suspect my two supervisors have had difficulty understanding the structure of the organisation. However, in line with Mintzberg's (1983) five proposed configurations, which are illustrated in Table 12, I provide some understanding of the structures used.

Structural Configuration	Prime Method
Simple Structure	▪ Direct supervision
Machine Bureaucracy	▪ Standard of work processes
Professional Bureaucracy	▪ Standard of skills
Divisionalised Form	▪ Standardisation of outputs
Adhocracy	▪ Mutual adjustment

Table 12: Five Types of Configurations

It is useful at this point for me to define Table 12 and the significance of the different configurations for storytelling. The nature of storytelling differs in each organisational type. The next section provides the reader with further clarification.

5.6.1a Storytelling in Different Organisational Structures

▪ **Simple Structure**

This structure focuses on a number of virtues. At the forefront is a small management structure. However, in making decisions, the final responsibility rests with the chief. This provides an insight into the working mechanism of the organisation. This approach can create a sense of solidarity. The use of informal communication allows the storyteller to shape, orchestrate, and facilitate the success of their narratives. Given the environment, some individuals can generate tension through creative use of storytelling. Therefore, stories can go through a series of phases, each lasting a significant amount of time. The stories can have a damaging impact on the momentum of the proposed events. The power dynamics of the organisation structure will control the flow of the stories. The organisational politics will be a way of life. If one can look at the positive aspects is that stories occur from the top down. That said the contents could be changed from the bottom up.

▪ **Machine Bureaucracy**

In a Machine Bureaucracy, each function has its own silo, and therefore, each silo develops its own story. These stories offer insight into the organisation's strengths and weaknesses. Learning from its past the internal community will actively seek to invest time to ensure that some stories build on existing commitment. These competing stories, however, can disconnect between the various management levels of the business. The organisation structure will serve some stories to embark on an unchallenging journey. As a catalyst, the value of storytelling will influence the way people think and the way they act. However, organisations that are dominated by professionals (Spicer, 1994) will create territorial subcultures. These subcultures lend

themselves to evolve and therefore, frame working relationships. Indeed organisational stories can transfer across the occupational groups with some adjustments. As a result, the subcultures will influence collective individuals' decision-making and working behaviour. The communication channels will affect the value of organisational stories. The means of understanding a story can highlight organisational barriers that might hinder individuals' perceptions. The storytellers' ability to dictate and introduce barriers will damage the local culture. The organisation storyteller is supposedly the voice of the organisation. They will control the flow of stories both vertically down and horizontally across the organisation. These individuals have the ability to construct, change, and communicate their stories. That said, these implementers (storytellers) would decide on which stories are shared, and choose who will defend them.

- **Professional Bureaucracy**

Organisational stories generated by occupational groups seek to support their frame of reference of a specific story. The ability to show a real commitment, and challenge any proposed adaptation will influence the local working relationship. Individuals will maintain stories if they trust the storyteller. These professional groups work autonomously. Each group can use stories to resist or undermine a new story. Therefore, stories are shaped and agreed to maximise both individually and collectively their chances of success. This means that these factors could lead to difficulties of personal control, political status, and competitive rivalry between competing stories.

- **Divisionalised Form**

Organisational stories in divisionalised forms express the distrust between divisions and between divisions and Head Office. These divisional stories show that management are averse to resolve longstanding organisational problems. The interaction between professionals in other divisional structures will be problematic. It can be argued that misunderstanding can perpetuate inaccurate accounts. The need of power can overshadow inappropriate tribal behaviour. Some stories, however, can manipulate the local culture than the culture of the parent organisation (Hofstede et al., 1990). Similarly, the Head Office can influence what stories are disseminated. Of course, to do this, each division will take advantage of their self-contained divisional power base to protect their stories. These divisional stories can challenge the official corporate stories to change the status quo. Each divisional management will have the power to communicate their stories into the organisation.

- **Adhocracy**

  Organisational stories generated in adhocracy form do allow management the ability to change, ignore, and oppose new stories. This flexibility provides individuals to continue as they always had, protected in the knowledge that they can put pressure on the organisation to change new stories. Therefore, *'knowledge that is narratively organised helps [professionals] integrate'* (Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997: p. 667) their views. Some individuals will use the opportunity to strengthen and disseminate their story for their occupation. There is, then the professionals' knowledge about who tells these stories. It is in this context that an organisational story might be weak if told by one individual. However, as a group, each member will have the power to manipulate a much wider audience.

5.6.1b Company A1 – Defining the Organisational Structure Fit?

It is impossible to select one structure to explain the organisation. The need for power will influence the choice. There is a mixture of structures within the organisation. In explaining these structures, I believe that Company A1 (parent organisation) has a 'divisionalised form' structure. It is the principal division within a wider divisionalised structure. Each company has the power to manage their own domain. The Head Office, however, does not entrust all its powers to each company. It will be important for the Head Office to have control over the entire business. Each company has full autonomy to make its own decisions. However, I would argue that the CEO and Group Financial Director would monitor each of the companies by: *'the results of these decisions'* (Mintzberg, 1983: p. 217). It could be viewed with a degree of uncertainty if not outright scepticism that Head Office is always monitoring them. The Head Office provides significant contributions to the business and may not *'want anyone in this organisation to have any doubts'* (Lorsch & Allen, 1973: p. 55) that they are still the head of the family. This is illustrated by the Head Office providing specific common support resources (finance and HR) to each of the companies, which is identified in Section 5.1. However, how these resources are utilised is on the remit of each of the companies. Document Four identified that the HR support does not work on the same platform and therefore, it can be a difficult to collate common information on its internal environment.

The Head Office will involve itself in any company decisions that will put the organisation at risk and in addressing this, Head Office can centralise all powers through to itself. The existing multiple chains-of-power may not be prepared to allow this to happen. Indeed, it provides the Head Office with greater power in very few hands. This will explain why Company E1 is keen to remain a single international entity and not join Company B1

because they will conform to the UK regulations. This is where the *'entrepreneurial atmosphere'* (Lorsch & Allen, 1973: p. 55) can commence.

Company E1 shares a number of the basic features of a 'Simple Structure' and 'Adhocracy'. Document Three revealed that this company has a flat management structure unlike Company B1A, B1B, and B1C. Company E1's internal structure is: *'simple and dynamic'* (Mintzberg, 1983: p. 159). The company may have used the simple structure beyond its time. Document Three acknowledged that the company had begun to increase its workforce. The senior management team were aware that information was not being cascaded down and, changed the way communication was undertaken. Document Four reports on the structured research on the company's staff survey, which revealed that employees felt that they were not empowered to make their own decisions and carry out their day-to-day duties. This structure is autocratic in how it distributes its organisational power.

The Head Office can choose to invest its finances elsewhere if a company's market share declines. As a result, the Head Office is the only office that cannot fail within the conglomerate. Other offices can be closed without thinking of the consequences. Therefore, establishing these divisional structures across its global business – it can exploit the assets of one division in favour of another. The Head office will make all the *'strategic decisions necessary to keep the over-all'* (Chandler, 1962: p. 111) operational goals. The larger an organisation becomes the more bureaucratic it will transpire to be.

5.6.2 Change the Structure to Change the Behaviour

The organisation has completed several acquisitions during recent years. Each part of the business has been acquired but remains a separate entity. This highlights why the organisation experiences the silo mentality of its workforce. As the saying goes: *'size does matter.'* The size of a company indicates who the 'master' is and which companies are their 'subordinates'. Staff interviewed from Company B1A believes that they are the 'master' company. Their assumptions were based on the size of the workforce. The other companies will argue that, they are the 'master' based on their financial performance. The relationship between Company A1 (Head Office) and the UK division resemble the 'them' and 'us' framework. The 'them' means Head Office, which consists of the CEO and the Company Financial Director. They are the founders behind Company A1. The 'us' denotes the various companies that make up the global empire. Company A1 and the divisions are similar to a 'landlord' and 'tenant' kinship. Every month each company (division) will have a certain level of cash collection in which it pays a portion to the Head Office. If each

company (division) does not meet this requirement, it puts pressure on the Head Office to cover the outstanding costs. There are no late penalty fines served. However, there is the constant pressure to satisfy Head Office and keep the bailiffs away from the door. It is clear that the internal relationship does not reflect the company values. Therefore, these findings indicate the reality of the organisation.

The misperceptions held by each of the companies are embedded within the West Midlands office. This view is taken from the series of issues that have 'roller-coastered' over time and which, have not been resolved. This has created mistrust in the working relationships. The power behind this will be communication and the spreading of inaccurate stories. The justification for using these stories, which can be damaging, will have influenced the relationship and the culture of this regional office. The silo mentality has developed from these occurrences, and the outcome relates to these past events. The thought that the office's history should have a stronghold on the present may be preventing the various companies from moving forward. This concept could be flawed because individuals are unfairly persuading new recruits.

The growing awareness of these stories should encourage us to be careful about how our own views to influence others. In the workplace, *'messages conveyed to a receiver(s) about his, her, or its (group) performance'* (Cusella, 1987: p. 626) will be perceived in multiple interpretations. These various interpretations will leave paradoxes and these mismatched perceptions will create problems for the working environment. I recognise that this will construct a distorted understanding of the workplace.

5.6.3   The Transition and Dynamics of an Internal Environment

This investigation illustrates that a person does not need to be in a senior position to manipulate others with their stories. Some individuals will utilise their own level of power assigned to the role or their line manager's role creating: *'a puppet with a voice'* (Latour, 1996: p. 59). These individuals will allow the storyteller(s) to use their *'poetic licence to embellish the narrative'* (Tietze et al., 2003: p. 65), and inflate some of the features in the account. Organisation members are expected to act accordingly (Simon, 1993) to promote and align their behaviour with the core values. The findings, however, reveals that people will use whatever means necessary to enhance the success of their story including the use of emotional gender games. The *'damsel in distress'* approach is influential. This *'card'* is used on individuals who will show compassion and not detect the fabrication. Therefore, these individuals will be the targeted listener. This illustrates the use of language in the construction of gender identities (Collinson, 1988; Hearn, 1985) within their respective

organisation settings. These individuals will have a series of communication techniques at their disposal. These skills will be used to persuade and deceive other individuals. The justification for their actions is the aspiration for dominance and power. Therefore, when individuals seek power, this can give them some degree of control over others and strengthens their negotiating position. I view this as an important factor to identify the type of influential language that can be used in this complex organisational network. The findings show that the choice of language will create winners and losers, as language powers will often be synonymous with control and influence (e.g. Davison, 1994; Donnelon, 1996; Schneider & Barsoux, 1997). The plan is to not *'allow [people] to think beyond'* (Davies, 1989: p. xi) the composed words. These storyteller(s) will have the choice to change their language to deliver a clear communication. It is anticipated that people will have different ways of saying what they mean. Some individuals will *'take advantage of [their] talents'* (Tannen, 1995: p. 148) and utilise their wide range of vocabulary. The use of stories demonstrates that *'language creates both division and unity'* (Jameson, 2007: p. 215), in ways which will affect sense-making, decision-making and communication.

A story may be accepted as being true, which is a: *'claim to [their] validity'* (Merton, 1973: p. 13). Another reason will be *'as patterns of interaction and perception [emerge] that a group of people share'* (Jameson, 2007: p. 204), which will be acknowledged as factual. This action will affect: *'how individuals communicate'* (Yuan, 1997: p. 311).   Having these discrepancies between the companies will challenge individuals' values, personal interests, and status by those who may stand to be affected. With the internal workplace in a continuous state of flux, certain interactions will divide the workplace between: *'push and pull, or engagement and disengagement'* (Kim, 1995: p. 178). This behaviour will cause *'conflicting perspectives and interpretations'* (Merton, 1973: p. 8) within the same internal context. It is important to recognise that this will lead to *a* display of *'reciprocal distrust'* (Merton, 1973: p. 8) between the companies. For the purpose of this document, there is no attempt to demonstrate internal employee care as is expected when working with an external client. A project working relationship is acknowledged if all personnel from each of the companies work in the same office. The relationship can be a concern when the other parties (companies) from other regional offices do not share the same matter of urgency to deliver their task on time. An explanation of these feelings was raised previously in Document Three:

> *"There is still a perception of being seen as a sub-contractor."* **(17Q)**

> *"Trust hampered when inviting [divisions] to bid on jobs. Problem when they overcharge."* **(5E, 11K)**

"Leadership style hampers communication." **(13M)**

When a company will not accept the leadership of another company on a joint project this will cause the relationship to be less effective and will influence how communication is conveyed. It may be appropriate to adopt an alternative method to manage an unreceptive partner, which may be, for example, be demonstrated by the delay of settling their invoice. The affected individual(s) will interpret this as a sub-contractor relationship. The failure to explain the working arrangements will instigate mistrust between the relevant parties expected to work together. The working cooperation is hampered by apprehension and fear, which creates tension between the individuals. For honest and clear communication to happen: *'some degree of trust [will be] required to engage in cooperative behaviour'* (Cassell & Bickmore, 2000: p. 56). A display of trust and cooperation will ensure that the process operates smoothly. This allows the organisation to manoeuvre the workforce to a better collaborative and cohesive future.

The collections of stories exemplify their impact on individuals from a local level. Each regional office will have their collection of anecdotes. The most significant aspects will be the practices associated with these stories, which may have altered the culture. The *'reproduction cycle'* of these stories will continue as memorable events in the business. These stories will be harder to remove because newcomers are exposed to them. These individuals will view these stories as: *'truthful and valued'* (Gold, 1998: p. 111). Having preconceived feelings will clash with the organisation's company values. Some individuals are not provided with space to construct their own meaning and, will adhere to other people's interpretation of events. The shared meaning is developed and shared with participants within a group. The internal setting and the structure of the business provides the opportunity for stories to excel unchallenged. There has been no effort to minimise the affects and, these problems continue to develop. There is the danger of inciting internal rivalry, which is evident from the findings. Some individuals demonstrate: *'to be successful, presenting themselves better [and] being known to higher level [management]'* (Barlow, 1989: pp. 505-6). The process provides individuals with the visibility to promote their stories. Throughout the management structure people, regardless of role or status, can play out this approach and because of the internal structure, every person can effectively manipulate someone in the chain of command. This action may be undertaken openly or secretly, and will depend on the individual.

5.6.4 Potential Ongoing Research

This document has determined whether the organisation will continue to experience the same problems if it continues along the existing path. The organisation's company values are supposed to demonstrate the behaviour of the organisation. However, the mutual trust necessary to encourage cooperative behaviour is not there. Having observed 'reciprocal trust' between all the companies during the 'resilience process' a sense of belonging to a cross-group community was revealed. This event briefly showed what could happen in a buoyant environment. The resilience process has now been completed and the 'them' and 'us' behaviour has returned. The inconsistencies between the emergent characters and these behaviours have changed these stories to act as a negative mode. Keeping the business aligned with these changing internal conditions will be challenging. People will be conscious of their social environment and their collection of stories. However, an individual will choose how to communicate these accounts and may *'modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others'* (Ting-Toomey, 2005: p. 217) recollection of events. This process will become a challenge for senior management. A change to the current approach for using narratives is required. However, there are clearly issues associated with this, in particular, those stories that can travel and self-perpetuate. People want to trust that their colleagues will not withhold vital information or convey superfluous information. The alignment of the organisational structure does not allow all the groups to work in a cooperative way.

This document highlights that people will use communication and stories to stimulate control and reinforce their decision-making powers. The previously mentioned characters (Them & Us, the Tarnished Hero, the Heroic Survivor, the Victim, and the Villain) identified in the collection of stories can be empowered and effective in the internal environment. Their behaviour can act as a barrier to prevent communication taking place. A wider organisational perspective to develop effective corporate communication will stimulate further research.

5.6.5 Issues for Further Consideration

In this document, the organisation's structure was reviewed to identify the relevance to this study. The organisation acts as a single entity for its external audience. However, the internal setting behaves as separate businesses, which continue to conflict with each other. Mintzberg (1983) states that the way in which an organisation divides its workforce to undertake distinct tasks will characterise its structure. This approach could be akin to the organisation. However, it is inflicting more harm than good. It is believed that: *'elements of [a] structure should be selected to achieve an internal consistency or harmony'* (Mintzberg,

1983: p. 3). The choice to remain with the current structure may be recognised as being a: *'comfort blanket.'* I believe that organisations will not always adopt the structures needed because of their disagreeable circumstances. These factors may include the age, size of the business, the managerial systems in use: *'the stability, complexity, diversity, and hostility of their environments'* (Mintzberg, 1983: p. 145). The need for collaboration to share and support each other is critical. The potential discrepancy between the different components will be costly and time-consuming to correct these problems.

The intent is not to criticise management but to provide an understanding of the intricacy of the internal structure. There is a strong possibility that this will lead to advocating a better internal relationship-based approach. The organisation has not attempted or considered changing the internal management structure, which could be the reason for its failure. The evidence of misunderstanding may be fuelling these stories to be embroiled in the day-to-day internal communication. The length of time that these stories have been allowed to flourish means it will be harder to remove mistrust by a single manoeuvre. It will take time to flush out the old views and replace them with new constructive thoughts. The organisation's management structure hinders this from taking place and therefore, the existing practices remain.

5.7 ROUTES FOR IMRPOVING COMMUNICATION IN COMPANY A1

> *"With every story I hear, I try to think that there is another side, but without knowing specifically the other person's story and only hearing one, it is difficult to make a clear assessment. I do not think there will ever be a case where both parties involved in the story will come and tell me. However, sometimes the person's behaviour would make me think twice rather than the story or situation. Mainly because the person that is doing the telling it could be at fault with their behaviour."*
>
> **Company B1A**

Based on the findings, I will put forward the following ideas for the organisation to consider. An appreciation of these ideas is described in two ways. Having completed this in-depth explanatory study, I cannot claim to have all the answers to resolve all corporate communication problems. However, it will be fair to say that I have an appreciative stance on how problems occur and develop if they are not resolved. Producing any notion of effective communication will require the participation of others. There may be reasons why people will not wish to participate even if they are expected to. The key to developing and improving communication will be to continue to work at it and, there is no simple formula or methodology for it.

In the case of this study, it will be important to resolve the long-standing issues not only in the West Midlands office but also within the entire organisation. Taking small steps rather than one large step will be more effective. Producing a new corporate statement on the process of communication may not be enough – appropriate demonstrable actions from key senior management will be required. Only then will the tidal waves begin to change people's opinions on their working environment. This document provides an insight into one aspect of corporate communication, namely organisational storytelling. In Section 5.2.1, I asked the question why we would want some organisational stories disseminated throughout the working environment. The use of corporate storytelling itself is not a problem – it can be a force for good. This study's findings assist in explaining and anticipating misinterpretation by organisation employees. Put another way, through language and understanding what is said people will have a full appreciation of the story. Instead, these accounts are linked to: *'claims, allegations, lies, and facts'* (Gabriel, 1995: p. 497). As such, these occurrences were no longer treated as stories. These anecdotes will be difficult to reclaim once they are accepted into the internal environment's stock of gossip and myths. In effect, some stories are 'myths' and have a direct influence on the organisation's culture. Companies that ignore such stories do so at their peril. These stories will contain a valuable tool in the management of learning and behavioural change in

organisations. The use of stories can be an effective way for diagnosing an organisation's problems.

I believe that organisational stories can be used in different ways. Stories are used to improve and, maintain a constructive social meaning in communication. There is a link here; stories provide both an affluence of knowledge, and a powerful source for communication, problem solving, and innovation. The implication here is that stories are more likely to flourish in organisations where it is expected and encouraged. This is especially significant to this organisation. Some aspects of historical events will help this prospect. It is envisaged that in all organisations internal stories will be part of the culture and values. The research into organisational stories highlights the purpose for sharing specific organisational stories to reinforce key messages. These will include:

- **Supporting the core values, strategy and goals:**
    - The pursuit to effective communication will start at the top of the hierarchy. The constraints to motivate change will be difficult if there is no consensus to achieve total success. The idea to communicate inaccurate stories will only serve to misrepresent the values and strategy for the organisation.

- **Define and demonstrate the core values:**
    - To change people's behaviour there should be a mix of people (different grades and disciplines) to promote a positive interaction to act as a catalyst. The anticipated relationship with identified personnel from across each of the companies will reveal any controversial issues, which may hinder the development to move forward.

- **Communicate the successes and failures of the organisation:**
    - People will always want to hear the success stories, but will also be intrigued about the ones that did not get to the finishing line! The fundamental failing to be found may be the stories that were swept under the carpet because they could embarrass an individual(s). It could be true to say that, *'our failures are well known, but our successes are not.'* Therefore, having the confidence to discuss these issues will encourage all parties to learn from their experiences in a coherent way.

- **Connect each person to the history of the business:**
    - The enhancement of the staff induction process will provide a suitable platform for new starters in particular, on the history of the business, particularly the idea of introducing designated 'office communicators' in each office. Their responsibility will be to ensure that new recruits receive a pragmatic overview of the organisation. To

ensure continuity of the information being communicated to new recruits, I would rotate the office communicator with one of the new recruits. This will ensure that acceptable stories are being shared between the new starters.

- **Highlight both good and bad internal feedback:**
  - Not every project-related working relationship with other divisions might have a satisfactory ending. However, these particular events will provide the opportunity to discuss what lessons were learnt and what will be done better next time so that the same mistakes are not repeated. For the storyteller – they should not be too facetious with the facts but provide a precise account. It will be more productive to be truthful to allow the listener(s) to ask constructive questions and appreciate the circumstances.

- **Taking the message from the bottom to the top:**
  - In encouraging cross-working and breaking down the barriers between the companies, a 'Let Us Talk Network' could be introduced. This initiative should be opened to all the disciplines at the grass-roots level. The scheme is not intended for the management. The intent will be for staff, without the presence of senior personnel, to have the opportunity to discuss any topics that are relevant to the local office. The theme for discussion could also be instigated at the senior level to gain an understanding of the issues and to take the findings gathered from the business to ensure possible solutions.

- **Who should be in charge of communication – HR or Marketing & Communications or the Staff?**
  - There are two groups (HR and Marketing & Communications) supposedly working towards the organisation's objective in developing a 'communication plan' for the business. It is uncertain what the groups' aims are in regards to 'communication'. I envisage that these groups will have their opinion on delivering this concept. The following announcement (**see Appendix Six**) from the UK HR Director informs employees how the UK Division will try to improve key areas within the business. The first of these is 'communication'. The message indicates possible improvements on the organisation's internal communication. The emphasis of the communication focuses on introducing further processes (communication tools) for staff to communicate.

It could be questionable whether these proposed programmes identified in Appendix Six can help improve the corporate communication. I believe that these ideas will *'run the risk of meeting inertia or resistance'* (McLean & Marshall, 1988: p. 1) because they do not attempt to focus attention on people's behaviour or reinforce the current values and beliefs of the organisation's culture.

- **Storytelling "Communal Areas"** – the company Intranet is the primary method of information for staff. There are shared sites for staff to have debates; however, management regulates these. I propose that an independent share site is set-up where staff can communicate and debate internal organisational issues. However, this site should ensure that staff cannot be identified by means of their computer login details. To preserve confidentiality, a multi-user login to access the site should be allocated to encourage the use of this initiative. The responsibility to monitor the site should consist of a selection of staff from across the various staffing levels. This management approach can benefit the organisation to understand and identify the value of organisation stories as a learning vehicle.

- **Viral Communication** – the effective use of corporate videos and presentations, in-house magazines, and the company Intranet provides an alternative route to improve communication. Despite their apparent differences in focus, they supposedly serve to tell a good story. It may require the organisation to: *'create a number of campaigns and see what hits, then nurture the winners along'* (Scott, 2007: p. 96). The intent of these initiatives should be to have other individuals tell and pass on the story and drive the actions forward. If these current marketing programmes do not provide assurance of meeting the objectives, then it will be necessary to re-evaluate their purpose.

- The next step will be to find ways to assist team leaders to choose their stories and appropriate behaviour. It would be wrong to suggest that managers will become PR experts. Managing the continuity will be an intricate part to change the behavioural pattern of the communal networks. This action will begin at the top of the hierarchy.

5.8 BEYOND THE DBA

> *"When you get introduced to someone it is **[Company B1A]**, **[Company B1C]**, **[Company B1B]**, etc. and not just **[Company A1]**. Hence the reason why I think there is a lot of segregation between and within the office. Even though this is a multi-discipline office, it feels like a **[Company B1A]** office and the rest of us are like visitors. I think because **[Company B1A]** has the majority of staff in the office that the perception is we are inferior to them, which is why it comes across that it is a **[Company B1A]** office."*
>
> **Company H1**

It is anticipated that this research will continue within the organisation. It could remain on the connections between the UK and the global business or alternatively, another division – USA, the Middle East, or Sweden. I may focus on the: *'complexities of communicating in global workplaces'* (Lovitt, 1999: p. 3). This will construct an alternative interpretation of meaning. It will be of interest to examine why senior management, who are committed to improving communication, encounter barriers, which creates problems to achieving and maintaining good communication in practice. Is it, as some will argue, due to the culture and political undertones of the organisation? It will instil an awareness of the culture to discover which type of stories may be shared and why. This will be an interesting area to research, to discover what communication patterns will be necessary for people to enhance effective communication and working relationships. A fundamental task will be to determine an appreciation of the criterion of a successful communication framework.

Another potential line of research concerns the conflicts within the organisation. The focus would be on the inconsistencies in the management structures. The intent would be to understand the various perspectives of each company and each division's contribution and necessity to the global business. This approach may generate a successful outcome for each division to appreciate the everyday practices and challenges faced by each division. An important aspect will be whether the organisation views this as an issue. I would point out that mistakes can always be repeated but good choices may not. If all these perspectives were to be integrated, the organisation may acknowledge: *'what happened, why it happened, and what to do next'* (Kleiner & Roth, 1997: p. 172).

An alternative investigation will be associated with the type of techniques used by team leaders to persuade other personnel including subordinates to align their behaviour with the individual and, what impact this will have on the other personnel in the same social environment. What steps will an individual take to enhance their status, and how would other people interpret their behaviour?

5.9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

> *"I have heard that each **[division]** does not have the same management structure. However, that should not stop us from talking to one another. I mean, if I had a query I would go and ask **[Company E1]** and **[Company B1C]**. However, I am mindful of what I have been told by others in the office."*
>
> **Company B1A**

I would like to express my sincere thanks to those who contributed to producing this paper namely, the staff members based in the West Midlands office. Further appreciation goes to other staff members from Company A1, who played a part, and helped to fulfil my continuous journey.

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Professor Jim Stewart	Course Lecturer/Supervisor
Company E1	Research Champion
Company B1B	Research Champion
Company B1A	Research Champion
Company A1	Executive Client Director
Caesar Family	Mum, dad and brother
Dr Lorna Cork	Critical Friend
Dr Yonca Crew	Critical Friend
Jayne Gilbert	Critical Friend
Chris Jones	Critical Friend
Marlene & Steve Oates-Hinds	Critical Friends

5.10 A REFLECTIVE MOMENT…

> *"Historical issues – a lot of what goes on is individuals because some of us do not forget the past while others work in the future. But I think there is a complete misunderstanding of what we all do some worse than others."*
>
> **Company B1C**

This paper has been by far been the most engaging in completing the DBA programme. I believe that investigating storytelling in a turbulent climate (before, during, and after the resilience process) has enhanced the scope to produce an interesting paper. Although I intended to be a non-participant observer this option was not available, as the events that took place over the past few months have also drawn me into the extended world. I experienced first hand how an unsettled, ambiguous, mistrusting internal environment can cause stories to escalate at fast speeds. These stories came from all levels throughout the managerial hierarchy and once they reached the grass-roots level spread like Japanese weed.

The internal environment triggered different meanings of similar accounts being communicated within this one location. Having the experiences allowed me to interpret, dissect, and respond upon hearing a story. These occurrences proved how stories can be distorted in uncertain times – and how the use of 'foot soldiers' will spread these told and inaccurate stories.

I previously acknowledged the unlikelihood that I will gain any recognition for this research from the organisation. To receive any gratitude now may not be given sincerely. I believe the reason for the lack of acknowledgement is that many people may feel that I should not have been allowed to enrol onto the programme in an attempt to pigeonhole me because of my current role. Thank goodness, I am a person who enjoys fighting back against the 'norm' of other people's preconceived assumptions. I hope my CPD achievements will encourage others, regardless of their current position, to complete a similar educational journey.

In terms of this research, it is clear to say that the passion that I have developed over the duration of this programme, I should not expect others to share. The knowledge that I show can only add value to my self-esteem. My mentor constantly told me: *"it is your research and not the organisation… they care but not as much as you do."*

Even though I have reached this final stage of my studies, it is amazing that I am still apprehensive about my ability to be more confident. I am not sure when I am supposed to develop this final piece of the jigsaw. I keep waiting for the *'eureka'* moment to happen. I permanently keep a lookout for it to tap me on my shoulder or even leave me a personalised note on my bedside table.

Finally, to conclude my reflective moment, the following passage summarises my personal thoughts.

> *'I do so recognising that change cannot happen overnight. I know there has been a lot of publicity about this speech, but no single speech can eradicate years of mistrust, nor can I answer in the time that I have all the complex questions that brought us to this point. But I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly to each other the things we hold in our hearts, and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground. That is what I will try to do today – to speak the truth as best I can, humbled by the task before us, and firm in my belief that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.'*

(President Obama, 2009)

5.11 THE OPENING OF PANDORA'S BOX

> *"I think all managers are at the beck-and-call of somebody further up the ladder. I should imagine there are rivalries and people that are in the good books, and people fall into the bad books at the top end. You see it at my level, but it is not every day you see it. It is only in quiet conversations but I would rather someone had a go at me and not hold it back, and then find out that someone blocked something that I wanted to do because they did not like me."*
>
> **Company B1A**

Over the duration of this study, I have analysed an organisation and its organisational stories. To complete this document, I thought that I would close this chapter by allowing a small selective audience to provide feedback on my research. The reason for doing this reflection in the first place is to *'generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change'* (Schon, 1983: p. 63) in the workforce's behaviour for the future. I have continuously undertaken a reflective approach. As such, the idea was to share an understanding on a familiar, talked-about topic and *'cause them to reflect more deeply'* (Reich, 1993: p. 178), particularly with the aim of helping build on the individual's own learning and perceptions. These individuals are from different companies, disciplines, and positions. Some of these individuals are not associated with the organisation. As such, they provide an external view of my research. To preserve anonymity, all the participants' identities are not revealed. Here are their comments.

I have read your thesis three times now, and every time that I have picked it up to read, it is like reading a best-seller! The first time I read the document, my views were very much the opposite. Having now read it for the third time, it has opened my eyes to understand what various individuals have being trying to tell me but were not as open with me. Whereas, you seem to have been able to gain the staff trust from across the various operating companies, regardless of their disciplines, and grades. I believe that you have exceeded where the Human Resources team has been unable to achieve, and that is the 'trust' in the staff.

The hierarchy philosophy is very much to filter communication from the top down. However, this tends to be water-downed to suit the needs of the individual in charge of cascading the message / information. Clearly, from your findings this seems to be happening under management's very noses. Are we ignoring the signs that our people are trying to tell us without being blatant? If so, who is managing the managers? I was horrified to read some of the stories that people have told you about. I suspect that as humans, we do tend to draw on the negatives in life.

However, this (waving the document in the air) illustrates an image from the people based in this office, and it does not put the organisation in a good light. Saying that, this is not an isolated thing, I have seen and heard of similar incidents occurring in other regional offices, and not just in the UK. I think that your investigation has unearthed an issue that has been brewing for years. I suspect that senior management will not thank you for highlighting the fact so constructively, and they are likely to shoot you - the messenger. However, not all of them will be short-sighted on accepting such a focused and thorough piece of work. I take my hat off to you! I bet if you gave the Chief Executive a copy of this that he would want to meet with you. Like me, he would want to know if you had had, an audience with the three MD's that you identified on your acknowledgement page. If not, then I am happy to drop a subtle hint to them all.

Anyway, the key points that I found reading your document are:
- I found the document very structured, and the sign posting to take the reader back on your journey to return to the current events was helpful.
- I thoroughly enjoyed the literature review, as it sets out the foundation of what was to follow.
- The lack of information to teams not getting out of the rut is an ideal opportunity for reoccurring problems.
- How individuals can suppress information for personal goals and power-control.

- A clear display of the lack of trust in the business, which also challenges our supposedly 1-company culture.
- Individuals' perceptions are continually being tarnished.
- Your research reveals that potential blockers need to be identified and removed.
- More attention required by management to manage their key staff who are responsible for managing and developing people, and not allow them – the team leaders, to create and rule how they want.
- If we are not careful, we will be producing an army of bullies.
- Different cultures and agendas in the business need to be channelled in a positive way.

Through many conversations with Rosemary regarding her Doctorate I have become intrigued with the outcome and findings of her investigation into the internal workings of the company which I have been employed since the mid 1970's. During this time I have worked at many company locations and divisions and as a result have witnessed many changes and group expansions through acquisition of other similar based companies, internal structural changes (both geographically and financial) and several attempts at "re-branding".

My curiosity has also been raised as during the production of this thesis Rosemary would have had an insight into more areas of the company and access to management levels, which are generally unavailable to the employees. Therefore, I appreciate the opportunity to read and make comment on her findings to confirm or counter my own judgement of the company's current structure and method of information transfer.

Although my position within the company is not at the bottom of the information stream, my input and feedback has always been restricted by Line Managers and Directors.

Since joining the company, the growth has been remarkable, from a "family" orientated consultancy to a large disjointed conglomerate with little interaction between divisions and office based groups. It is therefore not surprising, although disappointing that the majority of Rosemary's conclusions have confirmed my experiences regarding the lack of the transfer of information from the top to the shop floor.

The introduction of the company's Core Values appear to be there for PR rather than rules to be followed. They have been increasingly side stepped or conveniently forgotten during the recent economic downturn in order to consolidate individual's positions and divisional performance targets.

Increasing dilution and restriction of disseminated information through individuals who consider that information is power and that a "need to know basis" is the best policy is a concern, a fact that Rosemary has highlighted with the inclusion of the various stories from different levels within the company. This cannot be helped by having several company profiles to the outside world.

I have found the "stories" from individuals to be enlightening but highlights the petty grudges which have been held by individuals throughout the history of the groups acquisitions and the need to

"protect their own" during the mergers which has continued through the relocations of not only the [West Midlands] Office but during other office mergers following acquisition. As Rosemary has concluded, from each of the stories, individuals working within their respective division have manipulated or deliberately misinterpreted facts to create bad feeling between working groups to suit their own circumstances.

My experience has been that the working relationship and cooperation between the various departments and divisions has been generally good, although only at shop floor level. This has not been transferred through to a single global resource due to individual department heads securing and retaining fees within their own divisions to maintain their individual company status and not embracing the "one company" united approach. I have also experienced the persuasive power of Line Managers and Directors, referred to, to control the staff within their group to work within certain patterns not following the core values, *"when I want your opinion, I will give it to you,"* which has been identified in Rosemary's thesis. This has restricted individual thought and development of ideas resulting in a loss of potentially good young engineers and creating an environment where no one will speak out.

I believe that the mistrust is directed towards the faceless people who make decisions which will ultimately impact on the individual, the corporate heads which are rarely seen within the offices but appear in glossy intranet pictures, making decisions from their ivory towers which are remote from the work face preventing any direct discussion. The mistrust is also present in that any individuals concerns can only be relayed through divisional or office managers to the corporate heads. From experience, the divisional and office managers are unlikely to raise concerns outside their own boundary of control.

I am not sure who within the company would fit into each of the Hero, Survivor, Victim and Villain categories, but it would be interesting to ask each of the interviewees which category they would put themselves.

I would hope that following the publication of Rosemary's thesis that individuals further up the food chain would embrace the recommendations and develop a more secure information flow, preventing selective interpretation and embellishment by divisional directors. This could not be achieved by the internal HR department which although is there for staff welfare, it is ultimately paid for by the company. To achieve the correct solution the company must be willing to make changes to the structure and to enforce and police the flow of information through communication in a more open environment.

Reading the thesis has raised further questions regarding communication flow and individual behaviour within this company's environment:

- *Are we any different from companies of similar size?*
- *Is communication a business wide problem, being a small cog in a big wheel?*
- *Should the department / division heads be able to mislead, manipulate information being passed down from above if it is not having a detrimental effect on profit or performance?*
- *Should the stream of information not be policed to ensure that policy decisions are allowed to flow unhindered to the individual worker?*
- *Does the opinion of the individual really matter in the wider scheme?*

Feedback Nᵒ Three

I feel very honoured and privileged to be asked to feedback on such an extensive report.

I have worked the majority of my working life in the public and voluntary sector and it has always been assumed that the private sector had the answers and learning to a number of complex organisational development issues. Reading this report clearly emphasises that whilst this global organisation is successful currently in its business outcomes, however with a tightening economic climate, can it sustain its business effectiveness as its clients may become more selective in terms of who they do business with? This organisation, like many others, clearly has issues in terms of its communication structure and culture impact, and therefore an urgent need to change is becoming more imperative for future effectiveness.

It is clear from the research that story telling has a major influence and does affect the culture. The Higher Education (HE) sector for example has been stated as being good educators but not good developers, and the very same illustrations in this report could be mirrored within the HE sector. Therefore, this research is not only important for the company studied but translates to other sectors.

One of my favourite quotes within this report is *"it might take time to flush out the old views and replace them with new constructive thoughts"* (p98). It is my belief that a courageous organisation taking such fundamental actions forward to address and introduce new ways would generate impressive results both in terms of profitability but also become beacons of excellence, for the many other sectors. The challenges being "buy in" from senior managers who hold the power base in most traditional organisations.

In conclusion I would like to add that this report has stimulated my own thinking and engaged me to think more about my own area of organisational development, the impact of stories I hear and how I inter-operate the rich stories which influence my behaviour and engagement in the working environment.

I sincerely congratulate Rosemary on a comprehensive and well documented report and wish her every future success with her further research findings and reports, and I look forward in anticipation to further reading! Every congratulations Rosemary.

The key points that I picked up from your document were as follows:

- I do not believe that these stories exist. Your thesis describes an accurate (probably) picture from 3 or 4 years ago. Since then, many positive changes that include:

  - Annual Staff Surveys
  - Vision and Values
  - Project Enterprises
  - Intranet

- The above-mentioned are positive attempts to change during the time of your thesis.
- There was not much of a balanced view. Negatives were accentuated (I don't remember reading many, any positives).
- Academic Theories – The narrative seems a little structured in order to match academic theories.
- Understandably, a lot of the narrative is based upon [West Midlands] interviews. This may not necessarily be representative of the UK as a whole.
- I think you should speak to the HR Director. She might have some views about this.
- Should the rest of the Managing Directors to be told about this? I would be happy to provide an introduction to the other Managing Directors about your thesis.
- Key point coming across to me is the need for positive 'stories'. Otherwise, the negatives are accentuated.
- The organisation structure on p. 10 – it was interesting that these support services are indicated hierarchically above the operational running of the firm. Can you explain why you did this?

The document focuses on Organisational communication; but it also highlights a number of issues relating to both the management of change and organisational culture.

Organisations often find it difficult to turn their rhetoric into reality. For example, most say they want an inclusive culture where diversity is valued and everyone can reach their potential. However, the reality is different and the art of storytelling may impact both fairly and unfairly on staff that are brave enough who raise concerns about activities, which are ethically, and professional behaviour.

Harnessing positive and constructive cross-cultural communication will always be challenging if the organisation is not clear about its approach to effective people management.

In my organisation, (Government Agency) senior management often state that staff are encouraged to speak up. That is correct but if the messages are not acceptable to them, staff run the risk of being marginalised, undermined or subjected to unfair treatment in some way. The storytelling within the organisation often confirms what really does happen to staff when they speak up!

An organisation's HR Department can reveal a lot about how the organisation actually operates. They often set the tone for the culture of the organisation by how they operate themselves. The thesis clearly reflects how a dysfunctional HR can impede the progress of the organisation in promoting employee engagement and involvement.

Without a cohesive senior management people strategy, it is easy for staff to work in silos and appear as if they are working against each other. Senior managers set the standards of behaviour or performance for an organisation so it is critical that they facilitate and enable a positive and supportive work environment. This means not encouraging behaviour that works against the preferred ethos of the organisation.

Without the necessary clarity, staff will manipulate the situation and capitalise on their individual power and influence by using storytelling –constructive or destructive. The rules of engagement should always be clear and communicated clearly and often.

I like chapter 5.2.4 *'Using Narratives through the Use of Language'*. Particularly, the point about individuals who have a way with words can have the power to manage the social environment to their own devices. I see this happening all the time to undermine some key senior management messages.

In the current economic climate, it is even more important to ensure the culture of the organisation is positive – staff will be expected to do more with less so the dynamics have changed. This will be exacerbated if diversity issues are not addressed positively.

It is also difficult to manage the formal and informal networks, which help to perpetuate the culture. Changing the structure without a concerted effort to clarify what culture is required and what it will look like is likely to result in much of the same muchness. Each business entity within the company will need to sign up to being part of a bigger entity instead of returning to working in silos.

The suggestions for improving organisational communication are sound and the business would benefit greatly if it takes on board your suggestions.

A fascinating insight into human nature between individuals in professional working relationships at all levels within an existing organisational structure. Beautifully written and constructed presenting clear examples throughout and presenting explanations both meaningful and easy to understand - a pleasure to read.

I particularly liked chapter *"5.2.1 – Challenge the Methodologie*s". This was one of the sections that really opened my mind as to why anybody would choose to tell a story about somebody else. I think the most telling statements are:

"The practice of informal storytelling will continue to exist so long as the organisation is in operation" and *"It may be true to say that we all have a story to tell and everybody tells a story"* as people are always going to talk about other people but it depends on how they do it, why they do it and how often they do it.

My day-to-day views on storytelling within the office are:

- Some people tell other people a story and expect them to pass it on (in some form) to someone else – and that person in turn is expected to pass it on - like a chain effect
- Some people ask if they can tell somebody else a story in confidence – and mean it
- Some people ask if they can tell somebody else a story in confidence - but don't really expect them to respect that confidence

For example before reading the thesis, if I were asked the question *"Why do people tell stories about others?"* I would firstly say it because they're "gossips" – however I now believe that they're actually, *"storytellers by nature"* i.e. *"these stories may be good or bad, true or false; the storytellers will tell stories to capture minds and win hearts."* So *"office gossips"* are actually people who think it'll <u>make themselves look good</u> by passing on any information they hear or interpret about others whatever it is.

I completely agree with *"The justification of sharing stories will be to gain power over another person"* as by telling a story and placing someone in a negative light the storyteller believes that they will automatically place themselves in a positive light by putting somebody else down.

I personally hear many stories and tell very few. I think it depends on whether or not you believe you are a good judge of character and so only tell the stories to people (you believe) you can trust.

The reason I tell a story is usually because the person I'm telling has already confided in me about the same person i.e. I'm telling the story to back up a view I know the person I'm telling already holds of the person I'm telling the story about. This story could be something positive/negative or fairly indifferent – it doesn't matter. What matters is I am saying, *"I share your view and here's why"* by passing the information on.

I now have a completely different view of storytelling within the office having read this section of the thesis. I had previously thought that those telling the stories were focused - and wanted the recipient of the story - to be focused on the people they're telling the story about. Having read the research I now believe the people involved in the story are mainly the secondary focus and it's primarily to do with what the storyteller himself is feeling or thinking – from trying to gain power, to trying to win affections or trust, to seeking revenge, to venting frustration - or indeed any other emotion which will aid or assist that individual to cope in the office environment.

You can relate to what is being transcribed. It is true about speaking ones mind etc., but you are then treated differently. Look at the results of the staff survey compared to what the staff thinks. More people have to be honest and open rather than shirking away and it would then make a better place for working. Management are sometimes *'not listening'* when you do open up anyway!

I also think that your report is generally, what is happening in all offices and not just in the particular office that you researched. Again, management will not like what they read, as they don't open their eyes to what is happening or being said.

Old processes keep coming to fore, they are in the past, and we are moving forward. Try the new processes they could and can be better for the good of all.

Feedback N° Eight

Following a slow and diligent review (had to be in order for me to fully digest the details!) of your final Document for your PhD, I have to say it was a really interesting and refreshing read. There were many scenarios discussed which I could relate to and it was reassuring in a way that my own opinion and thoughts on certain situations can be related back to actual case studies and acknowledged certain behavioural characteristics.

It was quite strange reading about anonymous sub-companies and individuals, but being able to read between the lines and form an opinion of who you were probably referring to – some were easier than others!

I was also impressed by the lack of any reference – i.e. no actual names mentioned – to what I have always regarded many of the scenarios discussed relate to, which is *'Office Politics.'* This is possibly an over simplification of the now acknowledged multi layered and complex communication network present in a large organisation. I hope you realise I will also now tend to try and categorise certain individuals into one of the four characters discussed in your paper – I'm still not sure where I'd put myself by the way – do you have a secret schedule for everyone you interviewed – and possibly everyone in the [West Midlands] office?!

I certainly intend to take on board those closing comments and observations made in the Summary and Routes for Improving Communication. Ironically but not surprising I guess, some of which should really be common sense, but so easily missed and forgotten in the manic office environment – but this is not excusable. It will be interesting to see if any company policy is affected / reviewed as a result of this paper – it does make some significant recommendations on matters, which are of a magnitude, which really does warrant their consideration at Board level.

Best of luck with your final results on this Rosemary – this does mark the end of a long journey and hard work for you I know – you won't know what to do with all the spare time!!

As discussed, I found your work very interesting and enlightening. In addition, I offer the following thoughts.

Reading your thesis has bought forward in my mind the disconnection between the Group Values and the way we are structured and how the latter works against the former.

I also feel that the large number of 'managers' in the business makes the communication of values and other corporate messages / stories harder as each will interpret the core message differently. It also means that it is harder for the business to build a management team that is truly aligned and on message.

If we had fewer managers, then this would help the communication issue, and would also give greater weight to those giving the message making staff feel more connected to Group. You could liken the management level as a bank of cloud that sits between those below and the clear blue sky of the Group's corporate ideals. The thicker the cloud, the harder it is for the sun to penetrate!

I am also aware that, other than the staff survey, there is no mechanism for monitoring staff satisfaction or manager compliance or effectiveness in getting the corporate story across. The responses from staff in your thesis I find very depressing in that they show just how far we need to go to achieve the [Company A1's] Values.

Further to our feedback discussion, I have listed my key comments on your thesis, which are followed by a brief statement.

1. The stories chosen were clear and precise in order for the reader to evaluate each story for its inclusion.
   - The thesis does go into the mechanism for choosing the stories. It also explains why these stories made it and why some did not. This shows that the stories used were not biased in shaping the outcome.
2. The literature review was extremely comprehensive.
   - The review covered some 20 pages and showed that the topic was extensively researched and referenced.
3. I liked the way the topics were developed and the stories chosen to demonstrate the headings of victim, villain, heroic survivor and tarnished hero.
   - It can be seen that the stories painted a detailed picture of the topics, they also helped to emphasise the way individuals and organisations use the information to their end.
4. The stories were very graphical in bringing out the relevant points of the headings.
   - The stories used to demonstrate the headings show that information can be disseminated and interpreted in many ways. It can be seen that the same information passed on from individual to individual can change in meaning and emphasis during the transmission.
5. The stories used came from a variety of sources within the organisation, which enhanced to impact of the stories on the headings.
   - Having information from across the organisation gives the document more weight, if the stories were only from one section of the organisation the document could have been seen as biased with an un-realistic slant on the findings. However, using a broad spectrum of people with differing opinions and background gives the document a feeling of balance.
6. The thesis amply demonstrates that corporate communication is a minefield.
   - The various examples of corporate communication used shows that in what ever form the communication is presented in people will read into it different meanings. People will put a different emphasis on a communication dependent on their circumstances.

I hope this helps and good luck with your aspirations in 5.7 of getting the organisation to support its core values and in communicating both successes and failures.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

TYPE OF NARRATIVES CATEGORISED BY %

Type of Narratives categorised by %

Villain

Victim

Tarnished Hero   Heroic Survivor

Them & Us

Assocation between Characters and the Stories

Stories by %

70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0
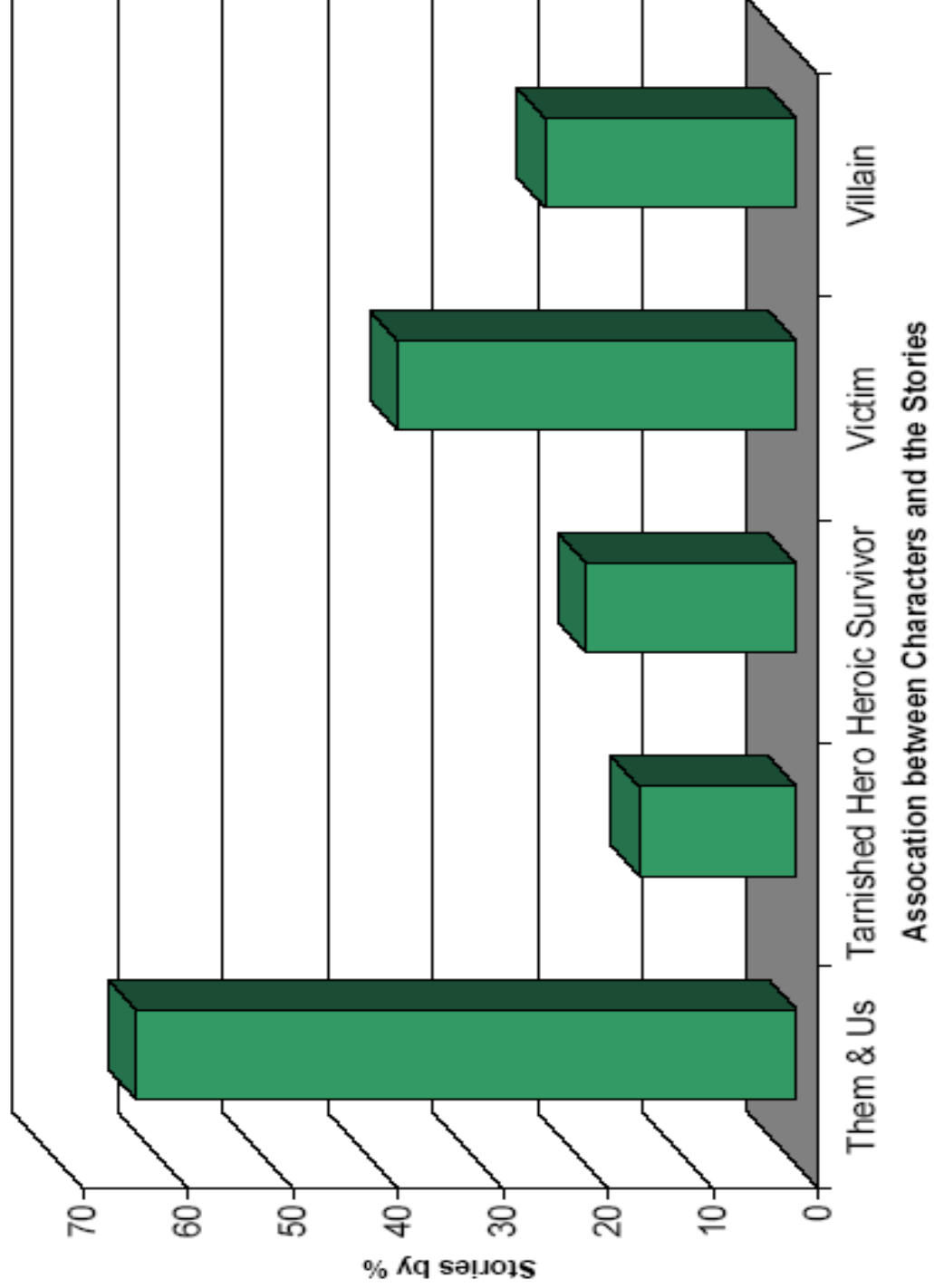
APPENDIX TWO

PRELIMINARY EXERCISE

APPENDIX THREE

'THEM' AND 'US' CATEGORY

APPENDIX FOUR

THE 'FOUR' CHARACTERS

APPENDIX FIVE

THE IDENTIFIED CHARACTER'S BY SUB-GROUPS

The Victim

The Victim

APPENDIX SIX

Announcement on Improving Communication, Company B1

Management Services update

HUMAN RESOURCES

20 October 2009

Dear colleagues

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

A few weeks ago we communicated the fact that the Global Employee Survey will go live next month. We also promised provide an update on each of the three key areas you told us in the last survey we needed to improve on in the UK. The of these is *Communication*.

When you have a business as diverse as ours, it is always important that we do everything we can to make sure we sha information. However, this year particularly has highlighted just how important effective communication is and, supported your feedback in the survey, we have taken steps to try and improve our performance.

A FRESH START

We started in January by reorganising our marketing and communications function to make it more effective. We appoint new UK Business Marketing Manager and recruited internally to fill two new roles: UK Communications Manager and UK Events Manager. We also reorganised our graphics capability and appointed a UK Graphics Manager from the existing t While this team has been working together with marketing and business development representatives across the UK business to improve our external profile, a lot of work has also gone into improving our internal communications. Here ar ome of the changes that have been implemented so far:

Email
You will have seen more correspondence from our UK Chairman, ▮▮▮▮▮ this year and his emails – as well as t of our UK MDs and key ExCom representatives – make use of new visual formatting to try and aid visibility in your crowd inbox.

We have also set up a dedicated Marketing & Communications email address to help you direct any questions – ukmarcomms@▮▮▮.com. Feel free to send us your ideas; communication is a two-way process.

Exchange
In July we launched our new quarterly publication, Exchange, which aims to help unify our UK business, create a sense community, and provide a platform for us to share ideas.

▮▮net
The UK intranet has for some time been our key communications tool, but we know that over time it has been extensivel adapted. We recognise that it is perhaps not as effective as we would like it to be and are currently looking at ways to address the issues. You can expect to see changes over the next few months.

VIEW
We know that we need to diversify the media we use so next month we are launching another new tool to help improve internal communications. Dial our new ▮▮▮VIEW telephone number from any landline or mobile and you will be able to a business update from ▮▮▮ hear the latest sector news, and more.

We still have a long way to go but we intend that these UK specific initiatives, together with the global roll-out of *United b*

20/10/2009

Document One

Definition and Mapping of Research Questions

Submitted by: Rosemary E. Caesar

Supervisors: Professor Colin Fisher

Professor Jim Stewart

Document One submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement of the Nottingham Trent University for the Degree of Doctorate of Business Administration

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATIONAL AND MANAGERIAL CONTEXT

How come you found out before me – am I not a Board Director?

The introduction to my research is being written at a time when the original piece of work I intended to undertake has altered due to continuous unexpected changes in the host organisation (Company A1). This might be what I plan to research, but the speed at which it is happening is difficult to keep up with! The pace has kept my thought processes moving to such an extent that it has been almost impossible to start writing Document One as the words and ideas alter in my mind almost as soon as they are ready to be written down.

When I decided to embark on the DBA programme last year it was with the agreement (in regard to time and access) of the host organisation that the Head of HR for Company A1 would choose the topic. Communication has been a problem for the host organisation, and therefore it was identified as the subject area.

As Company A1 continues to grow in size, it is becoming evident that official messages/information from the strategic management group are taking longer to filter through the formal channels and between the various levels of management to reach the lower non-managerial staff. Recent messages have been received not through the formal channels (top down) orchestrated by the strategic management group, but through some (unknown) individuals using informal networks (grapevines) to allow or possibly encourage communication to move quickly without any blockages. Some information spreads like 'wildfire', reaching the lower non-managerial staff before the management even has a chance to think about it. On a few occasions, this has backfired because when the management eventually decided to communicate the information, there were already variations circulating around the network. This can make it more difficult for the management to get the message across to members of staff who might already have made up their minds. On several occasions I have heard staff making comments such as 'I've been here over [5, 10, and 20] years and it is the same message I heard back then ….'

The subject as it pertains to the host organisation has never been the focus of an in-depth examination, even though the organisation has been in existence for over 30 years. However, the problem has never been dealt with because of the lack of support from the strategic management group, which did not take the issue seriously enough collectively. My perception is that this was because there was no one knowledgeable person who fully understood how to tackle the issue in the organisation. There have been several small target areas of project research by different personnel undertaking academic qualifications, such as masters degrees (MA, MBA, and MSc), for example:

■ MBA thesis: How to measure the success of a European acquisition in the service industry – a post acquisition appraisal (Stevens, 2003)
■ MA thesis: Are great workforces recruited or are they made? (Caesar, 2002)

Unfortunately, the research findings have been kept within the sponsored company and were not given the opportunity for an audience with the UK's strategic management committee.

The host organisation (Company A1) is a global conglomerate providing engineering consultancy services to clients across many market sectors. The company has a workforce of around 5,400 people. Over the last 10 years the organisation has continued to increase its presence in the business market by expanding its portfolio internationally through acquisitions. The regions covered are as follows: Asia, the USA, South Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Today, the organisation operates in 99 offices, working in 55 countries around the world. Company A1's intention is to provide an 'all-inclusive' service, which makes the business one of the largest engineering consultancy organisations. Throughout the history of Company A1, the group has primarily grown in size through acquisitions, with a small percentage via organic growth. Due to this, the group's organisational structure is set up with numerous management levels to manage and support the business as a whole.

The focus of my research is the following UK Division (B1) companies within the host organisation:

Company B1A   ]
Company B1B   ]
Company B1C   ]   **Division B1**
Company F1   ]

Company H1   ]

Each of the aforementioned companies is represented by a managing director and a designated board of directors. They are supported by their defined hierarchy structure levels, which are varied, and by a mixture of internal committees. These so-called working groups appear to work autonomously. Some of these groupings may not feed back to their relevant staff. Some, however, issue minutes from their meetings, although others are not so transparent.

1.0.1 Sector Champions

This specialist group is made up of twelve individuals selected from across the UK company (Division B1) who are recognised as 'experts' within their discipline in the external business market.   The sector champions work not only within their company, but also across the conglomerate to provide support on potential business opportunities and offer help during the life of a project. However, they are also seen as 'role models' who demonstrate the core values[i] of the business, in particular 'integrity' and 'collaboration', with the aim of encouraging the right environment for inter-company networking across the group.

As Document One gets underway, I am hopeful that at this early stage it will begin to clarify and influence the potential benefits of examining human influences within the context of a large environment and give a comprehensive understanding of why the host organisation is experiencing problems. In this document I will explain the research that needs to be undertaken:

■ to identify the importance of the communication problems that have been identified within the organisation; and
■ to understand the causes of these problems and their impact on the organisation.

I will achieve this by outlining a research plan, which I will implement in Documents Two, Three, Four, and Five.

The research will seek to identify ways to overcome the problems and improve communication in the organisation.

1.2 STAKEHOLDERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

> When I spoke to the Managing Director – he informed me this had already been discussed. Now I find out this is untrue.

A description of the topic to be researched was an issue in itself, mainly due to the continuous unforeseen changes in the host organisation, or, at least, my perception of how the host organisation has changed in the last few months in regard to how information is being disseminated.

To gain a better understanding from the strategic management board various one-to-one meetings were arranged with all the managing directors and other key personnel (HR & Communication Director, and the UK Finance Director) for an informal discussion. The aim was to find out if they were aware of the proposed research, secondly to provide the directors with the opportunity (in confidence) to express their own views on the subject, and finally for me to seek each individual's support for the research.

It was important that all the managing directors were recognised as individual 'stakeholders whose interests should ultimately be protected' (Schein, 1987: 125), because although the host organisation is seen externally as 'one business', internally the organisation works as separate entities. It was interesting that each person identified and raised the same problem areas, not only within his or her company, but also across the whole organisation. Below are some of the examples of the issues raised:

- Ring-fence cultures between the various companies causing blockages in communication between them.
- Information only cascades downwards, with very little or no feedback directed back up.
- The varied management structures within the companies delay messages, preventing quick delivery in the right language. This causes different interpretations to be made across the various office locations.
- Lack of trust between the companies, which impacts on the various management levels.
- Lack of sharing of expert knowledge within and between the various companies, which is seen as a power/control factor.

To help substantiate these findings, discussions were also held with three other managing directors (Company E1 – Global Managing Director and UK Managing Director, and the Managing Director of Company G1), who are not part of the UK division but who could possibly add value to the research. Therefore, permission was sought and granted by the managing directors to be included in the proposed research. The three managing directors raised similar areas to those detailed above.

1.3   ACADEMIC FIELD: PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

> Why do management speak to us like we are children?

The literature to be explored will cover a wide variety of fields. The range may well alter as the research develops, particularly because of the subject matter. As a minimum the research could follow either the approaches undertaken in communication, the processes by which the approaches are undertaken, or possibly the leadership styles of the management: the prospect of exploring the realities of management in practice and how they may impact on the approaches and the potential processes used within the context of organisational communication and whether the thinking of the members of the management has any bearing on the internal and external influences.

The following range of literature will be relevant to the research and will be explored in more depth in the main literature review (**see Document Two**).

1.3.1   Organisational Communication

Over the years, there have been diverse definitions of 'communication'. There is no doubt that our understanding of communication influences how we act and how we analyse situations (Hartley & Bruckmann, 2002), and therefore it will be important for me to bear this in mind and to be seen to act impartially while conducting my research.

For the purpose of this study, the definition focuses on workplace communication, for which a number of writers, such as Katz and Kahn (1966), Putman and Pacanowsky (1983), and Weick (1969), acknowledge an integral relationship between communication and organising, and therefore takes on the approach of organisational communication.

There are several definitions that a small selection of writers have put forward: a complex phenomenon that combines both the human and the social aspect of communicating (Kefalas, 1997); the 'impact of messages within a network of interactional relationships' (Tortoriello, Blatt, & DeWine, 1978: 3); 'environments designed for manageable, co-operative, goal-oriented behaviour' (Wilson, Goodall, & Waagen, 1986: 6); 'exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships to cope with environmental uncertainty' (Goldhaber, 1993: 14–15); and 'the

process by which people and their work activities are organised to meet organisational objectives' (Robinson, 2001: 27).

Goldhaber's definition has particular significance for what is proposed in this research, because the setting is a large complex organisation, and therefore it is the definition selected for the purpose of this study. The next section will identify examples of some of the topic areas explored. Within any organisation, communication can flow in three directions: downward, upward, or horizontally (Andrew & Herschel, 1996). The direction of the flow will depend on the structure and the 'functional relationships which decide to a great extent the patterned flow of communication' (Cherry, 1980: 8). However, changes in the direction, whether intentional or otherwise, can alter the shape if the organisational structure is 'highly complex and varied in form' (Cherry, 1980: 8).

1.3.2 Vertical Communication
Downward

Downward communication is not in itself a bad thing. However, it only travels in one direction, leaving little or no chance for variation because messages only flow from the top down. In defining downward communication Katz and Kahn (1978) suggest job instructions, rationale (for task assignments), information feedback, and attempts to indoctrinate or motivate. Elaborating on communication, Leopold (2002) points out that it is for managers to inform and educate employees directly so that they accept management plans. If downward communication is primarily to inform in order for employees supposedly to accept 'the information' from the management, even if it may be consistent, there is little opportunity for debate or to scrutinise any interpretations on the part of employees. How effective this might be within a large organisation is uncertain. In addition, does it help to stimulate greater commitment on the part of the employees? Torrington and Hall (1991) would argue that it is not enough for communication to be a one-way ticket. Drucker (1993: 490) supports this argument, suggesting that downward communication 'cannot work, no matter how hard and how intelligently we try'. Both these aspects are relevant to the research.

Upward

Upward communication suggests allowing employees to contribute information and ideas; keep managers in touch with concerns, issues, and questions; and contribute to the development of a shared understanding of organisational goals (Bevan & Bailey, 1991). According to Katz and Kahn (1978), upward communication usually focuses on

the employees' needs and assumes one of the following forms: employees' comments about themselves, their performance, problems and reactions, and ideas about others' behaviour. It could also include their reactions to organisational practices and policies and their thoughts about what needs to be done and how it can be achieved. If that is the assumption, it could highlight why some managers are reluctant to encourage upward communication if they feel that the approach could tempt 'subordinates to influence' (Greiner & Schein, 1988: 14). In these situations 'issues of status, power and prerequisites [can] often cloud the form and content of upward communication' (Andrew & Herschal, 1996: 146).

1.3.4 Horizontal Communication

It appears that much of the textbook literature suggests that traditional bureaucratic organisations may not merely have done little to promote horizontal communication but in some cases could actually have discouraged it. Within a large organisation, the conditions under which such lateral exchanges might be deemed acceptable usually involve a crisis or emergency (Fayol, 1949). It would be hard to define what is classified as an 'emergency' communication in one company compared with another company. Therefore, to use only this approach for certain might encourage competition rather than cooperation and create additional barriers. However, Andrew and Herschel (1996: 147) believe that by following 'vertical flows, each message would touch all appropriate points of authority'.

1.3.5 Informal Organisations

Often referred to as the grapevine (networks), information can travel quickly because it is unimpeded by structural constraints. Some individuals may feel the need to communicate with someone else not associated with their formal organisational channel, which could provide an informal setting for communication to occur. These networks can often develop by accident, possibly due to similar personalities, personal skills/disciplines and/or values. Most employees are involved in several networks simultaneously. Some groups may grow from political ties, others from technical interests, and still others from social preferences (Roberts & O'Reilly, 1978). However, Deal and Kennedy (1982) suggest that 90% of what occurs in an organisation has nothing to do with a formal event. Rather, the informal network, the 'hidden hierarchy', is the reality of how an organisation can operate. This is not to say that organisations may be swamped by the multiple layers of informal networks.

1.3.5 Sensemaking

In the context of how members of the management might communicate with their staff it will be important to understand how individuals assign meaning (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) within their working environment. It is through sensemaking that individuals can come to understand the organisation's objectives. Weick (1995: 133–124) highlights that 'organisations are presumed to talk' to their employees, who might be of help to the organisation as it plans for the future (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). This process might sometimes be undertaken with a 'top-to-bottom challenge of the company's deepest assumptions' (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994: 5). However, Weick (1995) points out that an organisation cannot make sense of its world without the social interaction of its members. I believe that without the opportunity for talking, arguing, and interpretation that is necessary for making sense of things (Ashmos & Nathan, 2002) it will be hard to engage in questioning and indeed helping clarify the information issued by the organisation. It is important to recognise that power games are not excluded and constraints on actions and interpretations should be taken seriously. Here, 'discourse ethics' is highlighted. Weick (1995: 6) makes an interesting point that 'sense may be in the eye of the beholder, but beholders vote and the majority rules', which could identify major resource problems – such as power struggles and conflicts within the organisation.

1.3.6 Discourse Ethics

The study of organisational communication can easily impose ethical questions on the techniques used to persuade and influence people, whether right or wrong in any situation. A major reason to engage with employees is that it is impossible for any one individual to have all the information necessary to make high-quality decisions (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Nahavandi & Aranda, 1994). The distribution of engagement within an organisation should increase the information, knowledge, and creativity that will be brought to bear on problems (Locke & Schweiger, 1979). With the problem of everyday decisions being made off the top of our heads (Taylor & Fiske, 1978), it will be important to understand the circumstances in which individuals in a managerial role can persuade and influence people (Schreirer & Groeben, 1996), in making decisions with or without the full relationship between 'fact' and 'truth'.

The examination of the diverse range of literature illustrated here will enable me to focus the objectives of my DBA research and develop a conceptual framework to guide the research.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND PLAN

> We are told that this is an 'open', and 'no blame' culture. Well, I do not think management read their own document.

The aim of the research is to examine how management use a variety of techniques to persuade and influence individuals to support and believe in the management's core values. I will concentrate on some of the key areas in the host organisation. The challenge, however, will be to focus the research, particularly as there are so many influences at work at present. It is my perception that there has been so much emphasis on the organisation's core values lately that you cannot help but feel that they are being forced upon the organisation from on high, for instance how communication is being 'drip fed' and received via 'informal networks'. Could this approach be concocted by management themselves? Is that their way of informing staff that what they are doing is for the 'good' of the organisation? Many individuals are now speaking with their counterparts from other companies to compare 'information' received from their own management. Such a study could also reveal the power relationships and to some extent the behaviour of management when informing staff. A range of conceptual frameworks that could be applied have been considered, which may be useful to the research.

The 'garbage can' theory (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972) might be useful as a processual approach, particularly because it focuses less on the details of individuals' decision making and more on the aggregate flows of people, problems, and solutions through organisational networks (Padgett, 1980), especially within a differentiated chain-of-command hierarchy.

The 'heuristics' theory (Hogarth, 1980) could be another useful processual approach. This method focuses on how 'emotions can also function as principles, for guiding and stopping information' (Gigerenzer, Todd, & the ABC Research Group, 1999: 31). It will also be important to understand how decisions are made and 'to capture how real minds make decisions under constraints of limited time and knowledge' (Gigerenzer, Todd, & the ABC Research Group, 1999: 3). Payne, Bettman, and Johnson (1993) believe that the constraints under which people have to make their decisions can be detrimental to

their judgement and decision making. In the context of a large global organisation it can be a major factor for all the stakeholders.

A range of theoretical 'lenses' have also been reviewed, which were complex, dynamic, linear, and sequential. At this point in the research both the deductive and the inductive approach can be valuable and therefore it will be important to be flexible with both options. The deductive approach is very linear – one step follows another in a clear and logical sequence. However, there might be occasions when this is not appropriate. This approach can allow the research questions and methods to evolve during the course of the investigation (Schwartzman, 1993), and 'produce [some] unexpected findings' (Bryman & Bell, 2003: 11). Alternatively, the inductive approach seeks to 'build up a theory which is adequately grounded in a number of relevant cases' (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 1997: 348). Therefore, it will be important to bear in mind that the 'theory or literature may change as a result of the analysis of the collected data, for example, may not fit the original hypotheses' (Bryman & Bell, 2003: 11).

With such a wide topic area, it would be difficult not to become fascinated by other concepts, in particular power (relationships) and knowledge management, in the context of the research topic. There is a great deal in the above-mentioned concepts that is of relevance here and will need further examination.

1.4.1 Research Questions and Outline for Documents Three, Four, and Five

The following research questions and sub-questions will be used to explore 'horizontal communication' throughout Company A1, and assist in understanding the inter-relationship between the issues and the influence they could face in the future.

1. Given its multi-cultural setting what should Company A1 do to improve communication between the divisions in the UK, Europe, and internationally?

2. Do the different senior management groups within each division of Company A1 have different communication techniques and approaches, and if so, what effect does this have on influencing their respective staff?

3. Do internal influences, such as senior/middle-tier management, prevent staff from receiving information, and if so, what long-term effect does this have on Company A1?

4.   How do individuals at different levels of management interpret the messages received from senior management?

5.   What are the consequences for Company A1 of the various management structures within the conglomerate and can power relationships influence horizontal communication?

These strategic and research questions are not exclusive within the study, and I envisage that subsequent questions and explorations will emerge later on. The next phase is to consider the range of conceptual theories and use the questions in carrying out the following activities to collect the data:

Document Three	Do the different senior management groups within each division of Company A1 have different communication techniques and approaches, and if so, what effect does this have on influencing their respective staff?

Document Three will take an interpretative approach in order to generate the complexity and inconsistencies that abound in the topic, which will be, for example, where the 'garbage can' theory might apply. This will take the form of action research, in particular with the top senior management (board of directors) of each company within the UK remit, including Company E1. I am intending to conduct a series of **focus groups**, **in-depth interviews**, and **open observation** during the course of the study, but predominantly at the outset. This will allow for each individual's and divisional groups' 'story' to be told and analysed. This will also include examining the interaction between the individuals so that the material accumulated can be interpreted alongside the other companies.

The main aims of the **focus groups** will be to explore the concept of organisational communication as it pertains to the 'host organisation', to identify issues that will be included in the questionnaire for Document Four and to assemble qualitative data for inclusion in the study. I am also intending to carry out some **in-depth interviews** with the key shareholders (the plc board of directors) of the host organisation, who as a group are key to the strategic direction and values of the organisation: the Chief Executive Officer; Group Financial Director; Chairman of Company J1; and two non-executive directors. This will provide me with the opportunity to work closely with the

participants (key personnel across the organisation) from the outset (Oja & Smulyan, 1989).

The relationship between the interpretations of these two groups (the plc board and the UK board) will be examined to find out how information (communication) is filtered and shared through the various levels of management. This will provide the opportunity not only observe to whether either or both the 'garbage can' and the 'heuristics' theory might play a part in how information is handled, but also whether these theories will shed some light on my understanding of the material. It will be important to recognise that these same individuals may interpret their own views in different ways, and may not be influenced when faced with another participant's story.

The above participants include individuals who have power within their respective companies. Therefore, testing the parameters of each of the environments, and exploring the impact on the organisation as a whole, will be an important factor. Their views on how they collectively and separately deal with information are vital to the health of the organisation's future.

Document Four	Do internal influences, such as senior/middle-tier management, prevent staff from receiving information, and if so, what long-term effect does this have on Company A1?

Document Four will be a realist study. This will be helpful in Document Five when examining carefully the stories from the action research in Document Three against a different background. For example, a small sample of individuals from the action research will be involved in completing the **questionnaires**. In Document Five the research will examine whether their views differ when being asked specific and private questions, rather than when they are part of the **focus group**. Individuals may interpret their own views in a different way when not immediately faced with their immediate group.

The sector champions (specialists group) will also be included in this area, because they will be able to provide some valid input, as their roles impact on how information is distributed horizontally across the various companies.

The sample will include a wider range of people than Document Three, to achieve a broader perspective of the organisation internally as well as externally. It will also

provide an international feature to the research. This could be in the form of either Company D1A or Company G1. Due to both companies having a geographical dispersal of offices, it will be important to negotiate a convenient platform on which to conduct this part of the research.

By carrying out a piece of realist research, in Document Five I will be able to look at the discrepancies and contradictions that arise not only between what an individual expresses in two different settings (questionnaire and action research) but also in comparison with others' views.

The most likely comments to be echoed from the specialist group (senior management personnel) and middle management might be: 'I communicate well, it's everyone else around me that needs help' or 'I communicate effectively with individuals below me but those above me do not communicate well with me.' I believe that some non-managerial staff will have the opposite responses. It will be important to establish these types of inconsistencies and identify the difficulties they are likely to cause.

The questionnaire will be designed and constructed around the issues raised in Document Three. However, there will be more intensive emphases in Document Four, because both internal and external influences and the change in individual leadership can be a key factor at the time of my research.

Since writing Document One, there have been some operational changes within the host organisation. As of 1 November 2005, Company West & West will be changed to Company N1 and will be fully amalgamated into Company B1A's remit. I was originally intending to include Company P1 (USA Division) as part of the research, but due to these new developments that has now been changed.

Document Five	How do individuals at different levels of management interpret the messages received from senior management?

Document Five will, as previously stated, examine the relationship between the individuals' views expressed in both Document Three and Document Four. It will also examine the differing viewpoints of the internal and external influences.

Once again, the realist approach will be used to seek and explain what is occurring in the host organisation. This time a mixture of **in-depth interviews** and **focus groups**

will be conducted at all the management levels across the organisation to accumulate qualitative data and to clarify any outstanding issues. This alternative option will be to induce a cross audience from all the companies to participate in a variety of group discussions. This approach will look into facets such as management techniques and internal cultural differences. Highlighting these factors could identify ways for the organisation to move forward.

The involvement and influence of leaders and potential 'actors' in, for example, behavioural indifferences, cascade blockage, politics, and functional relationships, just to name a few, cannot be underestimated. These influences may not necessarily be planned or a result of the specific management techniques applied. Document Five will endeavour to extrapolate from the data, as well as the views and objectives of the individuals, whether it is feasible to design all the facets necessary for a healthy and open environment or whether because all the managers (actors) are developing their 'knowledge' in an incomparable way and at different paces, it is truly impossible to predict at this time.

There are some ethical and organisational political issues that may influence the outcomes of the research, and these will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

1.4.2 Feedback to the Key Stakeholders

As part of the approach with regard to this five-year research programme, it will be essential to have regular contact with the key stakeholders of the host organisation.

All the Managing Directors during the initial discussions asked how they would be kept informed. Therefore, it would be unwise to wait until completing the course before providing any findings and recommendations. As an alternative, I suggested that it would be a good idea to make a brief presentation and/or undertake **focus group** discussions after Documents Three, Four, and Five, with which they were all in agreement. It will be at these key stages that they will have the choice either to discuss them only or to agree to an additional session within their own company with their respective board of directors, which is likely to take a different stance. In this instance, it will be interesting to see if the following question will be identified during the regular interaction with the managing directors and their respective board of directors.

What are the consequences for Company A1 of the various management structures within the group and can power relationships influence horizontal communication?

This regular feedback will also provide the opportunity to engage the stakeholders as part of the decision-making process, and at the same time keep the momentum.

1.5   ETHICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL POLITICAL AWARENESS

> When we are told that our Managing Director is leaving his 'ivory tower' to visit the office – we know it's going to be another – Do as I say not as I do speech …

1.5.1   Political and Ethical Issues

There are some internal issues of which I must be mindful. As a member of the host organisation being used as the research vehicle, and due to the nature of the topic, I am aware of the dangers of subjectivity, and every effort will be made to minimise this. Due to my current role, I am unsure whether I will be able to exert any power. On a positive note, working for several boards of directors provides an ideal platform to undertake this research, because their roles will allow me regular cross-section interactions with various levels of management across the whole group. Given the length of the research, some of the evidence gathering in Year 2 may be distanced from the experiences to be examined. The continuous unexpected changes that might take place could hamper my research. I will have to be alert to the fact that this is a likely possibility. For the research to be meaningful to the host organisation, I believe that it should be made available to the organisation to enable its development. In so doing, the 'confidentiality' and 'anonymity' usually afforded to such research will be paramount. This will be addressed as the research develops in Documents Three, Four, and Five.

It is anticipated that political organisational issues may have an undue weight in this research. The acceptance of responsibility for any improvements may be hard to draw out, and I include myself in that statement. It will not be an overnight success story, and I do not expect the 'Nobel Peace Prize'. The internal politics, bureaucracy, and culture within any organisation can be at best difficult to understand and at worst impossible to influence to bring an improvement. This will be a factor to consider when exploring the various levels of management across the organisation.

1.5.2   Organisational Outcome

The context of the organisational outcomes is not purely the organisation in question but also the wider policy and decision making, technical and professional bodies, as well as the HR leaders. An optimistic spin-off would be a contribution to knowledge that

encourages the academic community to become interested in the research outcomes but I will not be that presumptuous at this stage!

The research should add to the understanding of the particular sector in question, in relation to its need to improve continuously. The evolution of organisational communication within an organisational environment could be linked with the ability of the directors and their board of directors, who have the responsibility to manage a team, department, business unit, and company to embrace the understanding of communication and the implications if left unresolved. It should enhance 'creative' thinking and the development of a proactive role in enabling managers to meet the needs of their internal and external stakeholders. It should assist the organisation to be dynamic in its management and improve its understanding of how to analyse and manage its capacity to change. It is anticipated that the research will enable the organisation to meet its clients' aspirations and needs. The organisation will accept more openly the views and influences of its customers, particularly in times of change, i.e. they become trusted 'critical friends'.

Policy and decision making, technical and professional bodies, and their management/development teams could find the research useful when considering the way in which line managers are trained and developed. The research might show the necessity to move away from training that says 'This is how we rule' towards training that is discursive, questioning, challenging, and dynamic, training that might enable managers to be 'unlocked' from processes of management and focus on being flexible. By examining the current behaviour and how that affects the inter-working relationship, the research could also explore further the notion of joint, cross-discipline training for managers within all the sectors, not just within the private sector.

The policy and decision makers and technical and professional bodies could find the research (as long as it is not 'commercially sensitive') useful in understanding good management practice in the context of a large organisation, and the impact of internal and external influences – for instance, the pace at which an organisation can grow in size and change; its capacity to learn; and the implications of the variety of techniques of its line management. As an employee within the host organisation I hope to increase my academic learning and research skills but also, perhaps more importantly, to gain a richer understanding of organisational communication and large complex organisations.

1.6 PERSONAL REFLECTIVE ENTRY

The main aim for each submission paper is to include a personal entry of ongoing development up to the time of submitting the respective paper. This should hopefully build up imagery of the continuous development during the duration of the course and beyond.

1.6.1 The Learning Vehicle – Company A1

This five-year programme will provide an extensive platform to enhance the opportunities to develop and gain knowledge and experience within the organisation. It will offer scope to grow as a person both personally and adeptly. In addition, it will provide the prospect of evolving the understanding equally for both the chosen subject area and the host organisation. At the same time, I will be coming to terms with the doctoral-level work and what that will mean personally at the end of the programme.

This is my fourth year with Company A1 and during this time I have been on a steep learning curve working in a predominately male environment. It seems much easier for male employees to gain recognition for their achievements and be showered with gifts, whereas I have been placed in a 'box', which does not necessarily fit comfortably. One of the objectives during this programme will be to change that perception of how individuals can easily be labelled, so that it is much easier for them to be accepted in the working environment. Sir Alan Sugar (2005) recently made an interesting comment: 'I do not wait for acceptance. I am my own person'. I am very much of a similar attitude.

The following passage describes what I think is likely to happen as a result of this research.

It begins with a heightened perception of the way our lives move forward.
We notice those chance events that occur at just the right moment, and bring forth just the right individuals, to suddenly send our lives in a new and important direction.
Perhaps more than any other person in any other time, we intuit higher meaning in these mysterious happenings.

James Redfield (1994: 9)

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In November 1999 the host organisation went through some major personnel changes that led to the UK executive management board deciding that it was necessary to have a new ethos, as it was aware of internal problems that were having implications for its internal and external environment. This move was to amalgamate the organisation under one set of corporate core values that would influence the culture. Company A1's core values are as follows:

■ Integrity
■ Collaboration
■ Excellence
■ Sustainability
■ Innovation

Document Two

Critical Literature Review

Submitted by: Rosemary E. Caesar

Supervisors: Professor Colin Fisher

Professor Jim Stewart

Document Two submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement of the Nottingham Trent University for the Degree of Doctorate of Business Administration

CONTENTS

TABLES

2.0   INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

> *Communication …? That is an HR problem to solve.*
> **Company B1B**

All human resources (HR) and organisational development practitioners may at some point be asked by their management board or client to tackle the issue of 'communication' within their organisation, and to try to make some sense of it. It is assumed that HR practitioners are solely responsible for communication. If it is a joint effort line managers should be accountable and take responsibility for resolving communication issues within their team communication lines and not distance themselves from the problem. Schonfelder (1998: 52) argues that identifying the root cause of communication could 'require very different skills from those held by most' line managers, who may not necessarily have the right 'soft' skills to handle such situations. HR specialists are assumed to have the appropriate textbook answers and 'quick-fix' training measures to resolve these issues.

When an operational problem occurs within an organisation, communication can be blamed as the reason behind the failure. We often hear such comments as 'the communication in our organisation [or department, offices, etc.] is simply not clear' or 'what we have here is a communication problem' (Harcourt, Richerson, & Wattier, 1991: 348). The difficulty for any organisation is to find the right solution to its communication problem. The problem, however, may not always be recognised as a simple communication solution. For example, finding ways to motivate people to communicate and remove internal barriers could involve reviewing the culture and the hierarchy structure and evaluating the management skills in the organisation. In fact, it could be argued that everyone is involved in, and responsible for, communication. However, not everyone will be involved in deciding on the approach and method that should be undertaken. In terms of 'deciding what should be communicated' (Lubbe & Puth, 2000: 20) to staff and stakeholders, the final decision will be left to the management board of the organisation.

Organisational communication focuses on the behaviour and processes needed to create an effective organisational culture in an organisation. It is envisaged that an effective culture will ensure the proactive exchange of knowledge, opinions, and ideas

by everyone in the organisation. Of course, it may not be that simple. Most of us will assume that our interpersonal skills are not in question when talking about communication. However, without constructive feedback our understanding of this answer can never truly be known. One thing is certain: organisational communication cannot work without direct support from top and senior management. Although seen as key communicators, how often do members of top and senior management fail to be understood through the various grades of staffing levels? Their message can often be misinterpreted and altered by the same present audience. This could create various mixed messages.

With the number of different communication options 'the inability of organisation[s] [to] make effective use of the available communication channels' (Robinson, 2001: 25) to their advantage is surprising. For communication to take place it is important that all parties use a 'shared or common language' (Robinson, 2001: 27). The type of organisation, its structure, and its culture will determine to a large extent its style of communication. In essence, the more hierarchical the structure, the more inflexible the communication can be due to personnel being separated from one another within a complex and sometimes impenetrable network.

As previously mentioned, the structure and culture of the organisation will impact on the style of communication used by the various members of management through the hierarchy. At the same time, it is important to consider that the top and senior management in 'complex organisations [does] not design operating structures; it designs decision structures' (Weick, 2001: 38). Weick (2001: 28) goes on to suggest that the importance of this point is that top and senior management can 'not actually manage the organisation', but instead will manage 'the process that manages the organisation' (Kuhn & Beam, 1982: 325–326). Top and senior management will have to select the right 'people who will be in the decision-making group' (Weick, 2001: 38). These individuals 'will be their agents' (38) to exert influence throughout the organisation. They will also have their own style and pattern of communicating but will follow orders as instructed. Whether this is right or wrong will dictate the price the organisation has to pay if it backfires. Obviously, if communication takes an unacceptable amount of time to filter through the organisation, the likelihood is that it will be channelled by other means, in particular by informal networks. The information being disseminated might be altered by 'gatekeepers', who are in control of the business unit communicating the message. How each member interprets the message

will differ depending on the value of the contents and the layout of the environment in which it is presented. In other words, will the 'sender' (communicator) feel confident that he or she has communicated clearly with the recipients? This question will be presented in various formations:

1. Will the audience be able to interpret the message in the way it is intended to be received?
2. Are the environmental settings arranged to allow understanding to take place?
3. Will the management come across as telling the whole story?
4. How will the various management levels filter the message down the hierarchy?

Therefore, the focus should be concentrated on the ways in which ideas, information, and processes might be used to communicate to people within an organisation. As originally stated in Document One (Caesar, 2005: 5), the host organisation (Company A1) is a 6,000-strong workforce (3,000 UK-based) global conglomerate providing engineering consultancy services to clients across many market sectors. Since the beginning of this research the company has increased in size by making further acquisitions for its operation. This new development will be explained in more detail in Document Three.

2.0.1 Approach and Context

At the beginning of this introduction and in Document One, the core focus was on 'organisational communication'. However, the emphasis of the literature review in Document Two follows a different direction. The purpose of Document Two is to draw from the literature associated with organisational communication, in particular organisational structure, sensemaking, informal networks, team briefings, and core values. The core focus will be on how 'sensemaking' could impact on organisational communication within a large multinational organisation. Also associated with 'sensemaking' is the opportunity to explore how an organisation's structure can impact on the way in which information is cascaded through the hierarchy. If information takes a long time to filter through the various levels informal networks could emerge, which might work with or against the organisation depending on the individuals involved in them. All of these attributes can impact on how communication is handled throughout an organisation.

To begin with it was essential to have an understanding of this topic area, and therefore a lot of detailed work was undertaken to set the scene for Document Two. It must be stressed, however, that at this stage my views are scarcely developed, and may change as I continue with my research during the course of the DBA. The main objective of the review is to provide me with the opportunity to explore areas that are not familiar to me. This approach could provide the foundation for subsequent stages of investigation for Documents Three, Four, and Five.

2.0.2 Theoretical Background

The literature review that follows is motivated by a personal interest in human behaviour in the context of an organisational setting mainly dominated by one gender. The review will focus on how collaboration is based upon personal agendas and building relationships with individuals who can help fulfil future aspirations. I am also interested in the use of power games. I believe that they are key to the process of persuading and influencing individuals.

The early literature seems to focus on 'informal structure[s]' (Mintzberg, 1979: 8) relating to the relationships amongst the individuals in an organisation. Mintzberg (1979: 10) believes that an organisational structure could be 'a set of official, standardised work relationships built around a tight system of formal authority'. However, Mintzberg's (1983) interpretation changes slightly. He suggests that 'a good structure was one based on rules and rigid hierarchy of authority' (2). It would be difficult not to consider how relationships could be maintained and on what basis. The primary focus might be on Max Weber's bureaucratic (Gerth & Mills, 1958) formation, in which tasks are coordinated by rules. Weber (1947: 329) claims that bureaucracy could rely on individuals exerting their 'power to influence through rules [and] reason[ing]' and not on 'hunch[es], intuition, [or] past experience' (George, 1972: 52). It could be argued that individuals' past experiences can be limited and only restricted to their own discipline field or to their level of responsibility. Depending on the environment the individual might manage and have authority. Thus, he or she can influence his or her audience by 'systems dominate[d] through knowledge' (Miner, 1982: 391). An individual or group could 'appear powerful along certain dimensions, such as formal authority' (Greiner & Schein, 1989: 82). This could facilitate some 'mutual support in a dangerous environment' (Mintzberg, 1979: 124), which might cause unofficial power relationships (Crozier, 1964). These individuals could 'influence the distribution of decision making'

(Mintzberg, 1980: 328), which could persuade 'organisations to favour inappropriate though fashionable structures.'

Regardless of where individuals might work, as new starters begin their first day at a new place of work, they will most likely receive a welcome pack containing corporate information, including an organogram. The organogram will tell the story of the internal structure of the organisation. According to Mintzberg (1979; 1983), some organisational theorists reject the organogram as an inadequate account of what really takes place inside an organisation. Most organisations will have important power and communication relationships that are not shown on paper. Therefore, the organogram 'should not be rejected, but rather placed in context: it tells some useful things, even though it hides others' (Mintzberg, 1979: 37; 1983: 19). However, the company chart will show the existing positions, how they are categorised into the various units, and how formal authority flows between the various positions and units within the organisation.

The organogram could be a handy method of keeping track of who works in the organisation. It might be a useful tool to coordinate work effectively. Even though categorising could encourage coordination within the various units, it might also create 'problems of coordination between units' (Mintzberg, 1983: 47). The communication approach might isolate individuals from each other. In the terms of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), units can become differentiated in their various orientations – in their goals, time perspectives, interpersonal styles of interaction, and degrees of formalisation of their structures. It would be wrong to make the assumption that 'everyone thinks alike anyway' (Wilensky, 1967: 60), and having these variations within the units may possibly impact on the overall objectives of the organisation.

Individuals could be expected to communicate on a regular basis to coordinate their work within their respective units. However, for such communication to function effectively, the units should be small enough to encourage regular and informal interaction amongst all their members. Defining a reasonable number to form a unit will be an important factor to consider. If a unit is too large, the likelihood is that the unit will 'fragment into cliques' (Mintzberg, 1983: 68) and reduce into several 'informal units' (Mintzberg, 1983: 69). It has been suggested that the configuration of an organisation's structure, whether tall or flat, will often affect the unit size. Members of top and senior management might be 'more satisfied' (Mintzberg, 1983: 69) with tall structures (small

units at each level, giving rise to numerous levels) because they will still be in control, leaving lower-level managers less 'opportunity for making decisions [solely] on their own' (Pfiffner & Sherwood, 1960: 161). It has been recognised that 'tall structures interrupt the vertically upward flow of information more frequently, which can lead to greater distortion' (Mintzberg, 1983: 70), whereas a flat structure might require 'more discussion and consultation to get decisions made'.

Pugh et al (1969) suggest that the size of an organisation and the interrelationships with the other units can be a key factor 'influencing the structure and functioning of an organisation' (91). Presthus (1958) also supports this theory as an important factor in the differences between structures and large size has been considered a characteristic of bureaucratic structure. Other writers, such as Dubin (1958), Perrow (1967), Trist et al (1963), and Woodward (1965), argue that the importance of technology of production or service can determine the structure and function of an organisation. Litterer (1965: 410) raises an interesting point that with 'increased size comes greater internal confusion'. However, morale could suffer as individuals become confused with their working environment, causing internal 'barriers [to] increase [as] individuals feel more and more isolated' (Mintzberg, 1979: 233). This can result in the 'formal group break[ing] down and informal ones ris[ing] in its place' (Melcher, 1976: 409, 412). Argyris (1960) believes that the relationships between the formal structure of an organisation and the individual could impact on the group's behaviour. Therefore, it will be 'important in understanding why organisations are structured as they are' (Pfeffer & Leblebici, 1973–74: 273) in order to appreciate the way in which they function.

2.0.3 To Understand the Present is to Understand the Past

To understand how organisations 'tick' it will be important to review their historical structure as that can have an 'effect on the present' (Pugh et al, 1963–64: 308) structure. It will be practical to research an organisation's history to understand its present and possible future. An organisation can go through various 'stages of development' (Mintzberg, 1983: 123). It might start off as a one-man business, and over the years will grow in size by acquiring existing organisations. During its development an organisation can undergo several changes in order to manage its internal workflow. Reviewing the literature on organisational growth, one would expect a 'smooth continuous process' (Starbuck, 1965: 486) during the course of an organisation's development. Instead, the organisation's growth could be 'marked by abrupt and discreet changes' (486) due to the internal structure. The organisation can

change easily, but the structure rarely does. When the progression finally does arrive, it could cause disruption to the organisation because as it removes its 'organic structure' (Mintzberg, 1979: 241) it might emerge as a bureaucratic environment instead.

Depending on the age of the organisation and its history, long-serving staff will be able to reveal 'untold stories' about the past. Each will be able to recollect what had previously taken place and why it may have failed. Employees will most likely hear 'we've-seen-it-all-before' (Mintzberg, 1983: 123) from various sources. These individuals could provide useful information that was not seen as useful at the time. As Starbuck (1965: 480) notes: 'as an organisation gets older, it [will] learn more and more about coping with its environment and with its internal problems of communication'. That may be true for some organisations that are willing to learn from their mistakes and are not trying to reinvent the wheel every few years, hoping that no one will notice the same words with a new jingle! All that happens is that 'they repeat their work' (Mintzberg, 1983: 228) only to obtain the same reactions.

As organisations continue to grow, consideration of their development should not be too far away from our minds when understanding the stages of development. Mintzberg (1979) identifies five stages, which are explained below. It will be important to consider for each stage the possible development in the way that communication is handled. It should be highlighted that many organisations will not go through each stage consecutively; however, some will go through more stages than others. This is true of my host organisation, Company A1, a global conglomerate providing engineering consulting services to clients across many market sectors. The company has been through stages one to three during its thirty years in operation. These stages are not aimed at one particular sector. Filley and House (1969: 411) suggest that there is a 'remarkable similarity' in the development of businesses, nations, unions, and political and economic institutions.

- **Stage 1a – Craft Structure**
This is primarily aimed at small proprietorship consisting of a few managers working alongside their staff. There is only a single informal and organised group. The various jobs supporting the business will be easily interchangeable. The skills required might be standardised. There may be no need for direct supervision and possibly a recognised leader. If there is one, he will most likely spend 'most of his time working alongside the other members of the group on tasks comparable to theirs' (Miller, 1959: 244).

The **communication approach** will most likely be face to face. Therefore, two-way communication will flow easily and quickly between all the parties because they are working as one single group. This single group can interpret the situation and make decisions without the impediment of consulting various hierarchy levels.

- **Stage 1b – Entrepreneurial Structure**

  As craft businesses continue to grow and expand, informal communication, especially face to face, might become unsatisfactory for organising work. Whereas previously leaders would be working alongside their staff undertaking similar tasks and working as one team, now their roles have escalated. These leaders will be 'devoted to the primary task of holding the group together' (Miller, 1959: 249). The introduction of new levels of management might be considered to organise work more efficiently. This approach now enters the entrepreneurial stage. Within this structure the entrepreneur will make all the main decisions and coordinate the work, while everyone else carries out the orders. However, the structure can remain informal. This is because the individual could want the freedom and flexibility to control from the top without anyone impinging on the power to rule, hence the reason for putting off restructuring the management level, so that they will not have to answer to anyone.

  The **communication approach** will possibly be one-way and top-down, and might not be directed to all team members. The team leader's role will no longer be as an equal member of the team. Instead he or she will control the flow of communication within the team, and will continue to make decisions without consulting the team members.

- **Stage 2 – Bureaucratic Structure**

  As the business continues to grow and attract more clients, the key point that is not taken on board is switching the structure to accommodate a larger-sized business. The entrepreneur will want to retain total control, despite the increase in the size of the business. This can create a bottleneck in the flow of information and decision making. The old informal structure can be become challenging – and the staff is now increasing in volume and the staff members becoming more specialised in their particular field. Access to the entrepreneur can become less frequent. Lack of coordination will be inevitable; new job roles might not be revised in line with the new structure. For such organisations to survive this would mean a significant change 'pattern [in] behaviour and coordination' (Mintzberg, 1979: 243), and a shift from an organic to a bureaucratic

structure. The transformation to a bureaucratic structure is set off by the job roles becoming more specialised. This will require a hierarchy of authority to be put in place to coordinate these specialised individuals. As their work becomes more focused and the units become established and larger, the organisation will transform from standardisation to coordination. According to Bos (1969: 21), the organisation will move away from a soft approach to a much more 'rational instead of intuitive, mechanistic instead of organic, impersonal instead of personal' stance.

The **communication approach** will become more challenging for the individuals as they are dispersed into specialist teams. How the information is presented will be a key factor in how individuals interpret the message. The introduction of a management structure will impact on the flow of information being received and delivered amongst the various teams.

- **Stage 3 – Divisionalised Structure**

The continuous growth and maturity of the organisation can often help these bureaucracies to diversify and split themselves into dedicated units, or divisions, superimposed over the traditional functional structures. This method could bring the organisation into a new stage, one of a divisionalised structure. There can be little interdependence between the units or even close coordination. Each unit will be given a great deal of autonomy and have its own structure. The need for close coordination will be paramount because a large number of the units can report directly to the head office. This will provide some form of decision-making process being established within the units and amongst their members. However, as these units work independently, the way in which power is dispersed to different places for different decision processes will be important for the organisation as a whole.

If the organisation is not ready to increase in size, then it should be aware that 'divisionalisation encourages further diversification' (Rumelt, 1974: 76–77). Stopford and Wells (1972) argue that it is not really size alone but external market diversification that can drive organisations to divisionalise their structures. They admit to the influence of size, noting that 'large firms [can be] generally much more highly diversified than small firms' (72). This could impact on the organisation's structure if the head office does not have the right 'mechanism to coordinate' (Mintzberg, 1980: 335) the various units. In any event, age and size are clearly related to divisionalisation. Diversification

can be an important factor for 'changing short-term market demands and long-term trends' (Chandler, 1962: 385).

The **communication approach** will become more complicated as each unit grows in size, becomes independent and introduces its own hierarchy structure to support its operation. The flow of information will take longer to cascade through the various units. Communication will centre within the units and lose the personal links with other parts of the business as they focus inwards rather than outwards.

- ■ **Stage 4 – Matrix Structure**

The final structure is probably the most complicated one. In undertaking this structure the organisation will set up a dual authority structure. By using the matrix structure, the organisation can avoid choosing one group over another. As such, the organisation can choose both groups to resolve a problem. The organisation can identify the different line managers and grant them equal and joint responsibility for the same decisions. This approach will force the individuals to work together to resolve the situation between them, which can create an equal but delicate balance of power between all the parties. However, it could be more complicated if the individuals are not used to working with each other on an amicable level or if there are 'barriers of communication between [the] divisions' (Stopford & Wells, 1972: 27) that have not been resolved to enable the individuals to work in harmony. This delegation of power from the top and senior management down the hierarchy structure can cause problems. Without the cooperation between the various managers it can lead to many disputes being referred back up the hierarchy to the top and senior management to be resolved, which could leave them overloaded. Sayles (1976) suggests that organisations should be prepared to resolve their conflicts through informal negotiation by creating 'new structures where managers can operate with dual or multiple reporting relationships' (Stopford & Wells, 1972: 27). This might allow subordinates and superiors to have an equal power base, which could prove costly to the organisation. Demands will be high as individuals spend more time attending meetings and discussing rather than performing their assigned work. This structure might require 'more communicating to be done, more information has to get to more people' (Knight, 1976: 126), which could increase the administrative costs significantly.

The structure might help in developing new activities for coordinating complex and multiple interdependencies between the various divisions. However, it could come at a

cost to the organisation. It might cause considerable uncertainty, tension, and role conflict between the parties involved, as they are forced to work in an ambiguous environment.

The **communication approach** will be confusing for all the parties involved. This can be due to the dual role each member will undertake in this structure. Working in an uncertain environment will not be an easy task when faced with internal barriers that will have to be resolved before the structure has any chance of working.

2.0.4 Setting the Scene …

This introduction has provided me with some insights into how organisational structures can play a major part in organisations' cultural setting. What has been a surprise in this research is the emphasis on size and history, which can clearly set in stone the structure of an organisation. From the emerging literature it is clear how culture and bureaucracy can impact on the internal structure and adjust the interrelationships of individuals in power for personal interest. Also, power and control can be major issues causing barriers to be built within a hierarchy structure and impacting on how information is filtered through the various management levels. What are clearly starting to emerge are the 'hard' issues impacting on the organisation; whether they occur intentionally remains to be seen.

2.1 SENSEMAKING

> *If we could just remove the politics – things would be easier.*
> **Company B1C**

It is true to say that 'our days in organisations [can be] days of communicating' (Bantz, 1993: 5): a group of 'people trying to make sense of what is happening around them' (Weick, 2001: 5). In reality, without communication there cannot be an organisation (Sypher & Zorn, 1986). As individuals, we can all face challenges. We all seek to make sense of the events that present themselves on our doorstep. Watzlawick (1976: 50) suggests that 'once a tentative explanation has taken hold of our minds: information to the contrary may produce not corrections but elaborations of the explanation'. The emphasis is not on communication per se, but rather on the interpretations of the communication encountered. The 'importance of being clear about the conditions under which sensemaking [might be] initiated' (Weick, 1995: 84) will need to be taken into consideration.

2.1.1 The Seven Properties of Sensemaking

When referring to sensemaking in an organisational context, it is not uncommon to discuss the seven properties (Weick, 2001) that can effect how individuals use common sense to analyse what they face. These are briefly summarised below.

- **Social Context**

An individual's sensemaking can be influenced by the presence of others. With some uncertainty they will seek additional support, obtain validity, and share their feelings. The presence of these individuals influencing the situation could have a strong hold over others, and leave them totally lost without them.

- **Personal Identity**

The environment in which individuals are placed will determine whether they feel any sense of personal threat. They will behave in a particular manner and observe the consequences. It is the ongoing fate of these needs that will affect individuals' sensemaking. If individuals become threatened or challenged they might begin to lose their sense of the situation.

- **Retrospect**

  Sensemaking can be influenced by what people observe after an event has taken place and how well they remember the sequence of events step by step. Some individuals might refuse to understand the past and put their faith in anticipation rather than resilience. As such, their acts of retrospect can be deceptive and trivial, and their grasp of what might be happening begins to loosen.

- **Salient Cues**

  Individuals might have personal preference indicators that will help them to decipher what is taking place. They will determine their opinions through these hunches and respond to the situation. If the individual and the indicators are not in line, it could affect the individual's sense of what is taking place. If there is the slightest inconsistency or instability on either side, it can leave doubts about what is happening.

- **Ongoing Projects**

  For some of us, experience can be a continuous flow that might turn into an event only when efforts are made to put boundaries around a particular portion of the flow, or when an interruption takes place. Sensemaking might be restricted by past events. Individuals can be thrown into the middle of a situation and be forced to act without the benefit of establishing what is happening; they could lose the ability to keep pace.

- **Plausibility**

  This should allow individuals to make sense of a story presented to them. Sensemaking is about coherence, and how events can fit as one. Plausibility can be influenced by the other six properties. Therefore, the individual can be inhibited by agreements with others, consistency with one's own views of events and familiar circumstances, and actions that have tangible effects. If one or more of these sources disappears, stories could strain consistency, which might leave too many indicators unanswered.

- **Enactment**

  Without intervention, it would be difficult for individuals to make sense of what they are facing. Therefore, to enable some sort of action, they could evoke a reaction and see what happens. Without becoming involved, it would be difficult to know for sure what might have happened had no intervention been made. It is impossible for individuals to

be detached from the situation and not be affected by it, because their own actions will be made more difficult to confront and respond to.

There are situations in which individuals can sensemake effectively and other cases in which they cannot. Weick (2001) provides a case study to illustrate the aforementioned seven properties: the Mann Gulch disaster (Maclean, 1992). The story is about a fire outbreak in Montana's Mann Gulch on 5 August 1949. A group of experienced firefighters was parachuted near the fire. While they were moving to a safer place the fire blocked their route. Considerable controversy about what happened next has centred on the behaviour of the team members and the team leader in a high-risk environment.

The Mann Gulch Disaster

Sixteen firefighters who had never met each other before were called upon as a team to stop a forest disaster. What was first assessed as a simple assignment for these trained personnel ended in tragedy, with some of the firefighters losing their lives, all because they had never worked with each other and were pulled together under uncertain factors to work as a team. There was no time to familiarise themselves and build up trust amongst the team. Instead, the chain of command was challenged and ignored. Individuals became a single unit, working alone, not sharing information, and uncertain who to trust. Communication became non-existent, which made the team leader's role of managing the team and the situation much harder. Due to the increasing difficulty in interpreting what was happening thirteen firefighters lost their lives. There are important lessons to be learnt from this tragedy. Maclean (1992: 65) raises an interesting question: 'what the structure of a small outfit should be when its business is to meet sudden danger and prevent disaster?' This question can be asked of any organisation, because the work undertaken by organisations can be conducted in small and sometimes temporary teams, in which the risks might be high and mistakes can have serious consequences.

The fire crew's performance might not have been that dissimilar to that of an organisation. The firefighters had a series of connecting routines. Westley (1990: 339) defines an organisation as 'a series of interlocking routines, habituated action patterns that [can] bring the same people together around the same activities in the same time and places'. The crew members had a routine, a similar way of carrying out their duties, and came together to form a group. Although this set of individuals had not met before,

they did converge at the same place. Westley's definition suggests that it does not take much to qualify as an organisation. It could be argued that it might not take much to stop being one. The crew can also easily fit the criteria for a 'simple organisational structure' proposed by Mintzberg (1983: 158). These might include the strategy being organised at the top only, little formalised behaviour, an organic structure, and the person in charge tending to formulate plans intuitively, meaning that the plans can be a direct 'extension of his own personality' (Weick, 1993: 628–652). As previously mentioned, structures like these can be found most often in entrepreneurial businesses.

The various roles and rules in the group may have enabled the individuals to cooperate with a minor degree of trouble to their interaction with one another. There were at least three distinct roles within the crew: team leader, second in command, and crew members. The team leader sizes 'up the situation, makes decisions, yells orders, picks trails, [and] sets the pace' (Wiley, 1988: 65–66). This is not dissimilar to being in the board room and watching the chief executive officer (CEO) speaking to his top management team. The second in command will repeat the orders just given, ensuring that they are understood by all parties, and may help the team members coordinate their plan of action.

This story is about a group of people in the middle of a forest coming together as a team for the first time to solve a problem. If I was to repeat this story, and not mention the location and the skills of the personnel involved, it would not be hard to think that this is just another typical story about an organisational scenario. How we as individuals deal with making sense of the circumstances we face, whether at work or at home, will have an impact on us if the environment is not clear.

2.1.2 Definition of Sensemaking

The numerous studies on communication fall under various headings including noticing, interpreting, enacting, and learning (e.g. Daft & Weick, 1984; Hedberg, 1981; Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Weick, 1977). Weick (1995: 4) simply describes sensemaking 'as the making of sense'. However, it could involve more than 'interpretation, and means a creation of meaning' (8). Weick goes on to claim that 'meaning [can be] generated by words and vocabularies' (106), which could create some sense of meaning and understanding of the organisation. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) emphasise that to understand the operational relationship between information, knowledge, and human meaning will be to understand 'what [might be] happening in the organisation and its

environment' (Schwandt, 2005: 182). Vickers (2002) argues that if an event takes place that does not fit the expected interpretation of the environment, it could disrupt the individual's sensemaking. As such, people might not be sure 'what questions to ask, nor do they expect clear answers even if they do know the right questions' (Daft & Lengel, 1986: 557).

Sensemaking can often be associated with the cognitive aspects of organisational decision making. However, sensemaking also involves socio-political elements that can be seen as arguing, manipulation, sense giving, and management of meaning (e.g. Dutton et al, 2001; Gioia, 1994; Huff, 1988; Salk, 1997; Vaara, 2000; Weick, 1995). These elements link in with my concern with power games and micro-politics within an organisation. However, the individual's creation and testing of meaning (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992) in a 'complex environment' (Schwandt, 2005: 176) will be dependent on the environmental influences (Giddens, 1979). This can encourage the key players to overload their audience with too much information and expect them to make decisions 'under considerable pressure' (Brooks et al, 2006: 36). In an unstable environment individuals will not want their listeners to make any decisions on 'important issues' (36), because they want to deal with the issues 'only when they have to' (March & Olsen, 1994: 93), which could be associated with their personal interest.

Individuals' interpretations are seldom based only on their 'own observations' (March & Olsen, 1994: 18). At times they can 'rely heavily on the interpretations offered by others' (18). Identifying these individuals will be important in determining how individuals can be influenced by their 'trust in the interpreters' (18). Therefore, in an unsettled environment, individuals will 'take their interpretations [and others] seriously and act on them' (Weick, 1995: 79). These interpretations will be 'shared by several people' (Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, 1989: 398–399) who might 'act first and then later make sense of the outcomes' (e.g. Starbuck, 1983; Weick, 1983: 60). If a small part of the audience notices these changes, and interprets them differently from their original presentation, then over time 'interpretations [can] become objectified, diffused, and widely internalised into what comes to be called a consensus' (Weick, 1995: 79).

2.1.3 Mind Your Language

Weick (1995) suggests that sense can be generated by the words that are used to combine into sentences and conversation. However, individuals' use of the vocabulary will 'derive from prior experience of language of life, and experience that is obviously

different for each of us' (White, 1990: 35–36). This will depend on our educational, occupational, social, and cultural background. Freese (1980: 28) claims that 'constructing sentences to express statements about experience imposes discrete definitions on a subject matter'. These variations can be so 'enormous that in listening to the talk one is often surprised that it can go on at all' (White, 1990: 35–36). Many organisations can have 'their own languages and symbols' (Weick, 1995: 3), which could impact on an individual's sensemaking. Those individuals who might not have been with the organisation for a reasonable length of time could find it difficult at first when interacting with other colleagues.

Parris and Vickers (2005: 284) argue that 'people may not be "misinterpreting the messages they receive"'; instead, the message could be 'inaccurate, persuasive [and] designed to convince' (284) the targeted audience. However, the problem might occur if 'the same word is used but each of the individuals gives it a different meaning' (DeVito, 1989: 498). This could happen between different groups, particularly superiors and subordinates (Sullivan, Kamedo, & Nobu, 1991). This relationship could lend itself to multiple conflicting interpretations, all of which are plausible (Daft & MacIntosh, 1981). The environment can keep 'changing and the task is to carve out some momentary stability in this continuous flow' (Becker, 1986: 29).

The use of language in the context of organisational practices focuses on how individuals can influence others 'in such a manner as to make them attractive to listeners' (Grant, 1999: 330) and 'persuade others to their validity' (Watson, 1995: 806). Some individuals who can talk the walk may still fall short if their 'talk lacks subtlety' (Trujillo, 1987: 55) and nuance and is filled with clichés. Therefore, the choice of words matters. Merton (1967: 145) argues that the use of language can 'constrain our perceptions, thoughts, and behaviours', because it can play 'a central role in the creation of social reality' (Deetz, 1986: 170). Therefore, the art of using a 'mild, delicate or indirect word or expression in place of a plainer or more accurate' one (Stein, 1998: 26) can easily detract from the real message. This will be important when cascading information through the organisation. The notion is that individuals can and will use dishonest language to shift attention away from what is really going on (Stein, 1998) within an organisation. Individuals can be in control of 'gate keeping, [and] changing [the] emphasis within a message' (Stohl & Redding, 1987: 481). Their actions could distort the chain of communication within the various hierarchical relationships (Fulk & Mani, 1985), which might be used to the individuals' advantage.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1967: 50–51), 'language [will be] at the heart of meaning and sensemaking' and therefore it might be difficult to distinguish 'hidden beneath common words' (Mills, 2002: 308) from the performers (actors). These actors will be 'from different levels in the organisational hierarchy' (305) who can 'camouflage different meanings' (308) to suit their various settings.

2.1.4 The Performers

Sensemaking will highlight the complicated socio-psychological processes through which organisational actors interpret organisational phenomena and thus socially construct to enact their realities (e.g. O'Connell, 1998; Weick, 1995). The opportunity can provide an excuse for people to act, learn, and create meaning (Weick, 1987) and influence an environment that is not yet settled (Mintzberg, 1973). The intention might be to change the beliefs and actions of those people who comprise the environment (Eccles & Crane, 1988) by 'exerting influence to accomplish it' (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 446).

The performers can frequently influence the environment, which might allow them to take centre stage in the 'theatre machine' (Jencks & Silver, 1973: 144–145). The performers, at the appropriate moment, may feel that it is 'their duty to promote specific ideas' (Vaara, 2003: 865) to seek and manoeuvre decisions in a certain direction. If individuals can represent their 'specific [business] units' (865), it may provide them with different kinds of opportunities or even threats at the various levels of management. These can be manifested in different types of confrontation or power play between the different performers. These confrontations might take on various conflicts between top-decision makers (Vaara, 2001), which could promote one's own career (Hambrick & Cannella, 1993).

Performers can 'become increasingly aware of the political actions of the other actors and feel a need to act accordingly' (Vaara, 2003: 866). Brown (1978: 376) believes that 'power in organisations [will be] exercised' by those with the ability to communicate in an understandable and evocative manner (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). They might be able to 'improve the decision making [of the audience] if the environment changes slowly' (Starbuck, 1982: 5). The situation might be 'controlled by agents [performers] with centralised authority' (Kling, 1980: 90, 100). This will re-enforce the performers to 'justify their actions with problems, threats, success or opportunities' (Starbuck, 1983:

94).   Therefore, it can become more difficult for the intended receivers to make judgements in highly complex and ambiguous environments (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). March and Olsen (1989: 46) suggest:

> When the environments are created the actions taken in adapting to an environment [can be] partly responses to previous actions by the same [performer], reflected through the 'environment' and 'partly self-determined as each [performer] reacts to the other'.

Over time, it might be unavoidable that the actors' stories become distorted or simplified due to cognitive or political reasons (e.g. Barley, 1990; Golden, 1992, 1997). This may have implications for the organisation if individuals are tasked to cascade corporate communication through the organisation. It is not expected that the actors will share common values or beliefs. Each individual's 'behaviour [can be] predetermined by either the environment or one's subconscious' (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999: 256). Also, our 'values and beliefs [will] differ from one arena to another; perceivers may discover that the beliefs that guided them well in one arena take them astray in another' (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988: 57), which can leave some uncertainty.

2.1.5 The Manipulators

The credit should not all go to the performers influencing the environment to suit their needs, even though the performer and the manipulator can easily be the same person. Manipulators have the confidence that they can influence 'almost any situation because they can' (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988: 59) even at the 'risk of [a] confrontation' (Brockriede, 1974: 166). By gaining the upper hand the manipulators will become familiar with their proposed audience in advance by 'acquiring and using social knowledge' (Snyder, 1992: 74–75). This approach will be followed by 'regulating and facilitating social interaction' (76–77) with each person. By taking the time to get to know each 'opponent', the manipulator will come to understand his or her aims, intentions, and personality. Brickman (1987) makes some interesting observations about personalities. However, none of these members may fit into any of these boxes and it could be difficult to make such an assumption, although it is possible that individuals can camouflage their true personalities to suit their intended environment. Brickman (1987: 70, 229) acknowledges that 'shy people [can] find it difficult to take action, alienated people [can] find it difficult to sustain action, and depressed people [can] find it difficult to do both'. This will provide the manipulator with the necessary

data in an 'attempt to master the structure of the environment' (Weick, 1995: 152) to their advantage. Therefore, acting in a certain way can 'change what a person knows' (Zimbardo, 1969: 12–18) and how they will influence 'events, situations, and explanations' (Weick, 1988: 307). These individuals' actions can affect what the organisation observes. However, Starbuck (1976: 1069) postulates that:

> Organisations' environments [can be] largely invented by organisations themselves. Organisations [will] select their environments from ranges of alternatives, then they subjectively perceive the environments they inhabit. The processes of both selection and perception [can be] unreflective, disorderly, incremental, and strongly influenced by social norms and customs.

However, is it the organisation or the individual who might be unable to make sense of 'what it is' (Weick, 1995: 159) that they see and hear? Or is it that individuals can be 'constrained by their own actions' (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978: 73) and may not appreciate that their own actions can be subject to 'multiple interpretations' (Weick, 1988: 307). It is important to bear in mind that individuals will 'choose their own constraints' (Weick, 1995: 164) by introducing 'barriers to understanding' their intended audience. By doing so, hidden agendas can 'remain undetected for longer periods of time, meaning that once they are noticed they [will be] more severe and harder to solve' (Weick, 1995: 175). The perplexity that will be felt by those who 'remain stems not so much from their guilt, but from their inability to act' (Weick, 1995: 174).

2.1.6 Ambiguity and Uncertainty

Weick (1995: 91) claims that 'ambiguity and uncertainty' will be common to most organisations. However, in each case they might to some extent be different. Ambiguity will engage people 'because they can be confused by too many interpretations' (Weick, 1995: 91) and may not be able to 'make sense of the situation at hand' (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991: 518–19), whereas in the case of 'uncertainty, they do so because they [will be] ignorant to the interpretations' (91). This notion could 'involve political interests, consequences, coercion, persuasion, and rhetoric' (Weick, 1995: 7), over which the audience will not have 'ultimate control' (Thayer, 1988: 250, 254). It should not come as a surprise that 'multiple interpretations' (Merton, 1967: 145) intended for the receivers can and will 'produce a shock' (145). An individual may not fully understand the 'reasons why other people [might be] doing something or ignoring

something' (Helmreich & Foushee, 1993: 88) that they may not have been privileged to beforehand.

According to Levine (1985: 8), ambiguity can involve a combination of words or sentences with 'more than one interpretation' (8). This could lead to serious problems. Information could be misinterpreted from all directions, even starting at the very top of the hierarchy. Martin (1992: 134) argues that 'ambiguity [can be] perceived when a lack of clarity, high complexity, or a paradox makes multiple (rather than single or dichotomous) explanations plausible'. By clarity she means that something could appear 'obscure or indistinct, and therefore hard to decipher' (134). By highly complex she means that 'a plethora of elements and relationships [can] make it difficult to comprehend in any simple way' (134), and by paradox she means that 'an argument that apparently derives contradictory conclusions by valid deduction and acceptable premises' (134). By means of these definitions, Martin highlights that ambiguity can be subjectively perceived, interpreted, and felt. If an event appears to be unclear, extremely complex, or inconsistent, then people may judge the situation as being ambiguous. However, March (1994: 178) supports Martin's definition, suggesting that:

> Ambiguity refers to a lack of clarity or consistency in reality, causality, or intentionality. Ambiguous situations [might be] situations that cannot be coded precisely into mutually exhaustive and exclusive categories. Ambiguous purposes [could be] intentions that cannot be specified clearly. Ambiguous identities [might be] identities whose rules or occasions for application [may be] imprecise or contradictory. Ambiguous outcomes [may be] outcomes whose characteristics or implications are fuzzy.

What is clearly demonstrated here is that if the 'assumptions necessary for rational decision-making are not met' (Weick, 1995: 92), then they could increase the 'extent to which action is guided by [personal] value[s] and ideology' (Weick, 2001: 47), which may not be in line with the organisation's objectives. If 'Ambiguity is present; people who can resolve it gain power. The values of these powerful people [can] often affect what the organisation becomes. When ambiguity increases, the person best able to resolve it gains power, as does that person's vision of the world and the organisation' (47) by keeping the real objective under his or her hat!

According to March (1994: 174), uncertainty may come from 'imprecision in estimates of future consequences conditional on present actions'. Alternatively, Burns and Stalker (1961: 112) describe uncertainty as:

> … the ignorance of the person who is confronted with a choice about the future in general, and in particular about the outcomes, which may follow any of the individual's possible lines of action. Since the individual must choose, if he is to remain operative (as a businessman or any other agent), he acts in accordance with his belief about the future and the specific possibilities. These possibilities will always be differentiated in his mind according to the degrees of belief with which they [can be] credited.

Milliken (1987), however, makes an interesting point that uncertainty can be located in one of three places, in particular when:

> People lack understanding of how components of the environment [might be] changing (state uncertainty), or of the impact of environmental changes on the organisation (effect uncertainty), or of the response options that [could be] open to them (response uncertainty).

An unstable environment can consist of 'nothing more than talk, symbols, promises, lies, threats, agreements, expectations, memories, rumours, indicators, supporters, detractors, faith, suspicion, trust, loyalties, and commitments' (Weick, 2001: 49). All of these elements might be intangible and more influenceable (e.g. Gronn, 1983; Peters, 1980; Weick, 1980) for individuals to take advantage of their intended audience to persuade and enforce their 'belief[s] that their actions will be influential' (Weick, 2001: 49). They will be ready to stand their ground and confront any problems. March and Olsen (1994) suggest that ambiguity can involve a selection of situations and opportunities to demonstrate the difficulties within organisations. They identify four definitions.

- **Ambiguity of Intention** – Organisations can be 'characterised by inconsistent and ill-defined objectives' (12). Therefore, it will be impossible for individuals within the organisation to follow the objectives without distributing 'blame for what has [or has not] happened in the organisation' (11).

- **Ambiguity of Understanding** – For many organisations the 'casual world in which they live in [can be] obscure' (12). However, the organisation may not be the one creating the obscurity; it can be the individuals who are unclear. Therefore, individuals may have difficulty interpreting their working environment and understanding the links between the organisation's objectives and their possible consequences.

- **Ambiguity of History** – An organisation's 'past [can be] important' (12), but not easily interpreted by those within or possibly outside the organisation, as it can be reconstructed or twisted to explain to suit the intended audience 'what happened, why it happened, and whether it had to happen' (12).

- **Ambiguity of Organisation** – Individuals will vary their thoughts to provide different decisions under different circumstances, and will change their minds according to their 'self-interest' and 'group interest' (12). Therefore, due to the uncertainty and changing patterns of the environment, it will be difficult to know how individuals might choose from one decision to another.

2.1.7 Sensemaking and Arguing

It may be unusual for organisational sensemaking to consist of small talk (for example: good morning, thank you, how is the family?) where 'people [can] engage in pretty talk' (Billig, 1989: 231). Instead, a more familiar form of interaction might be one in which 'we [might be] always arguing at particular moments in specific places to certain audiences' (Mailloux, 1990: 134) to get our message across. However, Burrell and Morgan (1979: 31) suggest that 'conflict, domination and contradiction [can] play no part' in sensemaking, although several authors agree that it might be an essential segment of sensemaking in the field of organisational studies. Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972: 25) state that 'an organisation [can be] a set of procedures for argumentation and interpretation as well as for solving problems and making decisions'. Anderson (1983: 214) builds on the idea that 'goals [can be] discovered through a social process involving argumentation and debate in a setting where justification and legitimacy play important roles'. This can impact on the 'power struggles [which could] enhance the quality of information available to organisations, because each faction challenges the information' (Hage, 1980: 280). Individuals can challenge one another, demonstrating how political interaction in organisations can create 'a natural dialectic'

(Huff, 1988: 84). However, Schmidt (1991: 88–96) succinctly describes organisational sensemaking as 'debative cooperation' between all parties.

Some individuals can interpret what they think. This does not mean that others will see the same thing or even think the same way. This can be more evident in the setting where most 'dispute[s] between people' (Weick, 1995: 137) take place in organisations: namely, meetings. The main arena for individuals to have opposite opinions will form part of an 'argument in which someone else will argue the other side' (137). All the individuals attending a meeting will have some 'vague feelings' (Bird, 1989). They may act upon 'numerous sensemaking frameworks that [could] contradict each other' (137) depending on the nature of the meeting in question. The meeting might be of personal interest to the various individuals. Therefore, it should provide the 'confidence that they can eventually make sense of almost any situation' (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988: 59) and be 'ready to argue convincing[ly]' (Brockriede, 1974: 171).

2.1.8 A Personal Reflection on Sensemaking

Sensemaking, it seems, can be regarded as how we, as individuals in any setting, 'cope with [day-to-day] experiences, particularly surprises' (Louis, 1980: 239) when we least expect them. It will be more important to some individuals than others and contingent on the individual and his or her circumstances. It could be seen as one 'big performance' of confusion, in which certain individuals might gain the upper hand by intentionally controlling others either by status or by their sheer presence.

This enactment can easily be observed by watching either a parent with a child, a team leader with a subordinate, or a chief executive with the board of directors interacting with each other. Each scenario can make the other individual feel secure or indecisive. What is surprising is that such scenarios can be played out on a daily basis in organisations. The opportunity to learn from mistakes and make things as clear as possible might be available, but not chosen as an option.

2.2 INFORMAL NETWORKS

> *I'm a Board Director and I only get to find out what is going on by talking to subordinates.*
>
> **Company E1**

'It's not what you know; it's who you know ...'. This phrase can regularly be heard at work not just at the top of the hierarchy, but also at the middle and bottom. How important are these networks in an organisational context and do they add value? It would be hard not to think that individuals will and can use these informal communication channels for their own personal advantage by creating rumours and observing how these networks respond to hearing 'only half the story' (Sinclair, 1992: 614). However, it is amazing how individuals can create the other half of the story with multiple variations of Chinese whispers.

Organisations can have the choice of recognising these networks as 'powerful political tools' or an 'invisible enemy' (Cross & Prusak, 2002: 105) working within their midst. What can happen is that individuals, mainly from the top and senior management, will seek to work around or totally ignore these networks. Abrams et al (2003: 64) suggest that the importance of informal networks can be the 'primary means by which employees find information, solve complex problems and learn how to do their work'. I believe that this could allow the sharing of knowledge to be effective and efficient (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). It may be right to say that the success of an organisation could be achieved by understanding how it can 'reap substantial benefits by recognising' (Cross & Prusak, 2002: 110) that individuals will come to share common knowledge and information (e.g. Burt, 1987; Rogers, 1995; Strang & Tuma, 1993). Therefore, members of top and senior management should observe this approach as a positive incentive to learn from one another (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). To help individuals feel comfortable using these networks they might turn to their peers and colleagues to gain the necessary knowledge (Linden et al, 2002). This will ensure that they do not 're-create work already done' (Abrams et al, 2003: 64) in other parts of the organisation.

Some individuals can overuse the organisation's technical jargon, meaning that others who may not be 'accustomed to the lexicon will become alienated' (Greiner & Schein, 1989: 28). Therefore, allowing individuals to influence their team members by 'creating

information, withholding it, distorting it, or redirecting the flow toward selected recipients' (Greiner & Schein, 1989: 28) can be a vital flaw. An individual can be the primary receiver of important information. If the person feels that a team member might block his or her initiative, he or she could redirect the flow of the information and decide 'who sees what, when, and in what order' (Greiner & Schein, 1989: 28), although Filley and House (1969: 417–418) raise the point that it might only 'require a small work group' to block the flow of communication. However, it would be difficult to define a small group in a large organisation with multiple levels of management. For argument's sake, a small group can easily consist of a whole level of management.

Some might consider that asking for information or advice could be a sign of weakness, which may 'make a person [feel] vulnerable' (Abrams et al, 2003: 65). This might be true if it is an old boys' network. Some individuals can feel uncomfortable working with them (Davidson & Cooper, 1986) because they could have 'tremendous power and control within the network' (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993: 111). The problem faced by the individuals could include the need to change in some way to fit in (e.g. Cox, 1994; Kanter, 1977a; 1977b). Hurley and Sonnenfeld (1998) propose that this can only work for individuals above middle management rather than those at lower organisational levels because they will have the ability to assess accurately who knows what (Wegner, 1986) within the organisation. How this ability may be identified is not clear and it will be interesting to test the theory on the middle management within the proposed organisation.

Networks might not only be used for information purposes. As previously mentioned, relationships can be sorted and built on for future development in career advancement. Cannings and Montmarquette (1991) believe that informal networks can be more useful to male managers than to female managers because they are thought to be more appropriate for men (Yoder, 1991). Davies-Netzley (1998) also acknowledges that females have been excluded from informal networks by their male peers. This would suggest that female managers could be excluded from 'informal interactions where critical information was exchanged' (Lyness and Thompson, 2000: 87). This raises the question of how females can fit into and become recognisable within a male-dominated culture. The perception from females is that men can exclude them from holding male-gender-type positions, which might typically be held by men or thought to be more appropriate for men (Yoder, 1991). This could increase the problems for females having to endure 'male stereotyping and [their] preconceptions of women' (Catalyst,

1996: 37) in general. To hear comments such as 'men doing and women being' (Cannings & Montmarquette, 1991: 212) will compel females to perform better than their male colleagues to prove themselves (e.g. Davidson & Cooper, 1986; Harlan & Weiss, 1982) and gain their acceptance into the networks. Female counterparts can feel that they might be perceived as displaying the 'pushy woman syndrome' (Cannings & Montmarquette, 1991: 215). Therefore, it will be important to recognise the gender differences in the type of network in operation. For instance, individuals can hoard 'information or play colleagues off one another' (Cross & Prusak, 2002: 108) for 'political or financial gain' (108). Some individuals could be working towards 'ulterior motives or hidden agendas' (Abrams et al, 2003: 66).

For these networks to flourish, individuals will build and maintain relationships with key people from whom they may benefit later on. Schein (1987: 84) makes the assumption that 'relationships [will] depend upon mutual cooperation, giving all parties to the relationship as nearly as possible what they claim to need' to reach their goals. This could be true if all the parties are on the same status level, with equal benefits to gain. It might be inevitable that there will be winners and losers in these relationships. It has been suggested that trust could lead to increased overall knowledge exchange (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1974). Without some sort of trust, individuals can undermine the efforts being undertaken by putting up different barriers depending upon their level in the organisational hierarchy (e.g. Rosen, 1982; Russell, 1994). Being able to recognise these straits will be the key.

Most individuals can be associated with members they recognise who might 'walk the talk' (Abrams et al, 2003: 66). These members will be able to provide them with a 'sense of belonging' (Brooks et al, 2006: 90). However, can this really demonstrate that the individual is trustworthy, or that they may be very good at telling you what you want to hear? Therefore, in doing so, an individual can allow another person to 'influence one's thinking' (Abrams et al, 2003: 72) due to his or her positional status. Individuals might be unaware that certain members might be involved in 'hamper[ing] the work of the informal network' (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993: 105). Their primary purpose will be to 'provide intelligence' (105) to the top and senior management on what might be being discussed and by whom. These particular members can exert 'tremendous power and control' (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993: 111) within these networks. They can take pleasure in enacting their new powers because they will be 'more than would be granted' (111) in their own formal communication structure. The willingness of these

individuals to 'deviate from formal' (Melcher & Beller, 1967: 13) channels to achieve 'consensus on a[n important] subject' (10) should not be underestimated. Members might be willing to exclude individuals whom they feel may not play ball! They will use their positional status to 'persuade others to take [unauthorised] actions' (19) throughout the network or even the organisation. This will provide them with the opportunity to manipulate and alter the course of events.

2.2.1 Gender Bias

Although these networks can be sources for sharing information and knowledge and developing relationships for future career development, the emphasis on gender seems to make an appearance regarding who might be accepted into the inner circle. The focus of my research is not on gender issues. It is, however, an important area to recognise, as it may be of significance in demonstrating how 'power games' and relationships can be developed within a disproportionate gender environment. I would argue that these networks can be used to encourage unfair treatment and inequality within and outside the parameters of the networks. Hofstede (1985: 347) raises the point that members of a group or a culture can accept the fact that 'power in institutions and organisations [might be] distributed unequally'. If that is true, how can it still be a problem today? Baron and Newman (1990: 173) also suggest that 'organisations [can] generate inequality'. Some organisations will allow the continuation of old boys' networks – 'informal relationships [will be] formed and or strengthened' (Moore, 1992: 54). These so-called networks can be the 'pinnacles of organisations' where 'men [still] hold an edge' (49). As mentioned, men can hold the 'most authoritative positions; this might give them an advantage in informal network positions' (49).

Some individuals will interact with other members of the group. The downside, however, could be that females may not have full access to and be fully included in the informal organisational networks (e.g. Epstein, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Kaufman, 1984; Lorber, 1984). This problem could impede females from participating in the future. The networks can be important for 'sharing information, advice, and support' (Moore, 1992: 47). It could be argued that these might impact on members' job performance and mobility (e.g. Blau, 1963; Brass, 1985). This idea suggests that they could provide few opportunities for females to interact with their key members within the male-centred networks of power (e.g. Epstein, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Kaufman, 1984; Lorber, 1984; Martin, 1985; Moore, 1988). This male advantage might result from discrimination. Dealing with an old boys' network whose preference for 'interaction [can be] with one

another' (Moore, 1992: 47) can put females at a disadvantage in interacting with their 'men peers' (48). However, it should be taken into account that the individual and the members have a limited history of working together.

By limiting access for both male and female individuals, the key members can 'maintain advantages [over] favoured groups within [the] organisation' (e.g. Acker, 1990; Baron & Newman, 1990; Bielby & Baron, 1987; Miller, 1986: 10; Reskin, 1988). This selective approach could be a way of 'eliminat[ing] some individuals from the channel' (Melcher & Beller, 1967: 15). The assumption might be that some individuals may not be 'particularly useful' (15) to 'talk out of turn and carry secrets to the right people' (Dalton, 1959: 232–234). The supposed information might 'not be legitimate' (Melcher & Beller, 1967: 12). In other words, the communication may not have been authorised to be disclosed due to the confidentiality of the contents. However, the individual(s) might be willing 'to take some unauthorised shortcut[s]' (Melcher & Beller, 1967: 12) in introducing the information into the public domain. It could be argued that the unsanctioned behaviour may contribute to the viability of an organisation (e.g. Dalton, 1959; Kuhn, 1961).

2.2.2 Trust

Given that the focus is on 'informal networks', there is a strong emphasis on 'interpersonal trust' being an important factor. Therefore, it would be unwise not to consider the importance of this concept when discussing this particular topic area. It must be stressed that this is a summary of trust and is not meant to be a comprehensive study of trust in all its forms.

The purpose of these networks could create the right environment to share information. Depending on what might be divulged, certain information should be kept confidential, otherwise it will violate the other person's trust (Butler, 1991). Dodgson (1994) raises the point that for the exchange of knowledge to be effective, a relationship with a high level of trust will need to be developed. Individuals will have to trust one another to be 'honest, capable and committed to joint aims' (291). Therefore, high levels of trust will need to be considered in order to facilitate the levels of communication to generate learning (Dodgson, 1993). Creed and Miles (1996: 26) argue that there can be 'little question that within the network form trust requirements [might be] high and the consequences of failing to meet them severe'. They go on to say that 'managers [might] attempt to operate in network settings with low levels of trust, [but] failure appears

almost certain' (26). It will be important to recognise how informal networks can impact on the formal communication network and whether they can enhance or hamper trust within the organisation.

Abrams et al (2003: 64) highlight the importance of interpersonal trust. They talk about the 'trust in a person's competence' (64), which could allow 'effective knowledge creation and sharing' in these networks. They continue to say that it will be 'difficult for managers to influence' due to it being an 'elusive concept' (64) within the workforce of an organisation. A lack of the concept could affect the knowledge creation and sharing (Borgatti & Cross, 2003) amongst the individuals within the organisation. Grandori and Soda (1995: 21) similarly note that 'trust [can be] one of the most frequently mentioned concepts with inter-firm co-operative relations'. They argue that trust can be an outcome, a character of the emerging relationship between the various parties involved. Finally, they posit that the relationship that emerges will depend on the mechanisms that might be utilised to facilitate interaction to take place.

On occasion, trust has to be established quickly if a group is to meet tight deadlines. In these certain situations, swift trust (Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996) might be needed. They view swift trust differently from trust that can develop over time through being exposed to each other's behaviour. Individuals will have to learn 'to trust and be trustworthy, within the limits of a temporary [set-up and time-scale]' (170). This could mean that 'people [will] have to wade in on trust rather than wait while experience shows who can be trusted and with what' (170). The drawback could be that the group may 'proceed with the minimum of communication between its members' (Knights & Wilmott, 1997: 19). It remains to be seen whether this approach could really work within an organisational context.

Dodgson (1993) differentiates between interpersonal and inter-organisational trust. He proposes that collaboration between organisations could help to transcend individual relationships. He argues that trust can become 'engrained in organisational routines, norms, and values' (91). The problem can not be easily changed. Depending on the environment, collaboration can be personal rather than in the interest of the organisation. Other writers claim that such collaborative situations will depend on high levels of trust between the parties (e.g. Buckley & Casson, 1988; Lundvall, 1988). It is often assumed that trust can simply be built through a process of continued interaction or communication (Hakansson & Johanson, 1988). Thus, good interpersonal

relationships and effective communication will be 'continually identified to be critical in maintaining trust between partners' (Dodgson, 1993: 83). McCune (1998: 46) supports this by suggesting that for 'collaboration to work, the participants [will] need to trust one another, and to build trust they [will need to] share some common experiences'. The problem could be that establishing such trust might take considerable time and resources, which in some cases may not be available or even on offer.

2.2.3 A Personal Reflection on Informal Networks

The use of informal networks can be a double-edged sword for any organisation. Although not necessarily part of the official hierarchy, they can exist and play a major part in the organisation's internal structure. They can provide additional support or work against the very heart of the business. Relationships can be based on 'what can this person provide for me', rather than 'mutual respect'. They can be all about the long-term hidden agendas that, as individuals, we all have. However, they can also involve the extent to which an individual will go to reach his or her aspirations. It seems wrong to make the assumption that the benefits should be of equal gain for all parties, including the organisation. If they were of equal gain, these networks would not be in existence. These networks are like 'exclusive membership clubs': harder to enter than actually to cancel the yearly subscription. Therefore, a positive output still remains to be seen.

2.3 TEAM BRIEFINGS

> *Before we would get the opportunity to ask a question, but now we're just being talked at …*
> **Company F1**

Today, team briefings have become a way to disseminate information at all the levels of an organisation. The principles remain the same: to convey strategic and operational information to staff via face-to-face meetings encouraging feedback, which might be recorded at all levels to provide follow-up sessions. Team briefings were originally designed to communicate critical information to employees across the organisation. Briefings can create a 'valuable feedback loop' (Clutterbuck, 2001: 6) for all the individuals involved. Some organisations might use team briefings 'simply for cascading information from the top to the very bottom' (Garnett, 1983: 29). This approach will provide little or no opportunity for feedback or to challenge the understanding of the staff. It would be wrong to believe that the use of email and the occasional bulletin on the company Intranet could solve all the communication problems. Team briefings work because they are face to face; individuals can observe the body language of their presenters more closely. As such, managers will need to 'concentrate on creating a climate where communication can happen' (Clutterbuck, 2001: 6) and discussions are freely encouraged to take place.

It is amazing how much time can be spent attending various briefings. Organisations would be lost without their 'groups, teams, committees, and meetings' (Alessandra, 2001: 17). After all, 'teamwork in [an] organisation' (Hohmann, 1992: 302) can improve coordination, involve people, and encourage innovation. The downside, however, is that it can also fail, 'drain vitality, leave frustration, and [encourage] power struggles' (Alessandra, 2001: 17) and 'competitive behaviour' (Hentze & Kammel, 1992b 624). Team briefings can be important to organisations. However, some organisations' approach to running effective briefings can help improve communication and reduce barriers within the organisation. Some participants might view this approach as 'wasting valuable time' (Mankins, 2004: 58) having to wait for the next quarterly briefing to reconvene over 'old ground'. Instead of being a productive couple of hours away from day-to-day duties, individuals can be left with cynical moods and complaints about the whole session. It will be important to conduct these briefings effectively, especially if the various parties only meet from time to time. Mankins (2004: 60) suggests that top and

senior management can spend 'less than 3 days each month' briefing their staff. I believe that this may not be viewed as a lot of quality time set aside to update staff and gain valuable feedback. What would happen if the meeting is cancelled? The time delay will be much harder to fill and the likelihood of top and senior management members putting extra time aside could be fairly slim, considering that they (senior management) will not wait for 'consensus[hip] building' (Berger, 1998: 125) because it can be a lengthy process, and 'time is money' (124).

As organisations become larger, staff can feel cut off from the information they need (Goldhaber, 1976) due to the lack of follow-up sessions. This can impact on staff perceptions of top management and their communication practices (Snyder & Morris, 1984). They can also influence the 'trust and openness' (Harcourt et al, 1991: 350) between them. In general, staff might prefer to hear organisation news directly from the top (Foehrenbach & Rosenberg, 1982) because the quality of information can deteriorate (Morgan & Schiemann, 1983). This could suggest that a lack of trust within the hierarchy of the management is what is being communicated to staff. Gibson and Hodgetts (1986: 202) note that 'employees [can] prefer to get their information from group meetings with management' in attendance. This approach will allow staff the opportunity to interact with management face to face without the possibility of information being intentionally blocked.

Recognising that top and senior management can also manipulate briefings by the 'timing of information flow' (Costa, de Matos, & Cunha, 2004: 66) affect the order in which information is released. This can cause resentment and undermine team identification among subordinates who feel that they have been excluded (McClane, 1991) from receiving the information at the same time. If the briefing is being run by members of top and senior management they can use their positions as leverage to try and influence the outcome. In these situations there could be 'winners and losers' (Alessandra, 2001: 17). As such, the majority can be 'influenced by the culture of [the] organisation' (Harcourt et al, 1991: 353) and the individual. The possible outcome if these briefings fail is that individuals will use alternative communication methods to find out what might really be happening within the organisation. They will not take anything said at face value and may wish to see everything mentioned put 'in writing' (Alessandra, 2001: 17).

2.3.1 Cultural Values

The culture of an organisation can influence all parties regarding how to 'behave at meetings' (Berger, 1998: 124). This can also include the members of top and senior management, who will be 'focused, driven, and dominating' (Alessandra, 2001: 17). This approach can make the management come across as 'insensitive' (17), which could impact on their interaction with the staff. This can also sway whether decisions are made 'by teams or individuals' (Berger, 1998: 127) because a team can develop its own culture and influence 'the majority of its members' (Legg, 2004: 15) to delay the outcome. It should not be taken lightly that some individuals are used to being dictated to by superiors; they will expect to be instructed and told how to behave. Other individuals, however, might not like to be given instructions to follow, and prefer to travel their own path. This will be a challenge when working with different cultures whose values can be different from one's own (Hofstede, 1993). Finding out which style of approach is suited to the organisation based on the variety of cultural values currently in place can be a long process. It would be helpful to understand how cultural values affect the attitudes and behaviour within these various teams. This could assist in 'adapt[ing] one's approach' (Berger, 1998: 126). Legg (2004: 15) suggests that individuals from a variety of backgrounds can be brought together by leaving 'behind their cultural environment'. How true can this be? In some cases conflict can be inevitable (Guzzo & Shea, 1992). This could include 'personal values and beliefs' (Costa et al, 2004: 80), which might not be easy to influence and change amongst the majority whose attitude is fixed, which may also include top and senior management who will have 'strong values and beliefs' (Costa et al, 2004: 67) of their own. Establishing 'who communicates with whom' (Costa et al, 2004: 71) might help to persuade other individuals to influence each other.

2.3.2. A Personal Reflection on Team Briefings

Too many organisations fail to see the importance of providing a two-way communication channel. This could be for fear that their staff might have something valuable to contribute or new ideas that had not been thought of in the boardroom. Whatever the reason, it can backfire if not taken seriously. If this is the only opportunity for staff to interact with the top and senior management, and not just at the yearly office Christmas party, it should be right to allow the event to take place. The length of time taken to receive information will become longer and it will be harder to filter information through the various management structures as an organisation continues to grow. Delays will be inevitable, due to one reason or another. This hold-up could impact on

the authenticity of the information issued. The concern surrounding power and control can be present in everything that we do in some shape or form. The fact that power can impact on trust, behaviour, and attitude should ring alarm bells with the top and senior management to rectify the problem. Sometimes, the management might not be aware of issues pending in the organisation. It might be true to say that if you want to find out something about the business, the shop floor will be the place to go!

2.4 CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

> *Can we not just practice what we preach?*
> **Company H1**

Can organisations really 'walk the talk' of their corporate values? Many organisations produce a set of corporate values. It could be argued that these values should not be a selection of 'careful' words to parade in front of staff, stakeholders, and clients. The words should actually mean something to the members of the board who are presenting to their audience. For the values really to mean something, the top and senior management should be singing from the same hymn sheet. They should also have considered the appropriate mechanisms to embed these values within the organisation. As Patten (2004: 1) says, core values should: 'set out the code of conduct, which an organisation will live by, and these values serve as a moral compass that sets standards for making decisions and individual behaviour'. Core values can become 'important due to the various cultural and country environments' (Vitell & Paolillo, 2004: 185) in which global businesses operate on a daily basis. However, we are talking about values; we should also think about how they can be translated into behaviour.

Although common to everyone values are very 'personal and intimate and vary from individual to individual' (Wolfe, 2005: 51). Brooks et al (2006: 14) define personality as: 'specific characteristics of individuals which may be open or hidden and which may determine either commonality or differences in behaviour in an organisation'. The definition suggests that personality can affect people in an organisation environment through interaction. This can affect how individuals see themselves and as a result the extent to which individuals might be a positive or negative force in the organisation. The difference in personalities can lead to unfriendliness between individuals, which might hinder the organisation. It could be argued that personality might have a major bearing on the way people behave in an organisation. A combination of personal attributes and environmental factors could determine the way in which an individual might react. We cannot take for granted and should consider how individuals perceive themselves and possibly others during their day-to-day interrelationships at work. Their own perceptions can be a key factor in how they portray themselves between the various environments. These settings might already be familiar to them or be unknown territory. Brooks et al (2006: 15) suggest that the following factors (**see Table One**) can impact on individuals' outlook in their various settings.

Innate Factors	Environmental Factors
Personality	Organisation/work factors
Perception	Family
Values	Peer-group pressures
Abilities	Personal life experiences
	National cultures

Table 1 Variables affecting individual behaviours

The whole formation revolves around the use of language, which should not be taken light-heartedly. Conveying honesty and trust can be part of the corporate values. One thing to be wary of might be the 'avoidance of lying' (Lewis, 2005: 40) to the audience by disguising the words being used. This approach could impact on an individual's integrity. It could be argued that it might be better to 'gain more credibility and trust if we don't pretend to have all the answers' (Lewis, 2005: 40). Verschoor (2005: 17) believes that values can benefit organisations in many ways, including 'facilitating internal cooperation and communication'. Wolfe (2005: 51) argues that this can only take place if steps are taken to 'maintain open and transparent communications with stakeholders'. I believe that this will provide 'truthful information' (Wolfe, 2005: 51). It might also ensure that the information cannot 'circumvent the truth' (Lewis, 2005: 40).

For corporate values to have any chance of convincing staff and stakeholders, a united front should be demonstrated. This will start at the top of the hierarchy, and the tone will 'set the rest of the organisation' (Patten, 2004: 1). The chief executive officer (CEO) of an organisation cannot set off alone in pursuit of his or her goals without the support of the board. Therefore, not only should the tone be set by the senior management, but they will also be clear about 'desirable and acceptable behaviour' (Patten, 2004: 1). The phase 'leading by example' might be in each board member's immediate thoughts. If each individual was asked whether it is possible to act at work the 'same way we act at home' (Wolfe, 2005: 52), what would be his or her response? No doubt there would be a few raised eyebrows, an uneasy cough, a slight body shift in the chair, or even a little chuckle, if anyone dares to display such a reaction in front of the CEO himself. The scenarios at home and at work will not be the same. Some might feel that there is no difference between the two locations and how they act. Others could disagree and might say, 'you have not met my wife; my husband; my children or even the in-laws!'. Members of the top and senior management may not be immune from displaying different behaviours. Even their tolerance level can be much greater and supposedly

disciplined to control their behaviour in front of their staff. As previously mentioned, in Table 1, diverse variables can affect our behaviour. These core values will be closely linked to the organisation's cultural setting. The culture might be a 'set of values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, which will be the unique hallmark of [the] organisation' (Grundy, 1994: 28). The values should be living values and not merely abstract ideas from the CEO. He should have the full support of his board or these values will have a 'remarkably short shelf-life' (Grundy, 1994: 209). However, if there is any unrest within the main board, such as distrust, this will hamper the board's efforts. Therefore, the CEO might need to consider how to fortify the structure and 'spread [the] appropriate core values throughout the organisation' (Verschoor, 2005: 17). If the structure is not correct at the top of the tree, it cannot be correct at the various levels further down. If the head of a waterfall is dirty then you cannot draw clean water from the bottom.

The introduction of a set of values should be designed for virtually all personnel 'regardless of race, age, gender, culture, religion [and] personality type' (Wolfe, 2005: 51). Some individuals will 'accept and support beliefs that promis[e] certainty' (Hofstede, 1985: 347–348) rather than 'uncertainty and ambiguity' (Vitell & Paolillo, 2004: 187). The next stage is the delivery: how the values will be filtered through the various levels by the managers. These managers will have to contend with the cultural attitudes and alternative values already embedded in various parts of the organisation. The key question that could be raised by the potential audience is: 'Do I like [or trust] this person and the way in which she [or he might be] talking to me?' rather than 'Do I agree that these things make sense?' (Grundy, 1994: 208). Questions like these can be raised by staff. Therefore, how long will it take before they can influence the decision-making process within the organisation? Individuals will 'make decisions based on what is best for them, personally' (Vitell & Paolillo, 2004: 186). However, some might decide on the 'greatest good for the greatest number of people' (186). For individuals not to accept the values there will be 'dissatisfaction' with 'one's job' (Schwartz, 2001: 254), which might include their working conditions, office politics, and grievances against line management. The corporate culture and organisational commitment can play an important role in 'perceptions and ultimately decision-making' (Vitell & Paolillo, 2004: 195). These will be important implications to consider.

According to Vitell and Paolillo (2004: 195), organisations exhibiting values may benefit from 'having employees that [will be] more committed to the organisation'. Is it easier to find or identify individuals who will fit into the values of an organisation, or an

organisation that will fit into the values of an individual? By having selection criteria to pick the chosen few, organisations will have the power to influence individuals' way of thinking 'through the enforcement' (Vitell & Paolillo, 2004: 195) of their values. The organisation's influence could also impose its way of thinking and acting. As Pillmore (2005: 16) suggests: 'changing the behaviour of people is all about hearts and minds and has to touch their heart in a way they can relate to within their culture'. This will be the biggest obstacle to overcome with so many people from a diversity of backgrounds and cultural differences. It will not be an easy process to choose whose values will gain overall acceptance.

2.4.1 A Personal Reflection on Core Values and Beliefs

It is one thing to accept an organisation's mission statement, but it can be another thing to take on someone else's values and make them your own. You may never be asked but told and expected to accept them without any prior discussions. Not recognising the values will be an obstacle between the individual and the organisation. Does having corporate values make a difference to an organisation or even the workforce? What may happen is mutual respect and trust. Values are not a contractual agreement but a reciprocal way of working together. How individuals are treated might not need to be re-enforced if there is no problem in the first place. Introducing a set of values will not, and cannot, change the behaviour of people. Our personal values are instilled from childhood. Seeking to change a lifetime development within a short period of time will be an impossible task.

2.5   A REFLECTIVE MOMENT

The past year has been a stepping stone for me personally. My development has moved very quickly, mainly due to my current studies. I have noticed that I am more focused and streamlined in my thoughts. I question things more thoroughly and I do not take anything for granted. Nothing surprises me when it comes to human behaviour, both in my personal and in my work environment. Researching my topic areas has opened my eyes to my surroundings and how people interact with me. I am more observant in the way that my duties are organised and in what manner. I am still cautious in my own interaction with other personnel, more so now than I was previously. This is due to working in a predominantly male environment. I tend to play down the fact that I am studying. I am always interesting in observing how body language can change very quickly as soon as someone mentions what I am doing within the organisation.

I have taken on a second role. I too, am also a 'performer' within my own organisation in order to continue my research. At the same time, I am seeking not to be seen as a potential threat, especially to the HR personnel, whom I feel are very guarded with me. Only time will tell if there is trust between us. It will be interesting to see what happens in the next stage of my research, which will take me into the business across all the companies. I envisage that sooner rather than later I will receive an invitation to present my findings and assist in some quick-fix schemes in the business. How I will overcome these obstacles will be a learning point and another stepping stone.

My continuous journey is exciting, and at the same time moving me into unknown territory. I am unsure what will greet me at the next interval break, but I am certainly looking forward to it.

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Document Three

An Interpretative Report on a piece of Ethnographic Research

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Document Three submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement of the Nottingham Trent University for the Degree of Doctorate of Business Administration.

CONTENTS

FIGURES & TABLES

3.0 INTRODUCTION

> *"We've got too many fingers in the pie and it's not deep enough..."*
> ***Company B1A***

At the start of this journey, I was uncertain as to where the research topic would take me. I was also unsure whether I would continue on my original path throughout the duration of the course. Now on the third stage of my thesis, I have been presented with some alternative options that were not previously considered. However, I feel that I would have found the whole experience rather tedious if there had been no challenges along the way. I am aware that I may regret confessing this later on!

3.01 Justification

This document provided a long-awaited opportunity to go into the host organisation and converse with various personnel from across the business. I had an idea that my first point of contact would reveal some interesting data, which would make this an exciting journey. Therefore, the reason for this change in direction is explained later in this document.

3.02 A look back down memory lane…

It would be unthinkable to believe that all objects move at the same pace or even stand still in order for us to have a glimmer of hope that we may possibly catch up. This has certainly been the case since starting this journey. Several changes have taken place within the host organisation, which in some way have influenced my course of action in moving forward. In the first instance, the host organisation has continued to grow and expand in terms of its size and operation. Its workforce now stands at 8000 in total. This number may have increased since this document began. It was only by reviewing the company intranet that I found that the organisation has expanded its portfolio through the acquisition of another company. Unfortunately, the organisational organogram on the intranet does not reflect these changes, and it was difficult to find out where these new acquisitions reside within the structure. There have also been some internal changes within the senior management structure.

The management board of Company B1B underwent a major reshuffle. The entire board of directors, including the managing director, was demoted to alternative roles.

Until a new managing director was in post, the company was temporarily under the management of Company B1C. The Head of Human Resources (HR), who is no longer with the company, chose the subject area of this document. Following his departure, discussions were held with the new UK HR manager, who was made aware of this research. However, since our initial discussions, he has not attempted to make any further contact with me whatsoever, or asked for progress reports of any kind. That said I have not pursued any line of communication. The managing director for the UK who was also my 'champion' in this research retired hastily at the end of December 2006. It is rumoured that the managing director for the UK had a disagreement with the chief executive officer (CEO), who had undermined him over a decision he had made and overturned it. Therefore, in order to ensure that I was not in a vulnerable position, I made it a priority to find a new champion. Although he was only 12 months into the post, the new managing director for Company B1B agreed to take up the role. The new managing director for Company B1A (when 10 months into his post) where I work also offered his support. I could easily have asked the managing director of Company B1A to champion the research. However, I did not want this research to be led by Company B1A and therefore have a limited perspective. The abovementioned events provided a few challenges on this continuous journey.

3.03 Who are the sector champions?

In Document One (Caesar, 2005: 17), I confirmed that my chosen audience for the research in this document would be the board of directors from each company within the UK remit, including Company E1. However, due to various events, which took place at the senior level, I felt that it would be wise to choose an alternative group that was also represented across the entire business. The sector champions group certainly fitted the criterion. The group is made up of 11 individuals who are recognised as experts within their chosen sector. Table one shows the 11 market sectors.

Aviation	Offices
Education	Health
Pharmaceutical	Rail
Residential	Retail
Highways	Refrigeration
Entertainment	

Table 1 Market sectors

During October 2002, the sector champions group came to life. The host organisation decided to change its business strategy and become sector-focused in order to access a bigger slice of the potential identified markets. The host organisation identified the proposed 11 individuals who would champion each sector. Some of the identified individuals were already working within the proposed sectors, such as retail and health, while the other individuals were chosen by default, such as those in the aviation, entertainment and residential sectors. The next step was to set up a sector review panel. This panel consisted of internal personnel: two managing directors, two sector champions and a facilitator. It is not clear why there were two sector champions sitting on the panel, which was set up to review the remaining sector champions.

In December 2003, the 11 individuals attended a sector champions workshop in order to improve their understanding and appreciation of each identified sector. Following on from this workshop, the group attended a sector review workshop. At this meeting, the 11 individuals (including the two sector champions who were on the panel) prepared a number of documents and presentations to present to the panel. The aim of this was to explain the number of projects they had won and lost, to explain how each sector was doing financially within its own market, to identify key clients and future work strategies and to decide whether or not the host organisation was in a strong enough position to take advantage of the market opportunities that existed. After the meeting, each sector champion received feedback on how to improve or provide some additional market information.

Since this exercise took place in 2003, it is unclear what has or has not taken place within this particular group. The sector champions are still in existence within the host organisation. However, I searched for sector champions on the company intranet and received a blank page. In light of this, I thought that this would be an ideal group to research because so much time, effort and emphasis went into setting it up. It would be interesting to find out what developments had taken place and how they had managed to implement their strategy within the host organisation.

3.04 Research questions

My research questions relate to the question of what happens within an organisation when a specific vocational group seeks to engage with the rest of the organisation with regard to implementing their work programme. The focus is to examine how these supposedly key communicators can ensure that their directives are cascaded through

the hierarchy. In addition, the approaches, which are undertaken in order to ensure that all parties have a clear understanding will be studied. This document seeks to report the first stage of an ethnographic study with the aim of seeking clarification in the following areas:

- Communicating in a changing environment and making sense of it;
- Communications approach;
- Management structure;
- A collection of critical incidents.

3.05   Why undertake ethnographic research?

Ethnographic research is one of the most in-depth research methods possible. It can provide opportunities to see what people do as well as what they say that they do. It provided me with an enriched understanding of the people involved in this study, the organisation and the broader context in which they work. This approach allows the formation of an understanding of behaviour and culture by talking to people wherever they may be while they are doing whatever it is they do, and by watching and listening to them. It can allow the researcher to engage the participants in conversation in order to probe specific issues of interest and to take some meaningful notes in order to capture the moment. To do so meant that I would have to leave my own comfort zone and enter the participants' world for a short duration. However, these individuals pre-determined the length of time that I had in their world. I felt that had I been able to allocate a specific hour of their time, the results may have been more reflective of their working practices. Grills (1998b) points out that by going to *'where the action'* might be*,* I would develop a personal familiarity with the dilemmas, frustrations, routines, relationships and risks that could be part of everyday life. This approach allowed me to go into the field with no preconceived ideas or a pre-prepared script. This could have provided the selected participants with the opportunity to guide, influence and direct the discussions. These results could be of relevance if they highlight any major concerns which could aid or hinder the host organisation.

3.06   The ethnographic journey – Doing it my way

Due to the recent personnel changes, I put in place a contingency plan to ensure that my journey continued within the host organisation. As previously mentioned, I recruited a new 'champion' to support and *'vouch for [me] and the value of [my] research'* (Bryman & Bell, 2003: 318). I decided not to risk everything on one endeavour. I enlisted the

support of two other stakeholders within the host organisation. They were the managing director of Company B1A and the UK managing director of Company E1. I hoped that my plan would demonstrate a balance at the senior management level. It was important not to create any scepticism regarding the outcome amongst the rest of the senior management board.

3.07   Disclosure vs. Ugly Betty

I had to decide how I would approach meeting this chosen group. I wondered whether I should change my image, wear a dark suit and take on the character of Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore) in the box office movie *Disclosure* (1994) or Betty Suarez (America Ferarra) in the new American sitcom *Ugly Betty* (2007). However, I thought: this is not me, and why should I change now when I want to be seen as knowledgeable, approachable and non-threatening to the recipients? I was in the minority. The group is made up primarily of one gender – male. Therefore, I had to be careful in terms of how I wanted to be perceived by those who met me. It was essential for these individuals to feel relaxed within minutes of meeting me, because I wanted them to be open, honest and feel that they could trust me. In the end, I opted to be myself – no airs or graces. Instead, my jovial side played a key part in my approach. As a reminder, this select group of senior personnel included: a deputy managing director, the board of directors, directors and senior technical directors. I stood as a personnel assistant requesting an audience with these key personnel. One can imagine the butterflies which started building up in the pit of my stomach once the reality took hold regarding what was about to take place. When speaking to several individuals, they rightly reminded me that I was meeting the group in my capacity as a researcher. Their valuable contribution made a difference and helped me to formulate my thoughts for the approaching meetings. I had to identify who I had eventually become. I believe that I became a mix between Meredith Johnson and Betty Suarez.

3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – LITERATURE REVIEW

> *"We are not perfect by any means, but we have the opportunity to share our information and expertise….."*
> ***Company B1C***

Before I delve into Document 3, it is important to discuss the conceptual framework used in Document 2 to analyse the selected topic areas. This framework is illustrated in Figure 1: Force field analysis.
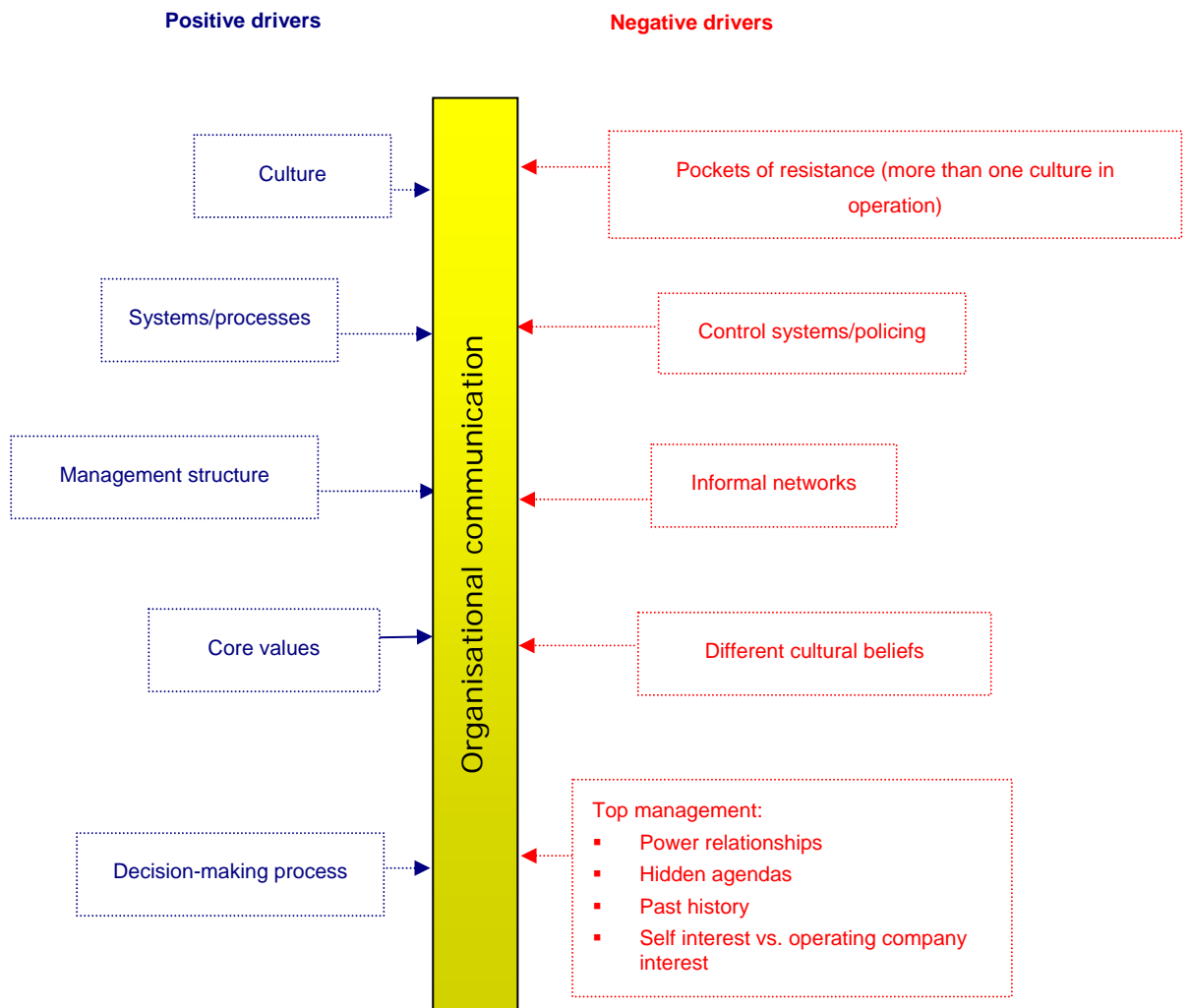
Positive drivers **Negative drivers**

Culture → Organisational communication ← Pockets of resistance (more than one culture in operation)

Systems/processes → ← Control systems/policing

Management structure → ← Informal networks

Core values → ← Different cultural beliefs

Decision-making process → ← Top management:
- Power relationships
- Hidden agendas
- Past history
- Self interest vs. operating company interest

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

I feel that the aforementioned key concepts (drivers) may affect the way in which sensemaking hinders organisational communication within a global conglomerate organisation. The rationale behind my approach is to encourage me to be selective and

to determine which concepts are the most important. My approach will be the key to identifying which interrelationships are the most meaningful and influential with regard to organisational communication. This method will highlight the information, which should be collected and analysed. I chose force field analysis as my conceptual framework because the identified concepts can be displayed in pairs. The drivers will not be strong enough to stand alone and therefore could be influenced by their opponents. Both components can compete for domination in terms of how communication is undertaken or controlled by key personnel. Such outcomes might not create a clear winner or loser in this internal tug of war. I will draw on these factors throughout this document, and recommend interventions, which could be made to rectify the situation. However, it is impossible to predict whether these will remain the key drivers throughout the ongoing investigation.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

> *"You cannot impose a culture by threatening the people..."*
> ***Company E1***

The research approach, which was used was diverse due to the nature and structure of the host organisation. As a reminder, the focus is on three parts of the global organisation. These are as follows:

Company B1A   }
Company B1B   }
                                          B1 (UK division)
Company B1C   }
Company H1   }

Company F1   (Central services division)

Company E1   (International division)

3.2.1 Data collection

Document Three used semi-structured interviews to collect research material from the chosen interviewees. I had an outline of the questions I wanted to cover (see Appendix 1). The questions were open-ended in the hope that they would encourage the interviewees to elucidate on their answers. In addition, observational material was also gathered. I attended three key meetings – a sector workshop, a UK directors' conference and a business future workshop – within the host organisation.

3.2.2 Multi-method approach - Triangulation

Reliability and validity

The advantage of using the multi-method approach was that it ensured that the material told me what I thought the participants were telling me. Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were used as the research methods. It was important that all of the key parties accepted my results as being true. The triangulation method helped to corroborate the research and helped to generate greater confidence in the findings (Webb et al., 1966). As Delbridge and Kilpatrick (1994: 43) point out: *'because we are part of the social world we be studying we cannot detach ourselves from it, or for that matter avoids relying on our common sense knowledge and life experiences when we try*

to interpret it.' This statement is significant to me. I work in one of the companies –
Company B1A. As such, it was vital to remain unbiased throughout the whole process,
and not to be seen to be showing any favouritism. However, using a combination of
data collection methods helped me to *'cancel out the limitations of one method by the
use of another in order to cross-check the findings'* (Bryman & Bell, 2003: 51). This
approach can be viewed as *'the most valid and reliable way to develop understanding of
such a complex social [environment]'* (Kanter, 1977: 337). On the subject of exhibiting
nepotism, it will be important to demonstrate authenticity. Guba and Lincoln (1985: 316)
outline five key points:

- *'Fairness* – does the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members
  of the social setting?
- *Ontological authenticity* – does the research help the members to arrive at a better
  understanding of their social milieu?
- *Educative authenticity* – does the research help members to appreciate better the
  perspective of other members of their social settings?
- *Catalytic authenticity* – has the research acted as an impetus to members to action
  to change their circumstances?
- *Tactical authenticity* – has the research empowered members to take the steps
  necessary for engaging in action?'*

These factors are both thought-provoking and challenging. It would be a strong
demonstration to be able to place a tick in all the boxes. Having the right social and
cultural environment could provide me with answers and demonstrate the presence of
the factors listed above during and after the research. It is one thing to present the
findings to the members, but it is another matter if they wish to learn from them and
agree to change.

3.2.3 Company X, Company Y and Company Z

I met with both stakeholders and my champion while conducting my research. It was an
opportunity to discuss my progress, to get some advice on any problems and to seek
additional support, if required. The managing director of Company B1A suggested that it
would be useful to include some external companies (competitors) in order to facilitate
comparisons. It was believed that this would reveal what the others were doing
differently to the host organisation. I asked the managing director to suggest any
companies which were similar in structure to Company A1 and which might be willing to

participate in the research. The managing director made a telephone call and confirmed my first external appointment. He also contacted the office sector champion to make a similar appointment for me. This appointment, unfortunately, never materialised. In the end, I spoke to the business development and marketing (BD&M) director for Company B1A and asked if he could suggest a client (personal contact) that I might be able to interview. An appointment was confirmed within a day. As these things happen in threes, I made the final appointment myself. I had previously worked for this individual two and a half years ago. To re-iterate the arrangements, they were as follows:

- Managing director – Company B1A   Company X
- Researcher   Company Y
- BD&M director – Company B1A   Company Z

These three organisations are not part of Company A1. They are some of the host organisation's many competitors in the business world. They were chosen because they have a number of similarities to the host organisation, as they all:

- Offer the same services within the same areas of work;
- Deliver work which is sector-focused;
- Are major competitors of the host organisation;
- Have a similar management structure.

I have provided a synopsis of each of the companies. For the sake of anonymity, the organisations have been given pseudonyms. Permission was granted by each company to reveal their real names in the acknowledgements section for the purposes of Document 3.

- *Company X* is a leading engineering consultancy organisation and provides core cost and project management services to the property and construction industries. *Company X* is a growing company with just over 450 members of staff located across the UK. It has a network of strategic alliances and joint ventures, which means that the company is able to serve its clients on a global basis. In order to deliver high-quality services, *Company X* is organised into five separate market sectors, thereby allowing the company to focus the acquired knowledge and expertise of their staff on the business needs of their clients. Today, *Company X* is

the third-largest property consultancy group in Europe, ranking it within the top 10 in the world.

▪ *Company Y* is a leading global provider of professional technical and management support services for major clients around the world. In order to provide a quality service, *Company Y* is organised into three separate market sectors. Between the UK and Europe, *Company Y* employs over 2500 people through a network of over 30 office locations. *Company Y*'s culture is built on integrity, collaboration and respect, and the company values the partnerships which it has developed with its clients and employees. *Company Y* believes that its inclusive style of working delivers benefits at all levels, which enables it to operate more efficiently and helps to create a better environment in which to live and work.

▪ *Company Z* is one of the largest international construction and management consultants. Through its global network of strategically located offices, *Company Z* provides a full range of consultancy services designed to meet clients' needs. *Company Z*'s record of achievement in delivering projects in the public and private sectors stretches over 50 years. *Company Z* recognises that its success is down to the quality of its staff. The company has invested over the years and has aligned itself with industry partners and clients in developing specialist systems and processes, enabling its staff and clients to access the knowledge resources the company has to offer in full.

3.2.4 Getting started: How and why were materials collected?

As previously indicated, the mixture of semi-structured interviews and observations of a variety of meetings provided ample rich material for this document. It also ensured that I could perform some cross-sectional analysis in order to validate my findings. Each interviewee was contacted by telephone (directly or via their personal assistant), and this was followed by an email explaining our previous conversation, the purpose of the meeting and confirming the date and time we had agreed to meet. Each one had the opportunity to withdraw if they did not wish to participate in the research. However, everyone agreed to proceed with the interview. Each interviewee was asked at the start of the meeting if I could record the meeting. Out of the 18 interviews undertaken within the host organisation, only one interviewee declined. The three external clients had no objections to their meetings being recorded. This part of the primary research is explained in more detail later in the document.

Each interview was completed with a briefing note to summarise how the meeting was handled. This exercise provided me with an opportunity to re-evaluate my approach and questions before the next interview. This was important in the initial interviews, as I was not very good at following up on questions. This was evident when I listened to the recordings and realised that I had not reacted quickly enough in following up on additional questions. However, I became more confident in asking for clarification, requesting examples, and challenging any contradictions. I intend to refer to these notes within this document, including the three meetings I attended as an observer.

3.2.5 Techniques for data analysis and feedback

In order to analyse the findings from the interviews and meetings, I used the following tools and techniques.

- **Interview transcripts**

  All of the interviews were recorded and downloaded onto my personal computer at home. I believed that this would be easier than having the interviews transcribed by another person because I was able to listen to the recordings repeatedly and pick up on any changes in the tone of the interviewee's voice or the tempo at which the interview took place and identify any mistakes made on my part in conducting the interviews. This would not have been as easy to do if I had been reading from print. From the recordings, I was able to index mark any comments, which I thought, were pertinent to further investigation.

- **Post-it notes exercise (mind mapping)**

  In order to demonstrate that I had rigorously analysed the material from the interview transcripts, I used a mind map (Buzan & Buzan, 1995). On reviewing each of the transcripts several times, I recorded any interesting and surprising comments and made a note of each one on a single post-it note (see Appendix 2). This exercise was carried out 18 times within the host organisation. All of the comments were noted, even if they were repetitive, as I believed that this would probably reveal an emerging untold story. The external interviews were analysed separately in order to draw useful comparisons with the host organisation (see Appendix 3). On completing this part of the analysis, I teased out any common words and phrases from the rich material. This provided the basis for primary feedback for the host organisation and identified possible areas to investigate in Document 4.

- **Relational analysis**

In order to draw conclusions with regard to whether the material was telling an unforeseen story, the next step was to take a much closer look at the collective comments. Therefore, I revisited the post-it notes exercise to see whether it was possible to group the comments into categories. The various comments highlighted three key concepts. These are as follows:

- Trust;
- Structure;
- History.

In order to demonstrate my findings, I took each concept in turn and placed it on a separate piece of paper on a flip chart showing each theme within its own environment (see Appendix 4). The list is shown in order of importance and is substantiated by the comments, which I gathered. There is a definite link between each of the themes. This was a surprise, considering that I am looking into organisational communication within the host organisation. These three concepts suggest the real underlying problems.

Analysis, explained below.

The next part of this document reports on the initial stage of this ethnographic study, drawing on the interviews within the host organisation and the three external organisations. The sections are split into three parts. They are as follows:

1) An introduction and definition of each of the identified concepts;
2) A sample of quotations and stories to demonstrate the recognised concepts;
3) A conclusion.

The final part of this section is a comparison between the internal and external interviews.

3.3 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

> *"I find out from a major client that our managing director is attending an interview and I've not been informed. I hate these internal politics..."*
> ***Company B1C***

The group at the centre of this study consists of the sector champions and their virtual team members. Table one identifies the 11 champions within Company B1. Company E1 is also included in this study. However, this company is in the early stages of introducing sector champions into its business. I met with the following personnel:

- Industrial (director);
- Rail (board director);
- Virtual team member (director);
- Communications (board director).

3.3.1 Analysis

The analysis is split into four sections:

Analyses one and two:
- A summary of the interviews undertaken with the study group and the three external interviews;
- A comparison between the internal and external interviews.

Analysis three:
- Do the results identified in Analysis one support the force field analysis?
- Do the findings from the interviews and concepts from Analysis one support and fit the force field analysis?
- Does the force field analysis explain the movements in the various levels of trust?

Analysis Four:
- A proposed three-by-two matrix;
- Can the interview findings identified in Analysis one be plotted onto the matrix?

3.3.2 Analysis One: Introduction and definitions – Three concepts

Three key concepts were identified from the interviews undertaken with the sector champions and their virtual team members within the host organisation.

These concepts are described in detail followed by sample quotations and stories to support each one. There are some overlaps between the three, which make interesting reading.

3.3.2.1   Trust

Where does one begin to define what trust is within an organisational setting? As individuals, we can assume that some measure of trust might exist when we interact with other individuals. In any type of social or working environment, we might not expect a '*trade off between trust*' (van Wittlelostuijn & van Wegberg, 2006: 199) and the *'mutuality of the relationship [resulting] in the creation of goodwill'* (Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001: 238). Lewicki and Bunker (1996) argue that, for this to take place, trust should be developed and maintained throughout this relationship. I believe that trust will develop and mature through the stages of the relationship. This suggests that trust can take time to develop as individuals begin to interact with each other. This interaction can take time to mould if individuals do not communicate on a regular basis. It would be correct to assume that the right environment is necessary in order to develop trust between individuals and to facilitate this process. Newell and Swan (2000: 1295) argue that trust is based upon *'judgements of goodwill or personal friendship.'* They also suggest that it is built upon on a moral foundation, which assumes that others will act with integrity, honesty and openness. According to Newell and Swan (2000), this could develop over time as individuals get to know each other *'over an interaction cycle'* (McKnight & Chervany, 2006: 43). This notion assumes that the proposed environment will permit individuals to develop on a personal level. However, time might not be allocated to allow such soft approaches to take place.

Trust has been the subject of research for decades and '*alternative meanings make it difficult to clearly and rigorously define*' trust using a single term (Bromiley & Harris, 2006: 124). However, this could be an indication of the multiplicity of meanings which trust has for different people and for different organisations. This is an important factor in our understanding of human qualities, which are a vital part of inter-organisational collaborations (Gulati, 1995). Encouraging willingness to collaborate and share information (Wiesenfeld et al., 1998) between the various parties is paramount.

The subject matter has been described in various ways. Some define trust as intended or potential behaviour. However, defining behaviour as good or bad is another matter. By observing the actions and reactions of other parties, individuals decide whether or not to trust an individual. If not, the person will ask a question or seek a solution in order to assuage his or her concerns. Other behavioural factors can demonstrate good qualities. Whitener et al. (1998) proposed five categories including behavioural consistency, behavioural integrity, participative decision-making, communication and demonstrating concern. I believe that these will be important attributes to consider and explore further when reviewing organisational communication.

In contrast, trust may be a dispositional capacity of the trustor (Dasgupta, 1988; Hardin, 1993) or reciprocal in nature (Hardin, 1991; Zaheer & Venkatraman, 1995). Trust can be the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to another, which might involve a degree of uncertainty and risk (Mishra, 1996). Rousseau et al. (1998) defined trust as a psychological state comprising one's intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another. Mayer et al. (1995) argue that this attitude can derive from the trustor's perceptions of the trustee's perceived trustworthiness in terms of his/her ability, benevolence and integrity. Martins (2002), however, uses words such as honesty and fairness to define similar constructs to those of ability and integrity in Mayer et al.'s (1995) dimensions of trust. Mishra (1996) uses the terms competency, openness, concern for another's interests and reliability to reflect aspects of trustworthiness. These components can contribute to the development of one's trust in an organisation. Therefore, as individuals, our own perceptions play a key part in how we perceive those personnel whom we meet and with whom we interact. These perceptions comprise our gut instincts. Within minutes of being introduced to an individual, we can start evaluating that person. We are all guilty of doing it – it is human nature.

What the data showed

The material gathered seems to focus on the senior management board, which is comprised of the managing directors. On occasion, they appeared to be the cause of internal problems. However, I believe that their position of power influences their conduct towards the sector champions and other personnel. All parties who *'perceive that those with whom they are dealing with [will be] trustworthy tend to*

reciprocate that trust' (Smith-Ring, 1998: 665). Therefore, effective communication between individuals may help to determine the level of trust that exists between them. A further element which is linked with the *'existence of, or, reliance on, trust between parties [could be] cooperation'* (Smith-Ring, 1998: 665). This assumes that pre-existing cooperation may be required if trust is to develop. Would it be wrong to presume that this trust should already be in place? Individuals should not be strangers to each other, and should share the same values for trust and cooperation to be standard practice. Sharing the same personal characteristics is a different matter. Individuals' competencies will be based on their own level of knowledge and interpersonal skills. According to Sitkin and Roth (1993), the competencies of an individual could be comprised of their ability to keep secrets, fairness, integrity (honesty, moral character), loyalty, sincerity, openness, reliability, empathy, patience, stamina, self-assurance and ingenuity. Smith-Ring (1998) argues that individuals demonstrating high levels of trust will be less likely to lie, cheat or steal. They may also be more inclined to give others a second chance or respect the rights of others. This implies that individuals must be familiar with one another in order to establish this high level of trust. A close working relationship would set the boundaries for each individual involved. As Husted (1989) points out, these kinds of relational trust behaviour could spiral upwards if reciprocated, and downwards if not. Setting a precedent at the senior level of an organisation is vital.

"Leadership style hampers communication…" (13M)

"It is necessary to develop ownership at the top and middle management level without it becoming protected and inward looking…" (9I)

I should highlight that this is the first of several references aimed towards the senior management board. Although the material above is acknowledged as demonstrating trust, it also appears to show the other side of the coin, which is mistrust. The sector champions sought to convince the senior management with regard to various disciplines. This might be due to both parties *'fail[ing] to communicate and misunderstand each other'* (Bachmann, 2006: 394). This could be based upon the managing directors' own perceptions of the individuals' competence *'to carry out the tasks that need to be performed'* (Newell & Swan, 2000: 1295). It is important for tasks to be shared between sector champions and their virtual team members. Newell and Swann (2000: 1295) claim that competence trust does not have to occur

through interpersonal exchange. It could also be based upon judgements made regarding an individual as observed in the context of his or her organisation. Word of mouth can influence an individual's reputation, which can be detrimental to the unknown individual. However, there is still misunderstanding and uncertainty at the senior management level.

"It took almost two years to get buy-in at the top level…" (6F)

"Misunderstanding brings out the worst behaviour…" (2B)

Can individuals work without trust being a part of the working relationship? It could be argued that *'the possibility of excessive trust may have negative effects for individuals and organisations'* (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2006: 165).

"Respect, trust and honesty helps long-lasting relationships…" (11K, 12L)

This section seems to suggest that the senior management board and the sector champions do not agree with regard to the proposed strategies for the business. This lack of management buy-in will not support a consistent open dialogue between the parties. As Newell and Swan (2000) propose, *'if the trustees do not quickly demonstrate the competencies that were expected, the trust [will] break down'* (p. 1295). Should the senior management board behave in such an unethical manner if they do not understand a particular sector? Considering that interaction will take place, it can be a struggle for the champions to persuade the management. This may sometimes not concern the matter at hand, but the internal politics, which take centre stage in the discussions. Therefore, it is impossible for the sector champions to assess the individuals' *'likely behaviour based on its influence on the probability of [their] choice of future actions'* (Gambetta, 1988: 217).

"The quality of people makes a difference to how or if you cross-sell…" (11K)

"[It is] important to get a consensus from all operating companies to get buy-in…" (2B, 4D, 13M)

The individual (sector champion), the type of reception he or she receives and the ambience created by the senior management board could create *'conditions under which certain outcomes, such as cooperation'* (Dirks, 2006: 15) may not take place.

It is possible that the sector champions may not share negative information (Read, 1962), such as the lack of support or buy-in from the board, out of fear of reprisal. This view could affect effective communication, as for this to take place, individuals must interact with each other openly without feeling fearful. A point echoed by Whitener et al. (1998: 514) is that *'managers' actions, and behaviours [can] provide the foundation for trust and that it [could be] actually management's responsibility to take the first step.'* This notion of demonstrating the qualities of trustworthiness such as integrity, competence and benevolence (Mayer et al., 1995) is important. The board consists of the companies discussed above. Therefore, it is doubtful that any of the managing directors would accept any *pointing of the finger* without confrontation. This will also affect the dialogue between the sector champions and their virtual team members. Considering that the virtual team is supposed to assist the sector champions, the team members are nevertheless kept out of the communication loop.

"It is important to know how things are moving along if we are to buy-in to the sector…" (1A, 2B, 6F, 18R)

"If you have not got these people on side, hearts and minds, it is not going to work…" (16P)

The importance of *buy-in* was also reiterated at the UK directors' conference in December 2006. The 11 sector champions presented two summary slides on their sector. The audience was later asked to answer the following question:

"What are the challenges in delivering the sector strategy and how can they be overcome?"

The comments received were:

"Motivation is company driven…"

"No clarity of the sector champion role, with the exception of retail and health."

"Lack of sector experts as champions..."

This suggests that there might be some uncertainty and a lack of buy-in, not only at the senior management level, but also amongst the other directors in Company B1. It was apparent that there were no representatives from Company E1 at the conference. It was later pointed out that they had been left out because the organisers had forgotten to include them on the delegates list.

This dependence on trust is the underlying theme in the dealings between the various actors and their interactions with each other. Van Witteloostuijn and van Wegberg (2006: 199) suggest that *'high dynamic high-growth firms run a large risk of not being able to honour trust.'* They also argue that fast-growing organisations can cause trust and trust-building to break down. They also believe that there may be no room for trust in a highly dynamic environment. As such, the lack of trust and trustworthy behaviour can be a problem (van Witteloostuijn & van Wegberg, 2006) if the relationship in question is supposed to be high in trust (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In accordance with the host organisation's own core values, this will be a key factor. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) argue that trust could indicate the willingness of an actor to be vulnerable to other actors. However, Ring and Van de Ven (1992) see trust as an individual's goodwill not to cause harm to another party.

"I think I trust everybody here because coming from a small business that is how we operated…" (18R)

These assumptions are a key factor with regard to how individuals perceive trust to be an inherent part of a relationship. This perception may be a *'belief that reflects an actor's expectations about another actor'* (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2006: 166). Engaging with other individuals in order to accrue these values may be not only for their benefit, but also for the greater good of the organisation.

"Sharing and supporting is not taken seriously…" (8H, 13M)

"Tribal behaviour – people do stick together. This is human nature…" (11K)

The term actor seems to be used within the various descriptions in the literature in regards to trust and relationships. This could imply that actors may be engaged in

one big theatrical relationship. In Document 2, I considered the relationships between performers and manipulators at some length. These individuals (actors) are able to influence situations in which they may have an ulterior motive. I previously suggested that these individuals could influence and persuade others *'in such a manner as to make them attractive to listeners'* (Grant, 1999: 330). They can also influence an environment that is not yet settled (Mintzberg, 1973) by creating fictitious situations in order to entrap their audience.

If trust is not demonstrated at the top level between the senior management team and the sector champions, then it should not come as a surprise that this will affect these actors' relationships with their virtual team members and that this lack of trust will cascade through the various management structures. This was evident when speaking with some of the virtual team members. These individuals expressed their concern about not being in close contact with their sector champion. Although they had been undertaking work within their assigned sector, some of the team members had not been in contact with their sector champion in over a year. As such, they were not privileged enough to be included in any of the discussions. There was uncertainty regarding whether or not they were on the same path as their sector champion. Some of the sector champions were holding workshops. However, their own virtual team members were not aware of this or even invited to attend. I spoke to the sector champions regarding whether or not they were in regular contact with their virtual team. I was provided with an alternative story.

A clear pattern emerged whereby the sector champions were not including their virtual team members. I met with virtual team members and asked if they had been invited or were even aware of either the conference or the workshop. A few of them were not aware or had not been invited, while others only knew about such things after I had asked them the question. One explained that he had not heard from his sector champion in over a year; however, he had been contacted a week earlier to provide information in preparation for the UK directors' conference.

3.3.2.1b Trust and history

The following section focuses on how perceptions (whether belonging to one person or an entire company) can hamper an ongoing working relationship. Past stories, which can be generated from a single source, can filter through the organisation. Document One identified this fact after meeting with all of the managing directors at

the start of the research programme. They observed a *"lack of trust between the companies which impacts on the various management levels"* (p. 7).

Each of the managing directors highlighted this issue. This was interesting, as it clearly revealed that there was mistrust, even at the senior board level. I believe that it is not a safe environment if the weak-minded are not prepared to defend their own company when it is accused of being untrustworthy. If the issue cannot be resolved at the senior level, the host organisation will continue to be in turmoil, with the past influencing its present and future. The continuous accumulation of stories within their own management structure could create a game of Chinese whispers. This might lead to misinterpretations and rumours among various personnel.

What the data showed

The material, which was accumulated, seems to reveal that there may not be an equal partnership between the various companies, which suggests that a pecking order exists between them. Over the years, Company E1's personnel have been made to feel inferior within Company A1. There have been several discussions regarding why the company remains separated from the group. However, having their own independent identity in the marketplace may be significant with regard to their reputation. There is still talk of embedding the company into Company A1. However, the managing director and the board of directors for Company E1 will not entertain the idea. As the communications director for Company E1 said:

"The following statement is controversial but most of our better people will not join a [specialist company] that is part of a multi-disciplinary firm. Most of our competitors who have a [specialist division] as a multi-disciplinary bit are perceived as second-class citizens within a multi-engineer company. This is because they tend to be the newer part and are subordinate to the engineers..."

Other personnel from Company E1 have echoed his comments and voiced similar perceptions when working with the other operating companies:

"[We] tend to be treated like sub-contractors and not equal partners..." (13M)

"[We are] perceived as second-class citizens within a multi-discipline business…" (15N)

"[In the] relationship with [Company B1A we are] treated like sub-contractors. [It is a] less-valued relationship…" (11K)

"There is still a perception of being seen as a sub-contractor…" (17Q)

These quotations reveal a history of misunderstandings by the company regarding the specialist skills set. No effort appears to have been made to resolve these problems. The senior management has allowed this conflict to continue, which could create tension between the companies. The companies have been allowed to focus on their own financial interests rather than improving the performance of the whole group through encouraging trust and collaboration between the component companies.

Company B1A, the largest company within the host organisation, seems to have made a bad name for itself amongst the other companies, and particularly Company E1. There is a long history between these two companies. This appears to be more of an issue when they have to work together. Problems can arise if one company believes that another has overcharged them.

"[The] quality of people makes a difference to how or if you cross-sell…" (1A, 11K)

"There are a lot of blockers who do not want to cross-sell for one reason or another…" (5E, 15N, 16P)

"Good links with those who make decisions and can knock it off course…" (7G, 10J)

This has occurred several times when Company B1A has agreed a fee with Company E1 for it to undertake work on a project; however, when the final invoice has been presented, the price has increased. In return, Company E1 then has to explain to the client why it requires additional funds in order to cover the unexpected increase.

"Trust [is] hampered when inviting companies to bid on jobs. [There is a] problem when they overcharge…." (5E, 11K)

If Company B1A is leading the project, it will dictate what the fees will be, and Company E1 will have to work within the agreed fee scale. This double-standard approach could have encouraged Company E1 to no longer cross-sell the various skills the host organisation can offer to existing or even potentially new clients.

"People carry grudges far too long…" (2B)

I should highlight that Company E1 is not the only company to take this approach. All the other companies do as well, to a certain degree, out of fear of losing or upsetting their key clients. Some individuals do not trust their counterparts to treat them as equal partners and therefore will take precautions in order to protect their company. Company E1 has ongoing problems with Company B1A. Company B1A is a major fee-paying client of Company E1 and therefore Company E1 continues to undertake joint projects with Company B1A. However, Company E1 will not accept any projects from Company B1B because of its rigid fee structure and its perception that Company E1 will work for a small fee.

3.3.2.1c *Trust and structure*

This final section on the subject of trust looks at how the management structure seems to have implications for individuals' perceptions of how decisions can be made at the senior level. Creating an unstable environment can reveal furtive motives, which could lead individuals to question and interpret the senior managements' actions.

What the data showed

These 11 sector champions are in key roles with responsibilities but can lack the power to make any decisions without fear of being overturned. A previous example is the departure of the managing director for the UK after such an action was supposedly taken by the chief executive. It can be difficult to comprehend how the managing directors expect the sector champions to carry out their roles with this constant interference. The managing directors seem to demonstrate a 'jack-of-all-trades and master of none' attitude. As a result of the managing directors own actions, how do they suppose that these sector champions might feel and what impressions do they have of the management board?

Jones and Bowie (1998) point out that trust will be in one's self-interest because, without it, relationships may never get off the ground. Baier (1986: 234) asks *'what [could be] the difference between trusting others and merely relying on them?'* Wicks et al. (1999: 103) suggest that one should *'exercise care in determining who [you might] trust, to what extent, and in what capacity.'* However, Husted (1998) states that trust may be a source of competitive advantage in business relationships. What cost could this have for individuals and the organisation? In addition, to what extent could trust meet the *'economic criteria in decision-making, [and] inefficiency'* (Barney & Hansen, 1994: 234)? Some individuals could be *'unfairly harmed'* (Banerjee, Bowie, & Pavone, 2006: 303) by '*exploiters'* (Baier, 1986: 253) in the process.

"Top management can override decisions and not inform you…" (2B, 3C, 18R)

"[I was] called in to give advice [which was] then not taken up due to politics at the top level…" (9I)

The senior management board's actions can undermine these individuals' responsibility to implement their strategic plans. What is more concerning is that sector champions may not find out that a decision has been changed until months later, or they may receive the information from a third party. This will cause tension as the board's actions can damage the individuals' integrity and credibility.

"Internal structure undermines our authority and team credibility…" (4D, 11K)

Considering that this group of sector champions was selected for a good reason, it is uncertain why they would require additional parental guidance.

"What are the barriers – titles or people?" (12L)

"Getting the managing directors to sign up and run with [the] initiative…." (2B, 6F)

"Top management paying lip service to the sectors…" (10J)

If the managing directors do make a decision without consulting the various parties involved, this could have repercussions within the business. The sector champions

and their virtual teams will seek to persuade the various regions to support and deliver their work. It is not clear why the managing directors would need to interfere without consulting these individuals who have been entrusted to fulfil their roles.

"Individuals allow the organisation structure to act as a barrier…" (8H)

"We are all guilty of looking out for our own self-interest…" (18R)

Could the managing directors' actions be based on their self-interest or internal politics, which may be overshadowing the focus of the business? It is conceivable that the managing directors of the various companies are fighting amongst themselves for a larger portion of the financial pie. I am not sure, however, whether the managing directors realise that seeming not to care about their actions (whether intentionally or not) could have implications for these individuals.

"[The] cross-company decision-making process can impact other companies who do not get a say…" (2B)

Some of the sector champions appear not to be in the same category, and their managing directors will not interfere without consulting them. I believe that this could be because these individuals are strong and confident enough to influence their environment in order to suit their needs and agenda.

"[The] blunt approach [is best used] to persuade and influence others…" (5E)

"[I] have to use coercive persuasion to get resources…" (7G)

"Familiarities, personalities – I know what makes them tick…" (17Q)

There appears to be some unsettlement between the public-facing and the private-facing sector champions, which could stem from misunderstandings regarding how they carry out their work.

"Conflict between public and private sector work can hamper understanding…" (7G, 10J, 18R)

Considering that a sector review took place a few years ago, a repeat exercise may be required. There are new sector champions joining the sector community.

3.3.2.2 Structure

It would be imprudent to think that all organisations have the same internal structures. Many are organised as hierarchies, with a key manager reporting to only one manager at the next level of seniority. Between any hierarchical structure, there will be significant variation in the number of managerial levels and in the sets of activities which are grouped together. The two main groupings are *'divisional and functional'* (Harris & Raviv, 2002: 852). Other organisations use a matrix structure, which may involve *'dual-authority relations'* (Jennergren, 1981: 43) which combine divisional and functional hierarchies. However, it is interesting to understand what determines whether or not a particular structure will be adopted, how many levels will be involved and how key activities will be grouped together. According to Harris and Raviv (2002: 855), organisations *'will exhibit a sort of life cycle as the organisation grows in complexity and size.'* Mintzberg (1979: 232) argues that *'an organisation grows more or less continuously, but its structure [can] change [but] only in discrete steps.'* Is there a reason why organisations might be reluctant to change their internal structure? Could it be a matter of *'we've got used to it, so we may as well stick with it'*? Perhaps it might be because these structures *'provide safety nets'* (McKnight & Chervany, 2006: 38). Creating such a protective wall might ensure that the managing directors' *'interests [will not be] violated'* (Sydow, 2006: 379) by the *'weaker partners'* (Clegg & Hardy, 1996: 679). Luhmann acknowledges that individuals will *'only work within a familiar world [structure]'* (1979: 20), which has been *'worked upon'* (Giddens, 1990: 121) for some time. I believe that individuals will be *'already familiar with each other'* and should be able to make a '*fairly accurate assessment of the contribution'* (van Witteloostuijn & van Wegberg, 2006: 205) which they are likely to receive.

Some individuals can become familiar with a structure and their respective worlds. As such, it can be *'taken for granted'* (Möllering, 2006: 368) that they will keep the same structure. Therefore, a structure might be *'unquestioned until further notice'* (Schütz, 1970a: 61), or, more frequently, individuals can have *'no choice but to make choices'* (Giddens, 1994b: 187) if they are forced by external pressures. These pressures could be a shift in the market environment due to clients' demands. The structural features of an organisation can hinder or '*contribute to coordinated*

interaction among organisational members' (Sydow, 2006: 382). The senior management's *'actions may be interpreted as an [in]appropriate manner'* (p. 382). De Rond and Bouchikhi propose that *'some [members can] put their trust in the repeated assurances of one individual [while remaining loyal to the organisation], whereas others [can] appear to have placed their confidence in the company's reputation'* (2004: 64).

What the data showed

As the host organisation has continued to grow in size, its internal systems and structure have not changed to adapt to the new formation. This appears to be holding the business back, and may be preventing the provision of the correct internal support for expansion. The concept of working in a global conglomerate business has not yet registered with all personnel within the organisation. Some of the regional offices are still operating as small independent businesses and are not sharing or communicating with other parts of the business.

"As the business has grown, we are still operating as separate businesses…" (17Q)

"We were a big small business but we're now a small big business..." (13M)

"[The] business set-up in silos does not help…" (6F, 9I)

"[There are] still pockets where cultures are way of what it should be.." (11K, 12L)

"[CompanyA1] is still causing issues within the organisation…" (2B, 7G)

The organisation presents itself to the outside world as one conglomerate. However, internally, the organisation has not taken the approach seriously enough. The various management structures are different, unclear, and not well-known, even by the sector champions.

"Management structure can be a problem if you are unsure who to go to…" (2B, 3C)

"There is still some way to go to sort out the management structure in [Company B1A]…" (4D, 7G, 14O)

This could make the sector champions' task harder in terms of knowing whom to contact in order to seek advice. However, Company E1 is a different story.

"Just because we have to do things differently does not mean we are not part of the family…" (13M)

Company E1's management structure is very flat and relaxed and does not have numerous systems and processes in place, which the board of directors does not approve of.

"We do not have a whole hierarchical [system of] control…" (11K)

"The whole business is underpinned by trust – we don't rely on systems…" (15N, 17Q)

The UK sector champions not only have to deal with the various management structures – they also have to manage the variance in the financial set-up of each of the companies.

"Different financial set-ups within each company hamper working together…" (5E, 12L)

"[The] mindset changes but administrative issues still catch up…" (6F, 7G, 10J)

The sector champions can face a reactive rather than proactive support function team. These groups can include finance, HR, and information technology support. These personnel work for Company F1. This company has become a bureaucratic dictatorship. Company F1 seems to advise the rest of the business regarding what they can do and how. As Company F1 is a non-fee-earning arm of the business, this company has grown in size, which has caused concern among the remaining parts of the business, which in effect, bring in the money. The attendees at the UK directors' conference also raised this as a concern. The facilitator asked the audience:

"How can the interface between the companies and [Company F1] be made more effective?"

(Company A1, Directors Conference: 2006)

The attendees at the brainstorming session gave the following suggestions:

"Improved communication and clarity:
- *Clear shared organisational charts/who to contact;*
- *Open service-level agreements;*
- *Clear service offering and value statements."*

"[Company F1] should be seen in terms of value not cost."

"Improve clarity of finance role and structure."

"We need better proactive engagement from the HR team…"

However, these points were made in the context of the organisation as a whole and not for the sector champions. This notion did not address the immediate problems that the sector champions are currently facing, although they were acknowledged as a starting point.

3.3.2.2b Structure and history

The combination of structure and history has highlighted some interesting stories, which raises the question: *With various structures in existence, can the host organisation ever truly become one company?* The group structure has been in place for such a long time that it might be hard to persuade the authorities that it is time for a change.

What the data showed

The various management structures have been in place for some time alongside the continuous growth of the host organisation. Company B1A and Company B1B have recently introduced a new management structure within their own company. It is still unclear who the key contacts are. However, some of the sector champions and virtual team members have noted an improvement in the co-operation between both companies. The intervention of the senior management team of Company B1A has been perceived as being helpful.

"[The] change of management within [Company B1A] has helped them to be more proactive…" (2B, 6F, 9I)

Some of the sector champions who interact with Company B1A on a more regular basis disagreed with the statement above.

"The [Company B1A] management board does not communicate, and nor do any of the other boards within the company…" (3C, 10J)

"Some of the decisions that come out are dictatorial; that puts people's backs up…" (4D, 5E)

"Communication has been poor. There has never been anything in place to cascade down from Plc meetings to the guys on the shop floor…" (2B, 12L, 14O)

Due to the history within Company B1A, some expressed that there were still issues which need to be resolved in order to improve the communication between the various levels of management.

"Still pockets of resistance around the business…" (1A, 3C, 7G, 17Q)

"There is a sort of old boys' network operating out of a particular office. They communicate naturally with one another – far better than the regional offices – and it is away taken for granted and it does not always work – word of mouth…" (18R)

Some of the sector champions felt that many of these problems could have stemmed from the middle management failing to share information.

"The main blockers to any communication are not what happen at senior management level, it is what happens at the middle part of our business…" (16P)

"[The] main blockers happen [at the level of the] middle management…" (6F, 10J)

"Ring fencing of information from technical directors [is an issue]." (1A, 5E, 14O)

If this is the case, why have the senior management not sought to remove these blocks or blockers? Are the senior management at fault themselves for possibly doing the same thing?

"[The] self-interest of the directors drives everything, not the companies…" (9I, 12L)

Even though Company E1 is global, it too is growing in size and reviewing its management structure in order to support its business. The company is expanding its portfolio with numerous acquisitions around the world. As it stands, Company E1 has a total workforce of around 2500 staff, of which 450 reside in the UK.

"We've been successful in the past [because of] our culture and values, and our biggest risk was when we grew by acquisition and rapid growth that we could dilute the culture. We are probably seeing that a little bit…" (13M)

"[You] get a lot of differences in the cultural basis of the individuals that you are interacting with – [this] represents a potential threat to the overall culture of the business…" (17Q)

Company E1's senior management have recognised these changes and are taking steps to retain their culture. Company E1 may be the only company in the group to have a very young, vibrant workforce, who is all under the age of 45 years old. As the other companies have been in existence for much longer than Company E1, they have a much more mature workforce, which could explain why the other companies find dealing with Company E1 difficult because they do things differently due to the absence of heavy internal systems.

3.3.2.2c   Structure and trust

The material gathered suggests that structure could hamper the trust between the senior management and the sector champions. This, however, does not imply that this might be the only level at which trust is hindered. It could be argued that it might start at the very top of the hierarchy, and that as such, it will no doubt affect the rest of the organisation.

What the data showed

This section indicates that the sector champions and their virtual teams feel that the problems might reside with the managing directors. I believe that having to deal with internal politics before their main priorities may place additional strain on the sector champions. However, the sector champions are not in a position to do anything, as they may not always hear what is going on until it is too late. As such, the virtual team members will also experience the same dilemma.

"Unnecessary burdens with the internal politics and history…" (4D, 7G, 14O)

"Individuals with too many roles making the decisions…" (3C, 9I, 10J)

Sometimes, the managing directors' meddling can backfire and the sector champions will be summoned to sort out their problems, which can be delicate and sensitive. For instance, this could involve contacting major clients who may have received conflicting messages from a number of sources, which are all inaccurate. A client will contact the sector champions before the managing directors and ask them to find out what is going on. This demonstrates their trust in that particular individual.

"It is how individuals interact with each other and not the way these individuals are structured…" (8H, 12L, 16P)

The managing directors wear too many hats, which can prevent fair and constructive decisions from being made. Instead of the focus being on the best interests of the sectors and the business, it shifts to self-interest and hidden agendas.

"The message at board level is normally clear, unless the board is unclear…" (16P, 15N)

"Management structure hinders the work [due to] different practices and ways of pricing…" (5E, 7G, 11K)

"[The] existing structure [is] stopping sector champions from doing their work…" (2B, 10J)

The combination of the various management structures will affect whether or not the sector champions trust the decisions made by the managing directors. The sector champions not only struggle with the senior management; they also have to deal with the regional managements around the network.

"[There is a] local culture driven by local management; they influence how their staff behave…" (15N, 14O)

The local culture of an office can influence the bigger picture if it is not interested in what is going on in the rest of the organisation. This is apparent in the case of

Company B1A. The senior management have not been able to penetrate *Regional office F* and *Regional office H* due to the management residing there. Several key people have left both offices due to the lack of support or interest from the local management.

"[They are] making decisions [based] on personal interests and not on the interests of the business…" (8H, 9I, 12L)

Two sector champions within Company B1A sought to intervene and were instructed by the managing director of the same company to *leave well alone*. When they raised their concern that this region was undertaking projects within their area of work without consulting them, the decision was still not overturned. These sector champions were uncertain what *message* this might be giving out to other regions not consulting the appropriate sector champions. Could there have been an ulterior motive behind the managing director's actions?

3.3.2.3 History

The history of any organisation can tell us about its characteristics. By characteristics, I mean the make-up of the senior management within the organisation. Whether the board is comprised of five or nine individuals, they will formulate the meaning of their culture. Therefore, if the board members are energetic, trustworthy and receptive to sharing knowledge and information, these attributes will cascade throughout the business. On the other hand, if the board members are always changing due to retirement, leaving for pastures new or being dismissed from the board or demoted, these characteristics will change. These changes might not be in the best interests of the business. These adjustments can hamper efforts, which have previously been invested. As the business continues to develop, it will take on a new formation, which could influence the internal stories, which are told within the business. Understanding the history of the business *'matters because past experiences of organisations [can] help explain their present and future behaviour'* (Leblebici & Shah, 2004: 354). Haveman (1993) claims that the patterns of interaction between the actors and other people will provide useful information regarding how they exert power over others (Grumley, 1989). This information could be used to respond to the *'emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations'* (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998: 994) under different historical conditions (Carroll & Hannan, 2000). The *'social structure, the*

cultural order, the technology and the languages of the organisation' (Leblebici & Shah, 2004: 355) should also be used to explain the past and present pathways of events (Roth, 1976) within the organisation. These could be traced back through the history of the management structure and used to identify the key personnel. By identifying changes and speaking to long-serving staff, it will be easy to plot when things started to change, whether for better or worse.

What the data showed

The material gathered seems to reveal the accumulation of stories about the organisation's past which could be influencing its present and future development. A lot of these stories and events will have been passed down from generation to generation, and therefore could have been altered. This approach has caused these stories to remain in the main discussions held within the business. They are alive and part of the community. Some individuals make every effort to keep these stories alive, but with what purpose? It might be to keep the companies apart, and to discourage the formation of a single culture. It is hard to believe that there has been a continuous chain of characters with similar traits re-creating the culture of the organisation, and that no-one has been able to break the circle.

"Internal issues have not been resolved and are still a problem…" (1A, 2B, 4D, 11K, 17Q)

As these stories continue to circulate, it will be hard to shake them off if things are not changed.

"There are perceptions of negativity among other parts of the business…" (15N, 13M)

"There is a long history of companies operating according to self interest…" (1A, 6F, 8H)

This also includes several stories relating to the various companies, which could hinder working relationships.

"Company B1A fear getting out of their comfort zone…" (2B, 6F)

There is some concern that certain individuals are focusing on their own success rather than the interests of the organisation. This might be normal to a certain

degree; we all aspire to fulfil our dreams. However, to what extent are individuals willing to pursue these dreams and at what cost?

"Too many people are concerned with their own status…" (10J, 14O)

"Individuals gravitate towards their own interests…" (9I, 11K, 12L)

With these suspicions, it may be hard to envisage whether the host organisation will ever be a truly united organisation.

"We aspire to be one company [Company A1] but we are still a long way off…" (1A, 5E, 8H, 17Q)

3.3.2.3b   *History and structure*

With the combination of stories and the structure of the organisation, it is any wonder that it can function as a business. Sometimes, *'existing power structures'* (Michelson & Mouly, 2002: 59) ensure that other members have little or no control over events (Festinger et al., 1948).   This notion could include the continuous *'inter-organisational competition between members'* (Michelson & Mouly, 2002: 62) becoming part of the norm.

What the data showed

The variance in management structures could have influenced the decisions and working relationships between the sector champions, virtual team members and the senior management board.

The history of an organisation can affect the present and the future. However, does this suggest that a power base may exist not only at the top of the management tree, but throughout the hierarchy and across the various regions? *'Knowledge, control and power, [can] become more and more important for trust-building or destroying'* (Sydow, 2006: 385), which can create ring fencing. It would therefore appear that influencing their environment could suit the needs of those seeking to control the situation. The variety of structures in place has created the perfect opportunity for individuals wishing to gain strength. This could result in individuals *'prob[ing] their counterparts to seek if they can maintain or increase their level of trust'* (McEvily et al., 2003: 99) in order to fulfil either their objectives or their hidden agenda.

"[We are] not kept in the loop with regard to decisions [which have been] made…" (2B, 3C, 6F)

"Decisions [are] sometimes taken at the top and not communicated back to the individual…" (1A, 9I, 8H, 10J)

Some parts of the business seem to be left to their own devices. Why this has been allowed and accepted is unknown in the wider domain.

"It is the fault of the regime in that the management looked after or didn't look after their staff. Unfortunately, the legacy is that the office has never benefited…" (5E, 14O)

As previously mentioned under 'structure and trust,' Company B1A has one region, which has been a continuous problem to the business. This has been a major issue for some individuals but not for others. I am assuming that the senior management board realise that the battle cannot be won!

"Companies [are] operating with a silo mentality…" (12L, 13M, 17Q)

There appears to be a stronghold over that specific region, which has been an issue for as long as I have been working for the host organisation.

"Co-operation with companies [is sometimes] better than others…" (2B, 4D, 10J, 11K)

It is amazing that a region can hold the senior management board to ransom and yet the sector champions do not have the power to be defiant and make such a demand.

The different company systems have not helped the understanding of the various procedures in operation. Each company's financial system is known only within the company in question. Therefore, a company leading a multi-disciplinary project with two other companies supporting it will not be privy to privileged financial information, including the profits made by the leading company. The information will remain confidential and is not shared among the parties.

"Financial systems used as barriers by individuals…" (5E, 6F, 11K)

However, until this information is available to all parties without restriction, the host organisation will continue to have doubts about being an equal partner.

3.3.2.3c *History and trust*

Understanding the sequence of events and stories can help to explain why it remains a current issue. Palekar (2006: 30) suggests that *'cultures and particularly subcultures [can] heavily influence'* the *'attitude of the top management'* (p. 35). As noted by Singh and Vohra (2005: 156) the organisation's *'behaviour[al] patterns'* could alter. Individuals can base their conduct on *'[past] knowledge, skills [and] previous experiences'* (Stone-Romero, Stone, & Salas, 2003: 335). Therefore, the past will have a strong hold on the current mindset of these individuals, which will have an impact on their communication and mannerisms.

What the data showed

In this section, there seems to be a distinct difference between the level of importance that the different companies attribute to the core values, and particularly trust. There is variation in how the companies use systems to control and manage the processes, which are used run the heart of their business. As shown below, Company B1A is focused on introducing and implementing systems in their business. It can be difficult to become familiar with a system tool just before another one is introduced. A colleague attended a cross-company meeting to discuss a joint initiative. The meeting was intended to consider providing technical directors with access to project information. A manager from Company B1A said to the delegates who were present:

"We do not trust our directors to access the information. We will put some blocks in place…"

Considering that this individual represented Company B1A, these comments left the rest of the group in disbelief.

"Our method of operation is very fleet and foot! Not heavy systems like [Company B1A] and [Company B1B]…" (13M)

"[The] local culture [is] driven by the management and [is] not interested in what the rest of the organisation is doing…" (5E, 11K, 14O)

The combination of *'bullying, power and politics'* (Michelson & Mouly, 2002: 58) can influence and create rumours. Inaccurate information and insinuation can hamper and damage the trust between the various parties.

3.3.3 Company X, Company Y and Company Z

The following will provide an outline of each of the companies with regard to how they undertake the sector champion's role and responsibilities.

Company X has been sector-focused for almost six years. Its four core sectors are:
- Technology;
- Lifestyle;
- Corporate;
- Industrial.

Management structure

The management structure is identical – a two-tier matrix across the four sectors. According to the areas of discipline, each sector is divided into sub-sectors. For example, the industrial sector has three areas:
- Offices;
- Residential;
- Retail.

Each sector is headed up by a sector board, which is responsible for reporting to the Plc business. The individuals assigned to the sector board are not part of the Plc board, and therefore there is no conflict of interest or danger of wearing too many managerial hats. The board consists of a chairperson, sector board directors, business unit directors and an executive director from the Plc board. The chairperson reports directly to the Plc board on the sector's performance. For continuity, the nominated executive director from the Plc board resides on each of the sector boards. His or her main role is to act as a sounding board for the sector board and to inform them of any wider corporate issues. The business unit directors are responsible for managing a specific portion of the overall sector budget and for producing a micro business plan, which will feed into the sector business plan.

Accountability & responsibility

Each of the business unit directors will report on a monthly basis to the sector board. The board will review their report and take any corrective action, which is necessary before issuing the sector chairperson to report to the Plc Board. This system ensures that each part of the associated community is aware of the implications for their business. Members within the sector will know their sector board members and their responsibilities and accountabilities. The four sectors are the business drivers.

Support services

Each sector will be allocated a principal member from each of the support disciplines: HR, finance and BD&M. Financial support is a vital function for the sectors. As such, a qualified accountant resides on the sector board. His or her key role is to ensure that the sector is performing according to the agreed costs and budgets. All of the BD&M members from each of the sectors meet on a regular basis to discuss and share any useful information. Each of the sector champions provides input for the group. In addition, HR is centrally managed in order to ensure consistency across the business.

Decision-making process

The sector board has full responsibility for all issues relating to operations and resources The sectors are not split geographical, but are divided into numerous profit centres. Employees can be transferred from office to office if additional support is required. There is no internal scrabbling over costs and overheads from the various business units.

Sector framework

Each sector will have a framework in place. The framework will be used to decide whether or not an enquiry is viable for the business to consider. For instance, the framework considers whether or not a project:

- Requires more than six months or more than £50k – there has to be a formal resource plan and fee calculation, which will be signed off by the sector chairperson or sector champion;
- Requires over £1m in fees, which will have to be signed off at the executive level;
- Whether whoever received the initial enquiry will remain the client manager throughout the project.

The board will decide which office is best suited to the responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of the project. For example, a Birmingham-based project will be handled by the Birmingham office and not the London office because the latter option would not be cost effective. Above all, the London office will not understand the local market or know who the key members of the design team are.

Internal communication

The chairperson will oversee communication throughout the management structure. The emphasis is on the local level with its various business units. The chairperson will sit on all the meetings, thereby ensuring that the units operate at the level required for each sector. The board and business unit directors will communicate regularly on a project-by-project, business unit-by-business unit and sector-by-sector basis to the sector chairperson. Full responsibility is placed on the board to ensure that the business unit directors interact with each other on a regular basis. Regular meetings are held with all members of staff and information which is relevant to the sector is shared. All the sectors meet twice a year. This includes a yearly fun day for all members of staff involved in the sector to attend. This can provide an opportunity to provide staff with information on future strategies. Each sector has a separate section on the intranet which is updated on a regular basis. There is also an internal magazine for staff which is issued four times a year. The magazine is managed by members of staff who publish stories on relevant topics. The magazine is then distributed around the business.

Culture

The company's culture appears to be very open, which could demonstrate a willingness to release information to staff. In addition, if a problem affects the structure of the business, then it will be filtered across the entire company. Changing the focus of the business can also improve the channels of communication, converting them from horizontal to vertical. Although it took time to develop, the relationships started to form between members of staff and their peers in other parts of the business. This may help to create one organisational culture as opposed to various cultures within the various offices.

Change in direction

The company feels that it made the right decision in changing its focus from geographical business units to sectors, because otherwise communication might have

been more challenging. This challenge could have resulted in inconsistent information being circulated in different ways and at different times. Problems might have occurred when members of staff began to compare information received from their line managers. In order to modify the way in which communication was conducted, the senior personnel on the Plc board took time to get the senior management to buy into this change in direction. This was important because the management structure under the geographical regime was not working. However, a long time was spent getting everyone on board, which has now paid off for the company.

Company Y has been sector-focused for almost six years. Its three core sectors are:
- Environment;
- Transportation;
- Buildings.

However, the company has not focused on sectors but major clients – seven in total. This is after several failed attempts to introduce a key relationship management programme within the organisation. Each identified client is now assigned a key relations manager.

Management structure

The parent company has a similar structure and grading system for all of its key roles (including the management board) across the business. All of the terms and conditions of employment, including staff benefits and share options, are identical across divisions. This will avoid any internal competition or staff being poached from one division to another.

The sector group has a dedicated BD&M board which is separate from the operations board. The board oversees the sectors and the future growth of the business. Each sector champion will be allocated a virtual team to assist him or her with the programme. The sector champion can call upon the nearest office to resolve any problems that may arise. The sector director will be kept in the loop regarding any issues involving clients.

Accountability and responsibility

As part of its management remit, the BD&M board is accountable and responsible for the sectors. However, all decisions made within the UK business will be presented to the parent company for final approval.

<u>Support services</u>

As the UK business has grown, so has the internal structure, including the support services: HR, finance and BD&M.

<u>Sector framework</u>

The UK business has identified seven key relations managers (sector champions) to be on the key relationship management programme. There could potentially be 56 personnel associated with one client. Key information and feedback specific to each client will be loaded onto an intranet discussion forum and will be shared with everyone associated with that client.

With a number of sister companies already reaping the benefits of the programme, the UK business can now demonstrate its success in gaining senior level buy-in to follow the same path. Therefore, the next step will be to develop a national and global business plan involving the proposed relationship programme. The company recognises that some parts of the business will be harder to manage because they are not strong with regard to client care. Tougher measures will be needed to convince them to behave in an appropriate way. The various divisions will not take on change without a good 'success story' behind it. Individuals will not accept any new ideas from another part of the business. In order to overcome this problem, a core group has been set up with representation from across the regional divisions. Therefore, ideas will not be presented as the work of an individual division, but as the work of one of the core groups. This approach will prevent the development of a 'not invented here' culture. This practice would illustrate that someone from one of the divisions had been involved in the development of the idea and therefore that all parties would have accepted the buy-in.

<u>Internal communication</u>

The company appears to find it easy to communicate across the business, even though it might be simpler within their own division. However, the organisation recognises the lack of opportunities for staff to network and build and maintain internal relationships. In order to resolve this situation, the management has attempted to create opportunities (such as regular sports and social events) for employees to meet individuals from other divisions. In addition, regular staff meetings and the yearly managing director's 'state of the nation' road shows will be held around the business. In order to reinforce the

company strategy, a portion of the agenda will be allocated to the key relationship management programme.

A variety of communication tools can be used to ensure that staff understand the information which is being presented, such as the intranet (a prime tool for all communications), quarterly staff newsletters and an internal television screen showing a selection of the latest national and global projects that the business is working on. The company might also have a local theme. This could include press releases, birthdays, births, marriages and special awards. Local information could be updated on a regular basis throughout the working day.

<u>Culture</u>

The key core values for the company are *trust* and *integrity*. A variety of cultures exists within the UK business. The company is constantly seeking guidance from the parent company regarding the way forward. There appears to be a good culture for adopting change that is self-evident and tangible.

<u>Change in direction</u>

In order to persuade and change the behaviour of the *unbelievers*, the constant use of success stories from the parent company will be used by working closely with the other sister companies.

Company Z has been sector-focused for almost eight years, which is the longest period of time out of the three companies. It has six core sectors. They are as follows:

- Education;
- Rail;
- Commercial;
- Retail;
- Government;
- Health.

Company Z has 19 sectors in its portfolio. However, the six listed above are the core areas for the business.

Management structure

Each of the key core sectors will have their own sector board, consisting of a mentor, a sector champion, two specialists (depending on the sector) and a representative from each regional operation. The sector boards will vary in size in terms of the number of members. Each sector champion will be allocated a mentor, which might be one of the divisional managing directors. The mentor's role will be to support the sector champion and act as a sounding board for the strategy for each sector. The mentor and the sector champion will meet with the UK managing director on a regular basis to discuss any possible initiatives.

The company has a two-tier management structure: regional and divisional. This formation ensures that the four geographical and divisional regions are covered. The sector approach is used to coordinate all of the regions. The management structure has continued to grow in order to manage the size of the business.

Accountability and responsibility

The sector board is fully responsible for and accountable to the sector. The sector is also responsible for BD&M and cascading information regarding how to approach the sector.

Support services

Each sector board will have its own support team that will meet on a regular basis. This will be a demonstration of the inclusive relationship between the sector members and the support services. The support team will be seen as a key part of each sector.

Decision-making process

The sector champions and their board are empowered to fulfil their duties and make decisions relating to their assigned sector. The mentor will also be included in all of the decisions made by the sector board. If the sector champion and the mentor cannot agree on a proposed decision, there is another forum in which they can debate unresolved points. The UK managing director chairs the forum.

Sector framework

The sector champions will have their own forum, which will meet three times a year in order to share information and knowledge. In addition, the sector champions and their mentors will have a designated forum, which will meet throughout the year. The

assigned mentors will rotate every three years in order to add new ideas to the various sectors.

Internal communication

Each sector will have its own section on the intranet which will be updated regularly. Communication within each of the divisions appears to be clear because of the cascade structure set-up, which will include all of the divisional teams. The sector champions can receive regular feedback from the business, which may affect their objectives in delivering their programme. The sector champions and sector board members will be in regular contact with each other in order to share best practices and knowledge.

The UK managing director will chair the sector champion forum, which will meet in order to review all of the sector strategies. The forum can help to test the proposed strategies. However, the sector champions will implement these strategies.

Culture

The main factors are:

- Trust is vital to the culture;
- They all work together as equal partners;
- They do not encourage internal competitiveness;
- Work designed to meet sector targets is not undertaken in an aggressive manner;
- The UK managing director meets with all members of staff from each office. He has a workshop without a specific agenda where staff can talk to managing director directly.

Change in direction

The company has changed and moved away from any sectors that might no longer be viable, and is seeking to continue responding to the marketplace.

3.3.4 Analysis two: Comparison between internal and external interviews

From the range of interviews, some distinct differences between the internal and external interviews emerged.

The host organisation

Currently, the sector champions seem to be struggling to gain control in leading their respective discipline areas. They are not clearly visible and do not have the respect

from the rest of the business which would allow them to undertake their work. They can be powerless against the senior management, who use their positions to override the sector champions. They do not have any control over the budget for their sector, and are powerless to challenge any business units which wish to transfer funds from their sector to another one.

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Key factor

The sector champion (Company B1A) attended a 'business future' meeting in April, which I also attended. He presented to the group, which until receiving the email, I did not know even existed. The group is made up of senior personnel from across the various companies. Upon presenting his financial figures on the profit made in the last financial year, the lead director responsible for the future of the business informed him that this was incorrect. To his dismay, he had made a much smaller profit margin. Up until this point, the sector champion had no knowledge of this. He had thought that he had access to all the relevant financial information, so his calculations were correct, or so he thought.

The lead director for 'business future' also has the role of sector champion for rail. He is privy to confidential and financial information and, therefore, has an overall and accurate picture of the financial performance of the sector group. It seemed that due to the sector performing successfully and healthily on the cash front, some business units, which had not performed as well, resulting in them making a loss on their projects, were helping themselves to the sector's finances in order to cover their losses. This transaction could not have taken place without someone in a senior position having knowledge of and authorising the transfer. Once again, the sector champion had not been informed or consulted regarding the matter.

Interestingly, the next question asked by the group was: *'How can we improve the profit margin?'*

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This is an example of being kept out of the loop with regard to the decisions made in a specific sector, and certain personnel having access to more information than others. This sector is vibrant. The sector champion may not have been aware of what was going on behind closed doors. The group should have suggested that these internal financial practices be stopped. In order to resolve this problem, business units should be made openly accountable for their losses. In this case, the business units are being covered or even protected. It is impossible to get a clear picture of the performance of the sector because of the variety of financial information which is in circulation in the business. This could lead to the following questions: *Why is there not a single financial source in operation? Is there a reason to create uncertainty?*

There is no clear senior board support, which is responsible for this group. I would accentuate the importance of the sector champions, which seems to be a missing factor. The business has put a great deal of emphasis on these 11 discipline areas in the interest of the organisation. The managing directors seem to only be providing lip service with no observable buy-in to the initiative. There has never been an official communication made by the managing directors introducing the sector champions, their virtual team members, and their respective remits in the UK business. This, to some degree, would not have helped to raise their profile. In fact, it may have hindered their continuous efforts. The sector champions appear not to be making the most of their virtual teams who were allocated or selected by these individuals. This might have broken the trust and working relationship between the sector champions and their virtual team members, and also the relationship between the sector champions and the senior management board.

There appears to be a lack of consistency between the various sectors regarding the way in which they deliver or interact with the business. I would question the personalities and interpersonal skills of some of the sector champions who might be interacting with clients. I define clients as internal personnel (across the various companies) as well as external clients. For instance, two individuals displayed similar qualities, which sent a cold chill down my spine. The first worked in Company H1 and was not only a sector champion but also the director head of the company. The sector champion refused to allow the interview to be recorded. He was very challenging throughout the interview. He would not answer any of the questions properly and was evasive in his responses. I sought to divert him and obtain information from him, but he would either change the subject or remain silent. However, he sought to gain information from me. He took calls on his mobile phone during the interview without apologising for the interruption. At the end of the interview, he said *"I hope I was not too intellectual for you."* The key factor below provides some information on this particular interview.

Key factor

This interview left me feeling unsure about my performance. Taking it all into account, it took a great deal of time and effort to have this meeting. I originally rang up to make the appointment. On the day of the meeting, he did not turn up, and no apology or call was received. I tried rearranging the meeting, but he did not return any of my telephone calls or respond to my emails. I put in a personal request to the managing director of Company B1A

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to have a word with him. It was not until the sector champion had received that call that I was able to meet him. I felt he was meeting me under duress.

I had a personal chat with a key member of staff who also works in Company H1. I interviewed this individual prior to meeting the sector champion. I did not go into detail about what took place; I just wanted to get confirmation about this sector champion's characteristics. He explained that it was his normal behaviour not to return any calls or emails, and that it was nothing personal towards me. He did the same to everyone in the business. He elucidated that the sector champion was a very untrustworthy individual. He gave very little in regards to information and guidance. However, he would absorb information from his team and other individuals he met. He would give nothing in return. This member of staff was always in confrontation with the sector champion. However, this was the only way to get anything out of him.

I should highlight that there was some confusion regarding which member of staff was the education sector champion. I met the supposed virtual team member for education in Company B1A. He introduced himself as the sector champion for education. However, he explained that no official communication had ever taken place. I asked if he was co-ordinating his work with the other education sector champion – he blankly said *"no."* I then asked him *"how do you know if you're working on the same path?"* He laughed shyly *"I don't…"* This clearly demonstrated the lack of collaboration between the two individuals working within the same sector. This may be a common theme within the organisation. It appears that there may be some uncertainty as to who is the official education sector champion for the host organisation.

There was further confusion regarding who was who within the sector group. I met the sector champion for offices. As in all my interviews, I asked about his interaction with his virtual team members. He felt that *"no support mechanism was in place to get the virtual team together."* Although that might be the case, it should not stop him putting his own mechanism in place. He identified the individuals within his team. As I mentioned earlier in the document, I met with one of his team members and quickly found out that he was not a virtual team member. He was a director for Company E1. In his view, he was not a team member in order to support the sector champion. He may have laughed it off. However, it could have left him worried about his understanding of his involvement.

Continuing in a similar vein, the second individual was the residential sector champion. I knew this interviewee very well as we had worked in the same office for nearly six years. He can be a difficult person to get on with at the best of times. However, I thought that he would be friendlier during the interview. This, unfortunately, proved to be erroneous. As ever, he came across as a conceited individual. It was hard obtaining a direct answer from him. He advised me that he had not actively worked on his particular sector for the past 18 months, because in his words *"it was ticking over just fine."* As such, my questions were irrelevant to him. I suggested that he answered the questions with his sector champion hat from 18 months ago on to make the meeting meaningful. After 20 minutes, I suggested that we close the meeting. However, he insisted that I continued with the meeting. Instead of answering the questions, he was seeking to find out what the others had said. I quickly reminded him of the confidentiality clause that I had established with all participants prior to and during the course of the interviews. At the end of the meeting, he requested a preview of my write-up before submission to ensure that I *"did not misinterpret his words."* I explained that this was not my first time analysing collected material and that I would not be altering any of the interviews, only pulling out any interesting themes in order to develop them in the next document. On the subject of similarities, four sector champions had comparable traits, which I thought was unusual. They were:

- Aviation sector champion;
- Education sector champion;
- Refrigeration sector champion;
- Entertainment sector champion.

Even more intriguing was the fact that they worked in the same company – Company B1A. While conducting the interviews, it became apparent that there was an emerging pattern. Even though these four sector champions knew me reasonably well, they were all reserved. I should point out that I work directly for one of the sector champions. He was very cautious and sometimes aggressive during the interview. I did not experience this from any of the other interviewees. However, when I did not react to his raised voice they seemed to revert to their normal tone. The interview with the aviation sector champion took almost two hours to complete because he took such a long time to answer each of the questions. I did not think that it was possible for a person to take such a long time to answer a question. It was as if he thought deeply after every single question. Although the four sector champions were happy being recorded, it was clear

that they could not wait for the 'off' button to be pressed. Perhaps the following key factor might explain the reason behind the apparent lack of trust within Company B1A.

Key factor

When I interviewed the **sector director** at **Company Y**, he provided his personal view of the host organisation. Two and a half years ago, he was the joint managing director for Company B1A. He left 18 months after taking up the role. He said that Company A1 had a bad reputation for hiring and firing senior staff and in the marketplace. I too had heard that phrase when I first started with the host organisation, and continue hearing it now. He felt that his predecessor had been at the root of the problem. He had created an environment of deceit and fear amongst his senior personnel, which did not leave any room for 'trust.' Comments such as *"I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him…"* were commonly associated with the managing director. This could have caused the company to change the behaviour of its senior management, especially when it came to sharing information amongst the board members. It may have resulted in an atmosphere, which was conducive to keeping information to oneself.

The concept of 'trust' may have been hampered, and was not a central part of the company ethos. He felt that this may have filtered down through the hierarchy and become embedded in the business. He confessed that he had a difficult time because he always had to watch his back – in his words, *"because the daggers were always out."* He had inherited the remaining senior board members, which made it harder to break down the barriers. Attending the managing directors' meetings was just as difficult as meeting his own board of directors. There was always competition among them, which could never be avoided.

Out of the three companies he had worked for during the course of his working life, Company B1A was the only one that he had found to be driven and even encouraged to thrive on internal politics and a variety of cultures. This could provide individuals with the power to persuade and influence how the business might function, which may not be in the interest of the greater good.

Some of the sector champions do not interact with each other, and therefore the sharing of information or best practices in the interest of the business is non-existent. This could cause internal conflicts amongst the group. The lack of understanding between the public sector-facing and private sector-facing individuals might be a key factor. The sector champion for highways works in Company B1B and is self-contained within his own company. He does not interact with any of the others. This includes some of his virtual team members, although he himself presented me with a different story.

As mentioned previously, some companies undertake work within certain areas while the associated sector champion is unaware. This is clearly the case with the rail sector. I attended a rail sector workshop. All of the companies were participating in major rail projects, but no-one informed the sector champion. This method is clearly not working, as it could remove the responsibility of the sector champion to co-ordinate and stay abreast of any progress, which is made.

Stories from the past and unresolved issues between the various companies appear to be preventing the organisation from moving forward. The host organisation still operates as separate entities instead of one company. The trust factor may not exist between individuals. I would highlight that it is not the companies which are creating the barriers, but the individuals within them. The managing directors know about the issues, but they remain unresolved and could continue to take centre stage at the senior board level. This suggests that trust could be a problem. Therefore, I would raise the question:

'Could the managing directors be acting out a circus performance to the rest of the organisation?' This might explain why the organisation has introduced stringent financial terms and conditions across the business due to internal bad debts between the companies, which are not paying for work, which has been undertaken. Tan and Thoen (2003) suggest that contracts can create structural assurance between parties and foster the commitment and trust that may facilitate co-operation (Newell & Swan, 2000). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000: 560) propose that *'trust [can be] built by having mechanisms, such as guarantees, insurance or contracts.'* Sitkin and Roth (1993) argue that legalistic remedies are weak and impersonal substitutes for trust. This could stem from contractual agreements between the parties and a view that the contract will be mutually beneficial to those involved. For these procedures to be in place could mean that word of mouth or a simple handshake will not be sufficient. This action could reveal mistrust within the organisation. Until past issues have been resolved, the present and future of the host organisation will continue to hamper improvement.

The external organisations

These three organisations provided an insight into how business might be conducted differently. Companies X, Y and Z are similar in their core sector focus. However, Company Y focuses on key clients, ensuring that the company/client relationship will be solid throughout the management structure. However, it might be interesting to see whether or not this approach is successful. All three companies have a defined management structure, which every member of staff is aware of, and their reporting line. The business is split into divisions, while their management structure appears to be transparent and consistent across the business.

"There are only two management structure levels within the sector group; it is flat. Regular meetings are held with staff and information is shared that is relevant to the sector…" (Company X)

"We have a flat structure that is transparent and open. We have a regional management structure and a divisional management structure. The reason for this is to ensure that the four geographical regions and the divisions are covered. The sector approach covers that and draws it all together…" (Company Z)

Company X has increased in size due to organic growth. Only key personnel handle the few acquisitions, which are embedded in the core of the business. A designated board

director is assigned to the acquired business and works in the business to ensure that the transition happens smoothly. It will be the director's responsibility to provide support and guidance and to ensure that the group's culture is upheld.

"There is someone delegated to be responsible for making sure the new business integrates appropriately in a structured manner, in the 'XXX' way of thinking…" (Company X)

The company has a designated sector board, which will support their sector champions and exist separately from the main Plc board. Each board will have complete visibility along with accountability and responsibility for their discipline area.

"If we need to be accountable then we need to have responsibility. We are given autonomy and responsibility to deliver our business plan within the realms of the guidelines that are set…" (Company X)

"[There is a] dedicated business development board to look after sectors and future growth for the business, which have accountability and responsibility…" (Company Y)

"All decisions are made within the sector team. We have full responsibility and accountability to the Plc board…" Company Z)

An assigned chairperson and mentor supports the board. Their virtual team members play a proactive role and are involved in making all of the decisions relating to their associated sector. No other personnel, with the exception of the chairperson or mentor, can influence them. There is a clear definition of what this group is authorised to do. Company Z is the only one, which has a mentoring programme for each sector champion.

"The mentor, who is one of the divisional managing directors, mentors the leader. His background is not in the same sector discipline. He is used as a sounding board to set the strategy…" (Company Z)

Every three years, the mentor can rotate onto a new sector board. This idea is designed to input fresh ideas into each sector. At the same time, it might provide the mentor with

a better understanding of all of the sectors and enable him/her to advise the main Plc board.

Companies X and Z appear to be further advanced in their approach than Company Y. However, this is not suggesting that Companies X and Z did not have their own obstacles to overcome before reaching their current level of success. Each experienced resistance and several failed attempts at getting the senior management to buy into the proposed new business strategy.

"Buy-in varied at the time because there was one management structure under the geographical regime and a clear career path, which is different to a sector-based organisation. It was a challenge to change the focus of the organisation and to get the buy-in…" (Company X)

"Email was used to announce the change of strategy, which was not good for the sector champions. It was not done by the top management to demonstrate their buy-in. Now [they have] introduced different media with which to communicate within the business…" (Company Z)

The long process of resolving the uncertainties at the senior management level seems to have paid off for Companies X and Z, judging by their success stories. After several failed attempts, Company Y is in the early stages of seeking senior management buy-in for its own strategy.

"Convince others that it is worthwhile as a business strategy. Publicise to others how we are doing, how we are approaching it, and what results we are getting…" (Company Y)

The directors persuasive tactics to sell the proposal with the 'success stories' from the parent company. It may take time to convince the various parties across the business. The problem appears to stem from the top of the management hierarchy, which is composed of the same individuals who agreed on the strategy. Like Companies X and Z, they too will overcome their problems and reap the benefits.

What is apparent is the regular interaction, which the sector champions have with their virtual team members.

"Our sector board, which includes the virtual team, meet on a monthly basis. Minutes of the meeting are taken and shared with the main Plc board…" (Company X)

"The board meets regularly during the course of the year. Meetings are scheduled in advance to manage time effectively…" (Company Y)

"The sector champions have their own forum, through which they meet regularly and share information and knowledge. The mature sectors meet yearly, whereas the new sectors, for example, meet every two months, with regular meetings with the virtual team on a weekly basis…" (Company Z)

The sector champions have the active support of their virtual team and also a team of support services to hand.

"Each sector is allocated a principle member of the support team [human resources, business development and finance]. The finance [sector accountant] is part of the sector board. It is an important role – they are able to understand how we are performing against our costs and budgets. They are able to give us trends in terms of how we are moving against our plan…" (Company X)

Company X makes an important point with regard to utilising the skills within the sector group effectively.

"There is a balance to be had between utilising their [specifically financial] skills to the maximum and allowing our technical guys to focus on delivering to clients…" (Company X)

As previously stated in Company Z's synopsis, the company recognises that its success lies in its people.

"Internal support services have grown to manage the size of the business, which is on the intranet for staff to see…" (Company Z)

With the support of the team members, there are no issues regarding sharing and accessing financial information. Any team putting forward tenders can have access to

all of the necessary financial information to manage the initial stages of the submission. This ensures that the right costing is submitted.

"There is information that staff quite rightly need to do their job, and that information will be made readily available to them. For example, someone putting a fee or resource schedule together will be able, through their line manager, to gain access to cost information on a project, so that they can work the fee out. They will be able to understand the profit margin that we are looking to deliver, and if they need to understand a bit more of that information, then they can talk to the finance team. We are quite open to releasing information to staff…" (Company X)

"We might be a pigeon hole for profit and loss accounting and tax reasons. Or we might be a pigeon hole because of our discipline – but we are [1 Company Z]…" (Company Z)

What is interesting about all three companies is their unique and inclusive decision-making process. I use the term 'unique' because it is a method, which is missing within the host organisation.

"The sector board is principally the people that are the nuts and bolts of running the sector. Decisions are made within the sector, because the sector is given the responsibility to deliver…" (Company X)

Even though an assigned sector chairperson oversees Company X's sector board, the responsibility of the chairperson is to advise the group on any Plc issues, which may influence the group.

"They are not there to drive the sector. They will be aware of what is going on at the Plc level, and if there are any wider, corporate issues the sector group needs to consider. The sector is driven by the sector board and that is the way our business is structured…" (Company X)

In the case of Company Y and Company Z, they both have different approaches.

"The support structure is very good, due to the number of people working with the same client. Any problems in a particular area are dealt with by the nearest office to resolve the issue…" (Company Y)

"The sector board is empowered to make all decisions. The divisional managing director is also included in decisions made within the sector..." (Company Z)

In addition, Company Z has an additional forum in place for any disagreements that cannot be resolved between the sector champion and the mentor.

"There is a forum to discuss points [which are] not resolved within the sector board. The mentor and sector champion can debate the unresolved points with the divisional managing director…" (Company Z)

More notably:

"The forum is accepted by all and it works well…" (Company Z)

There is a clear communications framework in operation for all three companies. However, Company Y appears to rely primarily on the intranet to communicate information through the discussion forum. If an individual, for any reason, forgets to upload vital information onto the intranet, it could be detrimental to the rest of the intranet community. There is a time limit, because this is their only medium of communication. Both Company X and Company Z have suggested that there is a time limit for communicating information to staff.

"When the business was geographically led, lesser communications were challenging, because there was the issue and danger of different pieces of information being circulated to staff in a different way at different times, as staff talk to each other…" (Company X)

"Communication is dependent on time…" (Company Z)

Company X has a precise system in place for communicating between the various levels.

"Oral communication relies upon a consistent message being fed from the sector board to the respective business units. Each business unit director sees the minutes of the sector board [meetings] and is aware of any issues, which helps a clearer message to

be delivered. The sector chairman sits on all business unit meetings to ensure that they are operating at the level required of the sector, which helps to maintain the consistency of the information…" (Company X)

In addition, this encourages all of the directors to interact with each other.

"We do place quite a bit of emphasis, not only on the sector chairman, but the sector board to make sure the business unit directors are communicating with each other. On a project-by-project, business unit-by-business unit and sector-by-sector basis, this is relatively straightforward when you have a clear focus on a sector…" (Company X)

Company Z has a similar approach to communicating.

"Internally, relationships are generally very strong. There is strong communication and a will to communicate. There is no protectionism. [Company Z] is a partnership; this counts for a lot – we are all partners, and we all work well together…" (Company Z)

What appears to be different in these three companies compared to the host organisation is their cultures.

"[We changed] the focus of the communication route from horizontal to vertical, which took time to develop relationships with our peers in other offices, but that really helped with the one company culture, as opposed to four different offices…" (Company X)

"We are the product of the people that are in the business today, as a result of the sensitivity and style of the management. You need a certain degree of stability to establish good-quality communication and a chain of command. Trust and integrity goes a long way…" (Company Y)

"The top management do develop that culture, and quite rightly so. Trust is key to the culture…" (Company Z)

The environment is non-threatening, and ambiguity is discouraged.

"Sectorisation harmonised communication and improved personal relationships within the sector. But what it did do was remove the close-knit local geographical community spirit…" (Company X)

"We promote acting in the interest of the wider business, and not acting out of self-interest. We do not encourage unhealthy environments. There is no backstabbing…" (Company Y)

"We have targets, but it is not done in an aggressive way. We are working with an external competitor who encourages internal competition within its various offices. Example: receiving a bid from two sector team leaders from the same office, and internal poaching of staff to try and get the best technical staff on the team…" (Company Z)

Finally, Company Z made an interesting point, which could explain why a culture changes for the wrong reasons.

"We all work well together. It is a really good environment at the moment. It is helped by a buoyant economy because we have not been challenged on our budgets. We are doing well, [and so we are] not internally competitive. So it is a very good environment at the moment…" (Company Z)

When negative changes occur, it may sometimes be harder to revert back to the old environment once the damage has been done and the new environment is accepted as the 'norm.' In the case of individuals, their personalities could have changed and adapted to the new setting.

3.3.5 Analysis three

The next phase of the analysis is divided into three parts, through which I will raise some additional questions.

Part 1: Do the results identified in Analysis one support the force field analysis?

The findings from the interviews within the host organisation appear to support the drivers identified in the force field analysis (Document 2). It is hard to differentiate between the positive and negative drivers in this particular scenario. The drivers are entwined, pulling back and forth like a game of tug of war. The contestants, the senior

management team, may be fighting amongst themselves or with the sector champions. In return, the sector champions are fighting with their virtual team members. At present, there are no clear winners receiving the gold prize. I did not envisage that the majority of the drivers would play a significant part in the material gathered. However, they can act as positive and negative factors within the organisation. What should be an equal balance is disrupted by individuals' actions.

Part 2: Can the interview findings from Analysis one support the three identified concepts?

The interview findings and the three identified concepts appear to fit into the force field analysis.

Core values	⟷	**Trust**
Management structure	⟷	**Structure**
Past stories	⟷	**History**
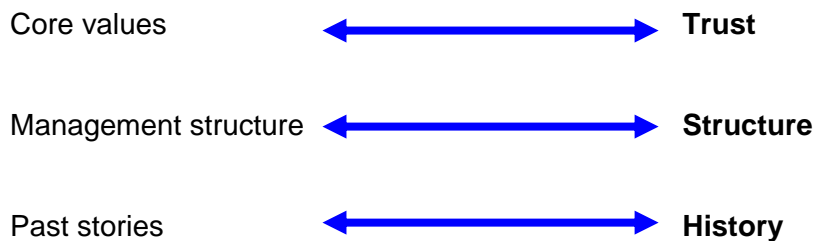
The main concept, *trust*, can influence the *structure* and *history* of the host organisation. What will surprise the organisation is that its core values are being challenged. The values were introduced in order to persuade individuals to align their behaviour with the values of the organisation. However, who is the organisation? What is behind the organisation? The answer to both questions is people. Individuals make up any company. This clearly shows that the calibre of people can either deliver or spoil a perfectly good plan. As such, it is important to whom you delegate the wooden spoon. It may only take one person to turn the tables and create mayhem with the remaining staff. It will be more difficult to remove the problem once it becomes embedded within the management structure, as clearly shown with Company B1A.

Part 3: Does the force field analysis explain the movements in the various levels of trust?

The core values are supposed to be at the forefront of everything we do and deliver. However, the decision-making process has been taken outside of the sector champions' remit. This could illustrate that the senior management do not need to demonstrate *trust*. In the context of everyday relationships based on trust, the *'norms regarding how vulnerability in the relationship should be handled may even have unanimous*

agreement' (Banerjee et al., 2006: 307). Defining these norms will be difficult if they are not part of the majority group. If they are not transparent and agreed upon within the select group, it will be harder to demonstrate trust. As such, the *'vulnerable party would be well advised not to trust'* (Banerjee et al., 2006: 307) anyone if the *'willingness to take risks'* (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982: 1306) is perceptible in an unstable working environment.

According to Gargiulo and Ertug (2006), trust within a relationship may be negatively associated with the levels of monitoring and the number of safeguards put in place by one or all interested parties. Zaheer et al. (1998) claim that performance can influence the degree of trust in relationships in the context of inter-organisational exchange. McEvily and Zaheer (2006: 291) also argue that *'financial outcomes [can be] among the most relevant and compelling indicators of inter-firm relationship performance.'* The level of trust is focused primarily on the financial gain from each of the identified sectors and not on the individual. The environment may not be conducive to knowledge exchange in order to develop trust. Therefore, this could change the *'outcomes that affect the well-being'* (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2006: 165) of the various parties. Dirks and Ferrin (2001) believe that in situations where there is a strong focus on outputs through the communication of goals, processes and expectations, trust may not have an appreciable effect. This is the case with the host organisation. It appears only to be interested in the figure at the bottom of the balance sheet. Dirks and Ferrin (2001) suggest that in situations with a strong structure and orientation towards process and expectation, those involved will become less concerned with issues of trust. As the behaviour of the senior management has become less ambiguous, there could be less of a need for the sector champions to *'engage in actions that signal their willingness'* (Gargiulo & Ertug, 2006: 179) to interpret their behaviour. At this time, the senior managements' actions are not clear, and when they become clear, the sector group will no longer need to be concerned a bout this issue, as the senior management's actions will have a positive impact on everything they do.

Newell et al. (2004) suggest that each member of a structure has a unique network which can provide them with a bridge, over which they can access the knowledge of others and *'use their personal networks and credibility to encourage'* others (Syedain, 2007: 32). Some individuals may need to have strong bonds with other members of the structure in order to integrate their knowledge. Through this bonds, members can negotiate, achieve and refine a shared understanding. The senior management should

recognise that the sector champions *'generally know what to do'* (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986: 44) and are *'expert[s] and [competent] in [their] particular domain and [have] an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge'* (Haas, 1992: 3). The lack of co-ordination between the actions of these individuals (Lewis, 1969) can be taken to signal untrustworthiness. However, could this illustrate genuine co-operation between the various parties? As Schelling (1960) points out:

People can often concert their intentions or expectations with others if each knows that the other is trying to do the same. Most situations provide some clue for coordinating behaviour, some focal point for each person's expectation of what the other expects him to expect to be expected to do (p. 57).

It would be hard to make such an assumption in an unstable and competitive environment. I would expect the opposite situation to occur, especially as it may be impossible to coordinate behaviour and ambiguity can have a major effect on all the actors in the arena. These expectations could be minor and may not be open to negotiation because they were not discussed prior to any interaction. The various groupings can be the creators of the culture which is embedded within the organisation. Whether these individuals wish to confess to this fact will be another matter. However, they can blame each other for the problems they are currently experiencing.

3.3.6 Analysis four

The following proposed matrix shows the areas which I feel can influence the way in which communications are cascaded down the host organisation. Even though an official route of communication is in operation, the unofficial route appears to work against it. However, it is surprising that the senior management link the official and unofficial communication channels. In front of the workforce, the management will play the role of the leader and present a united front. Behind the closed boardroom doors, the management can reveal a different picture.

The way in which people in the organisation actually do things	Official corporate media: policies, objectives, literature and the intranet
Unofficial	**Official**
▪ Power relationships ▪ Informal networks ▪ Hidden agendas ▪ The dogs of war (senior management)	▪ Persuade and Influence ▪ Management styles: ▪ Techniques and approaches ▪ Sharing of information

▪ Organisational history ▪ Gatekeepers ▪ Performers and manipulators	▪ Core values which underpin processes ▪ Decision-making process ▪ Inclusive culture

Uncertainty
▪ Individuals and groups
▪ Coercion
▪ Persuasion
▪ Political interests
▪ Gatekeepers:
   ▪ Rumours
   ▪ Suspicions
   ▪ Memories
	Ambiguity
	▪ Individuals' multiple interpretations at the various management levels
	▪ Unstable environment:
	   ▪ Safe
	   ▪ Trust
	   ▪ Protect
	▪ Motives behind language used with intent

Perceptions
▪ Competitive and aggressive environment
▪ Conflict
▪ Lack of trust and communication
▪ Contradictions
	Reality
	▪ Organisational history
	▪ Unresolved disputes
	▪ Hidden agendas:
	   ▪ Individual(s)
	   ▪ Group(s)
	   ▪ Divisional company
	▪ More than one culture embedded
	▪ Internal barriers

This paper will now review the three tiers of the management structure within the host organisation:

▪ Managing directors;
▪ Sector champions;
▪ Virtual team members.

It appears that these three groups may have created a pool of confusion. Whether or not this has been done intentionally can be argued based on the evidence gathered from the recent interviews. The culture of the organisation could have allowed this aggressive environment to grow and become part of the norm. The unfriendly source may have originated from the top of the hierarchy, and would have cascaded down the various levels of management. However, the management have not helped the situation, but seem to have encouraged it.

> **Key factor**
>
> Within any company working in the same office, it is not commonplace to have teams competing against each other to be crowned the *A Team*. I should point out that this is standard practice in Company B1A. Some individuals might see it as unlucky to be working on the *A Team*, as it can create an environment of intimidating competition. Some may feel a competitive environment can be healthy, and argue that the adrenalin keeps flowing. However, this can be a problem if individuals decide to leave the organisation because they have not been selected to be part of the *A Team*.

The example above could illustrate how local management can make an environment unstable, competitive or safe for their workforce. This might lead to individuals feeling vulnerable and seeking support from their other colleagues. However, in an environment like this, it might be difficult to find a true colleague. The trust factor will be hampered, leaving some individuals unsure in whom they can confide. Considering that the core values are a significant trademark of the organisation, they do not seem to have helped to change the attitude and the behaviour of the management in charge. In fact, the key personnel who should lead by example seem to disregard the core values. I believe that they do not realise that their actions will be observed and noted by the rest of the workforce. In order to demonstrate this matrix, I have plotted some sample comments within each of the identified boxes.

The way in which people in the organisation actually do things	Official corporate media: policies, objectives, literature and the intranet
Unofficial	**Official**
▪ *"[I was] called in to give advice then [it was] not taken up due to politics at the top level…"* ▪ *"[The] cross-company decision-making process can impact other companies which do not get a say…"* ▪ *"Too many people are concerned with their own status…"* ▪ *"Individuals gravitate towards their own interest…"* ▪ *"Ring fencing of information from senior directors…"*	▪ *"Respect, trust and honesty helps to build long-lasting relationships…"* ▪ *"The whole business is underpinned by trust – we don't rely on systems…"* ▪ *"It is how individuals interface with each other and not the way these individuals are structured…"* ▪ *"Co-operation with companies [is sometimes] better than others…"* ▪ *"Making decisions [based] on personal interests and not on the interests of the business…"*

Uncertainty	Ambiguity
▪ *"[We] have to use coercive persuasion to get resources…"* ▪ *"[The] local culture [is] driven by [the] local management; they influence how their staff behave…"* ▪ *"Long history of companies' acting out of self-interest…"* ▪ *"Unnecessary burdens with the internal politics and history…"*	▪ *"Getting the managing directors to sign up and run with the initiative…"* ▪ *"Main blockers happen [at the level of the] middle management…"* ▪ *"[The] self-interest of the directors drives everything, not the companies…"* ▪ *"The main blockers to any communication are not what happens at management level, it is what happens at the middle part of the business…"* ▪ *"The message at board level is normally clear, unless the board is unclear…"* ▪ *"Individuals with too many roles making the decisions…"*
Perceptions	**Reality**
▪ *"[We are] perceived as second-class citizens within a multi-disciplinary business…"* ▪ *"Communication has been poor. There has never been anything in place to cascade down from Plc meetings to the guys on the shop floor…"* ▪ *"Some of the decisions that come out are dictatorial; that puts people's backs up…"* ▪ *"Just because we have to do things differently does not mean we are not part of the family…"*	▪ *"Tribal behaviour – people do stick together. [This is] human nature…"* ▪ *"Individuals allow the organisational structure to act as a barrier…"* ▪ *"As the business has grown we are still operating as separate businesses…"* ▪ *"[There are] still pockets where the culture is are way off [the organisational culture]…"* ▪ *"[There are] still pockets of resistance around the business…"* ▪ *" Internal issues have not been resolved and are still a problem…"* ▪ *"[Company A1] is not one company, as there are still issues within the company..."*

There appears to be an imbalance between what officially takes place and what actually takes place within the organisation. Our behaviour can influence the stories and perceptions in the business, which could affect the three identified concepts. These are:

▪ Trust;
▪ Structure;
▪ History.

The managing directors same individuals are challenging the whole notion of the core values which underpin the organisation. These individuals are supposedly leading the

rest of the workforce by example. It should not be a matter of 'one rule for us and one rule for them,' as this will fail to achieve complete buy-in. As illustrated by Company B1A, a culture can be embedded in a structure, which is impenetrable. To initiate this approach within all three levels of management could affect the entire structure of the organisation. For this approach to initiate within three levels of management could affect the entire structure. The organisation might find it impossible to recognise itself as '1 Company A1.'

3.4 CONCLUSION

> *"Too many sectors for the business to handle…"*
> **Company B1**

The host organisation has an interesting history which may have influenced its journey throughout its operations. Some organisations will become both multi-disciplined and global, which could force their expansion through acquisitions instead of organic growth. Too much effort can be focused on external growth, and very little attention has been paid to the current internal structure of the business.

As the organisation continues to grow, internal issues are also developing at a steady pace behind it. These unresolved issues will remain a significant part of the organisation's structure. These difficulties stem from the senior management, and have embedded themselves within the management structure of the various companies. The problem could have been an individual misunderstanding, which could lead to Chinese whispers and erroneous stories travelling around the corridors. However, the managing directors and the board of directors circulate and receive the same stories. Their own actions will be scrutinised and perceived by those who interact with them. These individuals are in a position to correct and put a stop to these stories, but they appear not to, and seemingly allow them to fester and become part of the office politics.

What seems to be lacking in this organisation is the key component of its core values, trust. This is not to say that this might have hampered the rest of the organisation. However, the odds of this are high. Like water, it can only travel downstream. As previously highlighted, there could be potential blockers at the next level of management: technical directors. We do not know the extent to which this is true, as this group (technical directors) was not included in this study.

This internal bickering amongst the senior management could be deflecting away from the key importance of the business. Too much time seems to be spent inwardly and upwardly between these small groups of individuals. Their own actions and behaviour are challenging with regard to *'building or [and] maintaining trust'* (Dirks, 2006: 22) amongst their immediate personnel. Due to the speed at which the organisation is growing, there might not be any time or need to develop trust in a working relationship. Bruhn (2006: 35) suggests that *'changes in the work environment over the past 2-3*

decades [could] have significantly altered how we trust organisations.' Currall and Inkpen (2002) challenge the notion that organisations cannot trust and see trust at the organisational level as embedded in routines and processes. Due to the make-up of the individuals, there is no *'shared attitude held collectively by members'* (Janowicz & Noorderhaven, 2006: 270) at *'different organisational levels'* (Zaheer et al., 2002: 348). In such *'circumstances of time'* (Hayek, 1945: 83), the organisation could be construed as the reason for the lack of interaction in the development of an open working relationship. Could this imply that the senior management team is lacking interpersonal skills? The majority of the leaders (managing directors) who are in power originated from engineering backgrounds and progressed up the career ladder with no additional personal development. These decisions result from the managing directors' own perceptions and understanding of the situation. Their personal level of education, knowledge and an awareness of the options available to them will be key factors.

Some potential leaders are often promoted based on their technical rather than interpersonal competencies (Hogan et al., 1994). This could imply that *'many leaders do not always possess the competencies or motivation to build trust'* (Dirks, 2006: 23). As such, some may feel more comfortable *'focus[ing] their efforts on other goals'* (p. 23), such as meeting their targets and business objectives. Many leaders have a difficult role in balancing the needs of the organisation, meeting goals set by the CEO and the wishes of their subordinates. It will not be easy for these leaders to make promises to their subordinates which could conflict with the requirements set by the chief executive. Therefore, it could be a tall order to expect leaders to build and maintain trust with unforeseen challenges being faced on a day-to-day basis. On that note, it may be possible for the senior management to demonstrate good behaviour and fit into the aforementioned five categories of behaviour (Whitener et al., 1995):

- Behavioural consistency;
- Integrity;
- Participative decision-making;
- Communication;
- Demonstrating concern.

I have presented Whitener et al.'s (1995) behavioural categories into a simple two-by-two behavioural grid (see Table 2). The grid illustrates how the identified areas can affect each spectrum. The key factor in the grid is communication, because *'these*

situations may be seen as revealing a leader's true motives as they are put to the test under conflicting pressures' (Dirks, 2006: 24). The various pressures experienced by the managing directors will demonstrate how they cope under these conditions.

Behavioural consistency	**Integrity**
COMMUNICATION	
Participative decision-making	**Demonstrating concern**

Table 2. Two-by-two behavioural grid

However, why do people get so excited about trust? Some individuals simply work towards their agreed yearly personal development (appraisal) targets. During a typical conversation between a line manager and his or her subordinate, would *trust* be part of the dialogue or play a key role? Should trust be *'reserved for special social relations'* (Bromiley & Harris, 2006: 131), such as *'family, friends, and lovers'* (Williamson, 1993b: 484), and not day-to-day business?

Organisations are made up of and managed by individuals (Aulakh et al., 1996) who have their own *'perceptions about the institution or organisation'* (Dirks, 2006: 16), including their leaders. A follower's perceptions of his/her leader's character could affect his/her vulnerability in a hierarchical relationship (Mayer et al., 1995), because these leaders can have the *'authority to make [and override] decisions that have a significant impact on a follower and the follower's ability to achieve his or her goals'* (Dirks, 2006: 16). Mayer and Gavin (1999) claim that employees might believe that their leader[s] cannot be trusted. As such, they will divert their energy to covering their own back, which can detract from their work performance. As previously mentioned, an organisation's culture is driven by its financial performance. Each company and its respective business units will have to reach targets set by the senior management. If the targets are not met, this could lead to unnecessary levels of competitiveness between the business units, which could influence the working relationship between the

various parties. I do not believe that there is a formal relationship between these individuals. Instead, there is a contractual arrangement to fulfil the requirements of the organisation.

From the earlier discussion with the sector director from *Company Y*, I would argue that the environment is still aggressive, and that it may not have changed since the director left the host organisation. This could also explain why these managing directors display their distinctive management style not only to the sector champions, but also to their board of directors. Through their own actions, the managing directors could have damaged the trust between themselves, the sector champions and the virtual team members, because of their *'[un]trustworthy behaviour'* (Dirks, 2006: 25). Due to their management style possibly being seen as the norm, it could have provided the *'frame through which the[ir] behaviour is interpreted'* (Dirks, 2006: 25) by others without their knowledge. Would it be wrong to suggest that the managing directors might need to address their managerial skills? After all, they are the leaders, and everyone else is a follower seeking guidance from them.

3.5   LOOKING FORWARD – DOCUMENT 4

> *"It seems to be a sign of weakness for certain people to communicate they need help. I wish I knew why that was….."*
> ***Company E1A***

It would be wrong to think that this is the end of this part of the research. This study has been interesting. It has also provided some potential areas that are worth pursuing in Document 4. The focus has been on the concept of trust in leaders and the organisational culture developed around management practices. Having a better understanding of the way in which trust and culture can influence organisational communication within an environment will provide clearer insights into overcoming problems and improving communication in the organisation. It will be interesting to find out the extent to which these influences actually affect the organisation by researching further down the management hierarchy. I will recommend to my champion and the two other stakeholders that they take the research to the next managerial level – *the technical directors.*

This particular group (175 people across the whole of the UK organisation, including Company E1) is the primary link to the main board of directors. They are the first points of contact for receiving corporate information and messages from their respective management boards. They are responsible for nurturing and developing their respective team members. They also ensure that their team members progress in terms of their career development. It is these same individuals' responsibility to disseminate the information they receive to their subordinates. However, the way in which the information will cascade down and be delivered accurately to the remaining personnel is uncertain. As a result, it is unclear whether communication is a one or a two-way process. Can and do the technical directors withhold information from their subordinates?

This group could be a very powerful community. Like a revolving door, they can go round in circles, restricting access to either the board of directors or their subordinates. They can take with one hand and not share or pass on with the other, which could create a sense of their own personal power base amongst them. It will be interesting to find out their perceptions regarding how their management board communicates with them and, in turn, how they communicate with their subordinates. The management board may

well consist of some or even most of the sector champions who have already been mentioned in this document. Therefore, it will be interesting to look for any similarities previously identified by the virtual team members. The themes will continue to centre around trust and culture, focusing on how individuals' perceptions and interpretations can play a major role within the organisation. I intend to conduct a cross-company analysis with this group and see if there are any anomalies, which might reveal some interesting results.

In order to produce Document 4, I contacted the Head of HR for the UK to gain access to a copy of last year's staff survey. I received a copy on the understanding that I do not make it public, as it contains some sensitive information known only to the managing directors and their board. This document will assist me in asking some specific questions in the next part of my continuous journey.

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Finally, special recognition goes to the following people, who provided additional insights and agreed to be part of this research:

Company X	Sector director
Company Y	Sector director
Company Z	Partner

The following quotation sums up the story so far nicely:

"Change happens not by trying to make yourself change, but by becoming conscious of what's not working…"

(Shakti Gawain, 1993: 29)

3.7   A REFLECTIVE MOMENT…

I have thoroughly enjoyed producing this document. The opportunity to interact with these key personnel provided me with an opportunity to challenge my own abilities and push the boundaries of my own comfort zone.

It also provided me with the chance to engage with senior personnel, both within the host organisation and with some external clients. The fact that I was able to meet with these individuals gave a great boost to my confidence. A particular challenge that I had to overcome arose in dealing with unforeseen situations that presented themselves. It also taught me that things might not go according to plan. The ability to react and adjust to my environment provided me with a chance to feel positive about my own abilities, although I admit that I felt intimidated by one individual. However, looking back, he purposefully controlled the meeting and transferred my power to himself, which in hindsight I allowed to happen.

At present, I am not sure whether my research has opened any doors within my own organisation, although I have been asked to meet with two senior personnel within the organisation to discuss my findings. I am extremely cautious about being open, and now feel hypocritical.   However, I am being critical about the personnel and not the organisation, and may have every right to be so. As such, I believe that I will experience a similar fate, challenges and support in Document 4. The following passage expresses my personal thoughts.

Engaging the flow

"Knowing our personal mission further enhances the flow of mysterious coincidences as we are guided toward our destinies. First we have a question, then dreams, day-dreams, and intuitions lead us toward the answers, which usually are synchronistically provided by the wisdom of another human being."

(James Redfield & Carol Adrienne, 1995: xvii)

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3.9   APPENDICES

Appendix 1   Outline of questions

Appendix 2   Post-It note exercise – Host organisation

Appendix 3   Company X, Company Y and Company Z exercise

Appendix 4   My own 'concept' environment diagram

Appendix 1: Outline of questions

Introductory questions – Job and role

- How long have you been with Company A1?
- What is your role and what are your main responsibilities?
- How long have you been in your current role and your role as sector champion?

Communicating in a changing environment and making sense of it

- How do you split your time between your main role and being a sector champion?
- Has there been any official communication from the senior management board, clearly defining your roles and recognising the uniqueness of the 11 identified sector champions within the organisation?
  - If not, has this created uncertainty for you in terms of undertaking your duties?
  - Have you had any problems regarding not receiving information first-hand?
  - If yes, would you care to explain the situation?

Communications approach

- As a sector champion, how do you perform your role in terms of communicating with to your virtual team?
- What approach (e.g., face-to-face, email, intranet, and road shows) do you tend to use to communicate with to your virtual team and the senior management? How frequently do you do so?
- Do you find it easier to communicate within your own company than across the organisation?
- Have you had the opportunity to interact with other sector champions?

Management structure

- Two years ago, the sector champions underwent a sector research review. Since the review, what improvements have been implemented to help you to carry out your duties?   For example:
  - Being empowered in your role as sector champion to take full responsibility;
  - Being party to decisions made on areas of work: do you feel you can influence the decision-making process?
  - Receiving support from the regional management;
  - Systems in place for knowledge sharing;
- The identification of key individuals with sector specific skills.
- Does having to work with various management structures across the organisation aid or hinder your efforts to gain support and share information?
- In your opinion, as the organisation has grown, has the structure changed in order to cope with the size of the business?

- What implications does this have for the sector champions?
- Can you think of an incident in which a message or information was adjusted in a way that altered its meaning through the various levels of management? What were the consequences?

<u>Collection of critical incidents</u>

- In your opinion, do you feel that the core values (trust, sharing, and supporting) help to improve behaviour in terms of the way in which the workforce work and treat one another?
- Briefly explain the nature and purpose of the critical incident.
- Can you give an example of a critical incident?
    - Ask for details of the event.
    - Ask about reasons and whether they were good ones.
    - Ask about consequences.
- Continue to ask for critical incidents if the respondent appears to have further incidents to describe.

<u>Close the interview</u>

- Thank the respondent.
- Reinforce the commitment to respondent confidentiality.
- Ask whether it would be acceptable to contact the respondent after the interview for clarification or if further details are required.

Appendix 2: Post It notes exercise – Host organisation

Appendix 3: Company X, Company Y and Company Z exercise

COMPANY 'X'
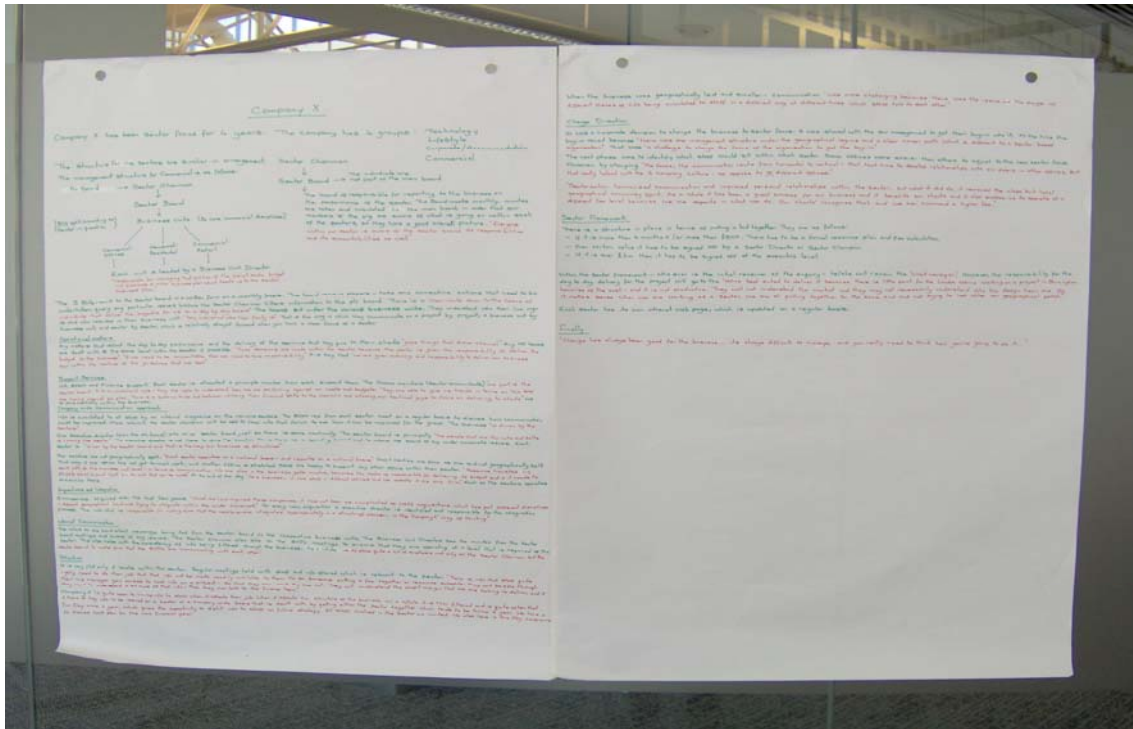
COMPANY 'Y'

COMPANY 'Z'
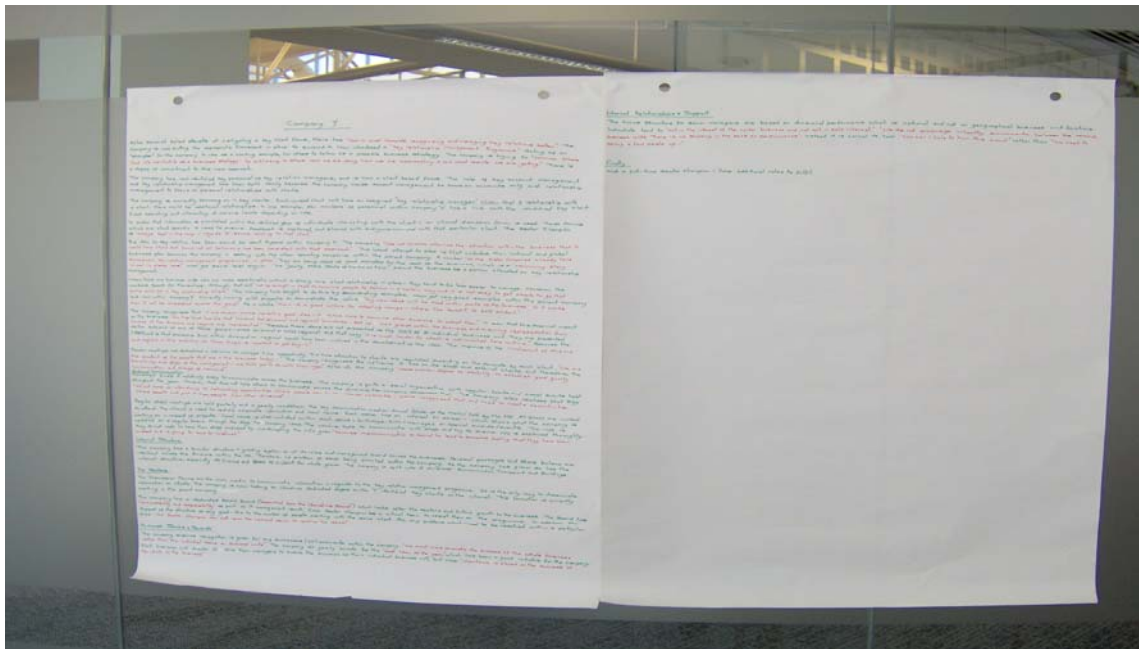
Appendix 4: My own 'concept' environment diagram
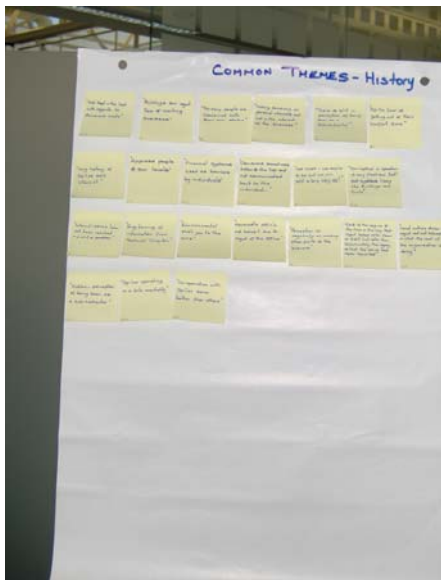
Document Four

A Report on a piece of Structured Research

Submitted by: Rosemary E. Caesar

Supervisors: Professor Colin Fisher

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Document Four submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement of the Nottingham Trent University for the Degree of Doctorate of Business Administration

CONTENTS

FIGURES & TABLES

4.0 INTRODUCTION

> *"We have a tendency of fuzzing the results to make them look more positive…"*
> **Company B1C**

This document will endeavour to identify an area of research, namely *trust* and organisational *culture* within the context of organisational communication, which is of interest to me and could be of benefit or of interest to all, or some of the following groups:

- The researcher as a practicing professional;
- the academic community;
- managers and organisations;
- policy makers and regulators; and
- professional associations, trainers and developers.

The importance of the field to these various groups is discussed within this paper. A number of specific research questions relevant to the general field of the research are identified and explored within Chapter 4.1. These questions were and still are currently perceived by me as capable of sustaining the research over the duration of the Doctorate of Business Administration programme.

Accompanying these questions are supporting references to the critical literature review and initial conceptual framework developed by me. Discussions of the various academic fields appropriate to the research questions are outlined for the reader. A synopsis of a critical review and evaluation of the literature carried out by me is conducted, leading to a set of working definitions of the key concepts used in the research. A description of the organisational and managerial context of the research is provided as an introduction to the identification of the research questions and its foundation in organisational life. It is anticipated that this discussion will confirm the importance of the research questions. The research questions will then be discussed in light of their suitability for structured, survey-based research. The working hypothesis and null-hypothesis will be explained at this stage in the document as a measurement tool for outcomes of the research project.

A comprehensive research plan is described in Chapter 4.2. This chapter will include details of the research method applied to date and for the remainder of the degree programme. The methodology is influenced by positivist and phenomenological approaches and includes quantitative and qualitative methods to data collection and analysis. This is not to say that I am against undertaking a positivist stance. That said, in Chapter 4.7 I will provide a detailed account and the reasoning behind the indecisiveness. The research plan included the identified variables used to test against the host organisation's company-wide web based employee survey. The results are statistically analysed to identify potential changes or problems previously identified in Document Three.

The objective of this document is to establish a continuity to the management concepts, against which to measure the results of the host organisation's employee survey. Using a positivist approach to categorise the cause and effect, Chapter 4.3 will identify the variables and provide a constructive argument related to the specific research questions. I had no active part in the process of implementing or delivering the employee survey and therefore, I remained unbiased. The sample construction and size are outlined for the reader to contextualise and conceptualised the entirety of the project. It is envisaged that this foundation of knowledge will enable the reader to analyse the research findings to optimum levels.

4.0.1 The Role of the Researcher, Managerial and Organisational Support

Throughout the duration of this research, the I have remained impartial within the identified host organisation. All communication with the three stakeholders (the managing director Company E1, the managing director of Company B1B, Company B1A) within the host organisation has been identical to ensure fairness.

Several individuals within the host organisation have contacted me to discuss the research in more detail. Each discussion adjusted according to the person in question. This approach was taken because each individual had a different objective and was seeking different outcomes to the research. It was important for me not to divulge any information not previously released to any other personnel. Some of these individuals were new to the organisation while others were already known to me. This was the first time any interaction had taken place between the host organisation and me. Therefore, it was important to keep an independent stance at all times. What was interesting I met one of the director's on the business future management board. He addressed me as

the *communication guru*. He was still enthused by my presentation to the board. It would have been interesting to find out the depth of the *enthusiasm* with the remaining management board.

4.0.2 On-going Non-participant Observation

Because I previously undertook some internal observational studies in Document Three, this development process has continued to be sought by many within the host organisation. The rationale for its appreciation could be the constructive feedback to the respective manager on how to enhance the group's collaboration and improve effective communication within their teams. It also demonstrates that many managers' roles could be developing, some more quickly than others, which may leave them with little time to focus on building their relationship with their team members. As it is an on-going continual process, I was enable to implement the process without difficulty to the participating teams. This is not to assume that with each new team involvement that it will not bring with it a new set of challenges. That said it is hoped that this training style could be developed further into a management development programme.

4.0.3 Feedback to Stakeholders

The three stakeholders have been in regular contact with me. The objective will be to ensure that their continuous support and to keep the line of communication opened. This has become more significant to the research because the feedback process has now widened within the host organisation. On completing Document Three, the managing director for Company B1A recommended that the findings to date be presented to the business future management board. This board has representation from all the UK companies (Company B1A, Company B1B, Company B1C, Company F1, Company H1, and Company E1). In November 2007, a 30-minute presentation on the findings from Document Three was made to the management board.

4.0.4 Business Future Management Board

As previously mentioned, the board consists of all the UK companies, including Company E1. Although a closer look at the make-up of the personnel from the various operating companies shows an imbalance on the number of personnel representing each company. Company F1 has seven members on the board. As indicated earlier in Document Three Company F1 is the *'non-fee earning arm'* of the business. The other companies only have one or two members each representing them. The make-up of the board is shown in Table 1.

Company B1A	Two
Company B1B	Two
Company B1C	Two
Company E1	Two
Company Q1	One
Company H1	One
Company F1	Seven

Table 1 Number of Representatives on the Business Future Board

It would be interesting to observe how decisions are made within this particular board. As illustrated, one company could influence which way a decision is made by the board. The remaining members could collaborate with each other in resisting the dominant company, which might create an unhealthy environment for all parties.

There is no description on the company intranet outlining the board's responsibilities. As such, it was difficult seeking any information for this board. However, a senior member of staff who attended the UK directors conference in December 2006 had the answer. I was advised that all the attendees were presented with the following précis of the board's responsibility, which is shown in Table 2. This information has not been extended or publicised to the rest of the business.

> ◼ *Business Future Team to formally manage sector performance through:*
> - *Bi-monthly reports from all sector champions*
> - *Annual business plans from all sector champions*
> - *Attendance at BF Team meetings*
> - *Secondary P+L reporting*
> ◼ *Better prioritisation of sector efforts – where do we focus investment*
> ◼ *Review of emerging and new sectors such as water, power and waste*
> ◼ *Better communication through Intranet 'sector focus' page*
> ◼ *Company 'buy-in' to sector strategies and develop a push / pull approach to increasing sector growth and performance*

Table 2 Business Future Board – Role & Responsibilities

After presenting to the board in November, I was advised by the board directors that a follow-up presentation would be made to the same board after completing Document 4. Although not formally confirmed, the assumption was made by me that this management board would be the official forum to report any future findings. I felt that it would be an

ideal audience because of the *'roles the different participants'* (Mintzberg, 1979: 61) at different levels in the hierarchy (Strauss, 1962) bring to this *'strategic'* (Mintzberg, 1979: 61), *'decision-making'* (Likert, 1967: 171) board. This board is also responsible for managing and reviewing the performance of the various sectors. The chief executive of Company A1 stated in a published and distributed external magazine:

'[We] have never gone into things that we don't understand…' (Impact, 2007: 15)

The findings identified in Document Three could be construed as falsifying the facts that for the past 3 years the host organisation has been operating in certain sectors that were misunderstood by the senior management board to provide constructive support by senior management. To illustrate, the following comments were referenced in Document Three, which will demonstrate the lack of support experienced by the sector champions.

'It took almost 2 years to get buy-in at the top level…' (6F)

'Top management paying lip service to the sectors…' (10J)

'Important to get consensus from all companies to get buy-in…' (2B, 4D, 13M)

'Decisions sometimes taken at the top and not communicated back to the individual…' (1A, 9I, 8H, 10J)

This confirms that the actions taken by the senior management board could have influenced the various companies not to buy into the sectors or support the sector champions. This communal demonstration by the various managing directors might have convinced the other individuals (sector team members) within their respective company into not collaborating with the sector champions. This may have damaged the working relationship.

It is early days for this board, and only time will tell if they fulfil their objectives and manage to consolidate all the sectors and enforce the business to collaborate and deliver the business strategy. I believe that the board may not have the appropriate combination of personnel. It is envisaged that the board will continue to expand, and introduce additional personnel to provide relevant input to assist in strengthening the board's remit. Primarily the board consists of one discipline area – *business*

development & marketing, which will play an imperative part to the sectors and the entire business. However, there seems to be a disparity in the variance of discipline backgrounds the parties bring to this particular board. As previously mentioned, the emergence of this board could be seen as a key factor for the future of the business. Like several management boards set-up in the past it will be interesting to observe the shelf-life for this particular board.

Although I acknowledged the board's remit, it is envisaged that this board might lead the way to improve communication and trust within the host organisation. The findings from this document may go some way to explaining the difficulty that the host organisation has been experiencing and underpin the three concepts (trust, structure, and history) and identify their strengths and weaknesses to effective communication.

4.0.5 Company X, Company Y and Company Z

The above three companies who participated in Document Three will have a follow-up meeting to provide some constructive feedback on the research findings from Document Three. This will be presented in the form of either a presentation or a briefing paper. It is anticipated that it may provide an additional opportunity to do some extensive follow-up research in the future. It will be useful to keep these links open with the various companies because it might provide the platform to focus future research.

4.1   OBJECTIVES

> *"Even though we are global, everything still revolves around the UK –
> especially London…"*
> **Company R1**

The purpose of Document Four is to complete the next significant stage of the Doctorate of Business Administration Programme, and to demonstrate an alternative research method – structured, survey-based to test the findings previously identified in Document Three. In addition, there is further development of a formative conceptual framework; along with the identification of potential action points and indeed identification of refined questions and plans for further ethnographic research to support the on-going development of this research project. The document will develop, and increase the validity of the themes of my DBA and create knowledge that will be useful to the host organisation.

The methodology is influenced by both interpretative and phenomenological approaches. This also includes both quantitative and qualitative methods to data collection and analysis. In this case, the data used in Document Four has originated from the host organisation's yearly staff survey and will assist in *'understanding, and resolving* [the] *business problems'* (Buglear, 2005: 108) and in seeking to *'improve the management of the human resources'* (Likert, vii: 1967) within the organisation.

The primary concern of the document will be one that was raised 40-years ago by Likert, which is *'for more adequate and accurate data than are now ordinarily available to guide policy and operating decisions'* (Likert, vii: 1967), between the decision-making bodies within any establishment. However, for group decision making to be effective, Likert (1967) makes a key point stating that '*the principle of supportive relationships [will be] a general principle which the members of an organisation can use to guide their relationships with one another'* (p. 47). As might be appreciated, it would be important within a microenvironment to create a *'level of trust'* (Lane, 1998: 18), and openness (Mishra, 1996) in the relationship.

4.1.1   Summary of Document Three

 As a reminder, the group selected for the ethnographic research in Document Three were the sector champions and their sector team members. In addition, three external

companies (Company X, Company Y, and Company Z) participated in the study. The objective of the document will be to ascertain the effectiveness of a communicational link between a senior management group and their supporting team. The goal was to establish any internal obstructions between the two groups. The qualitative material (1:1 interviews) gathered within the host organisation found that there were three management concepts hampering effective communication between the sector champions and their respective support teams. The concepts were trust, history, and structure. These themes could have influenced the microenvironment, which might have shaped the culture to what it is today.

The interviews undertaken with the three external companies highlighted potential improvement areas for the host organisation to take under consideration. The findings illustrated that the host organisation's past (historical stories) could have played a major part to the internal environment. These might have included the perception and misinterpretation of mistrust by individuals against individuals and company against company. These assumptions would have been visible at the senior level of the hierarchy before they cascaded through the managerial levels and across the various companies.

4.1.2 Justification

Document Four will be used to test, and deepen the findings previously identified in Document Three. In this document, it is expected to continue to use the three management concepts identified in Document Three, which are:

- Trust
- Structure
- History

It is also anticipated that further exploratory work into the host organisation will be carried out to test how far these feelings cascade throughout the business. It is believed that these concepts could hold the key as to why this organisation is experiencing difficulty with effective communication within its own environment. If the outcome of these findings supports those of the previous document it will support the proposals on how the company can influence, and improve corporate communication.

4.1.3 A Critical Literature Review – Organisational Communication

Living, working and coping with change can be a fact, or even an unpleasant reality for organisations and the individuals within them. This is not to assume that subjective experiences amongst the staff of an organisation cannot influence the internal environment when its least expected.

Daly et al, (2003: 153) suggests that it will be imperative to understand the importance of organisational communication when a phenomenon such as *'globalisation, technological advances, deregulation, privatisation, mergers or acquisitions'* takes place. At any point of the process, breakdown in communication can occur. If combined with any of the abovementioned, it will force or encourage organisations to review their methods of corporate communication with their most important stakeholders, their staff. That said it might be a wrong assumption that organisations, in practice recognise their staff as potential stakeholders for the business.

In the words of Kaplan (1964), the study of methodology will help us understand the process. It could be that organisations do not take time-out to understand why they do things in a specific way, which is undertaken by default, and accepted as the norm. Handy (1995) suggests that organisations can be less responsive and capable of dealing with changing environments. Tukiainen (2001: 50) supports Handy's theory, stating that organisations will be unable to appraise the phenomenon *'of their own community'*. This might explain why organisations are unable to recognise their internal environment. That said, it is uncertain who (HR or senior management) within the realm of the organisation should have the responsibility for recognising these changes. Tukiainen (2001) claims that this could '*tell a lot about the management* [and] *the structure of the organisation'* (p. 51) and whether it *'enhances or prevents'* (p. 51) communication to take place. Tukiainen also argues that the nature of the structure could affect the flow and timing of communication that is made available to staff. As such, this could reveal the managements *'way of making decisions and [their] communicative'* (Tukiainen, 2001: 49) style.

The structure of the organisation will tell whether management encourages *'participation from* [their] *employees'* (Elving, 2005: 130). It will be important to define participation as individuals will have their own interpretation of their supposedly involvement in making decisions. Kelly (2000: 99) supports this and believes that contribution from staff will *'increase trust and encourage co-operation'* and improve communication within the

organisation. That said, Hoogervorst et al, (2004: 299) believed that this needs *'trust and integrity'* from leaders to prevent *'cynicism among [their] employees*' (p. 288). If not, then it could feasibly cause unforeseen *'problems within the organisation'* (King, 2000: 12). Still, for many, the *'environment in which an organisation operates [can help] to determine'* (Wilson, 2001: 359) how things are done around here *(*Drennan, 1992). Deal and Kennedy (1982) argue that this could dominate and influence the values of the organisation. April (1997) points out that these values will not always be congruent to what the employees wanted, felt or desired. Gould-William (2004: 65) supports April (1997) claiming that company values will be *'designed to meet the needs of the organisation rather than the employee'.*   If this is true, the values can be beneficial for the organisation to obtain a *'positive outcome'* (Huselid, 1995: 644) rather than all parties (staff) experiencing the benefits.

Research on communication in organisations has provided an ample body of knowledge to recognise and seek to overcome internal barriers, such as *'rumours and resistance'* (Elving, 2005: 129). Berger and Luckmann (1966) believe that other factors can affect the internal settings such as structures and actions, including decisions undertaken by individuals. April, (1999) argues that this fragmented approach will create *'barriers between each other'* (p. 233), if it does not go beyond self-interest and individual viewpoints. Zuboff (1988) supports the claim that this could affect the atmosphere, making it less open between management and staff creating those within *'prisoners of* [their own] *organisational'* (p. 394) boundaries.

Effective organisational communication should be an important *'integrative part'* (Elving, 2005: 130) of any organisation. According to Daly et al, (2003), internal communication will be important *'together with the value and emotional significance attached'* (Tajfel, 1978: 63) in the way in which organisations and employees contribute in shaping the built environment (Greed, 1997). Hall and Seibert (1992) propose that the crafting of the internal environment could help create the framework that influences organisational behaviour and the development of individuals within them. Dainty et al, (2000: 241) argues that further investigation might be required to gain a *'holistic understanding of the*[se] *influences'* which are *'intertwined within the fabric'* (p. 248) of the organisation. Further consideration may need to be taken into account, as these internal influences will have different components (perceptions by the respective individual(s) involved),which can make it difficult to interpret their true meaning. However, Kelly (2000) believes that it will take more than the ability to recognise and align the

divergences between their management views and attitudes with the views and attitudes of others. However, Micheals (2003) points out that the challenges *'in order to achieve* [the organisations] *goals'* (para. 15).   That said, Kouzes and Posner (1995) emphasises that it will differentiate the organisation from all other organisations.

4.1.4 Conceptual Framework

An overview of the main theories, models and concepts relating to organisational communication is appraised in this section to allow the reader full engagement with the initial conceptual framework.   The underlying conceptual framework relates to the question of organisational communication.   The framework will offer the opportunity to visualise the linkages between the key concepts.   In the current discussions, the two key influences of interest associated with organisational communication are:

- Trust
- Organisational Culture

Communication is a reflection of an organisation's culture and as such, can affect it. Griffin and Pustay (2005: 85) define culture as a   *'collection of values, beliefs, behaviours, customs and attitudes'*.   The main factors of culture will be the language, communication, religion, social structure, values, and attitudes.   These elements will be interpreted in various ways according to the individual, which could change the microenvironment for individuals to trust each other if felt manipulated by a dominate majority.

According to McKenna (1994), organisational culture can be as important an issue in the 1990's as it was in the 1980's.   As a reminder, culture will refer to the norms, values and beliefs within an organisation (Holloway, 1991), which can influence on the management style.   However, Torrington et al. (1989) states that a culture within an organisation can be changed once management fully understand it.   Whereas Holloway (1991) takes this theory further by claiming that, *'the only thing of real importance that leaders [can] do is to create and manage culture.'*   Morgan (1986) argues that this does not mean that culture can be controlled.   It is believed and accepted that a set of beliefs can be established to improve or secure organisational effectiveness.   Harris and Hartman (1992) believe that an ideal culture will contain the following characteristics:

- People who have to live with them make decisions at the appropriate level;

- the organisation is supportive of the needs of its employees;
- superiors and subordinates have high levels of trust and confidence in each other;
- co-operation and teamwork exists at all levels;
- messages move upward, downward or across depending on information needs;
- subordinates accept downward communication with an open mind; and
- individuals speak with pride about themselves and their employer.

It is believed that an organisation can compare its own prevailing culture against the these characteristics and identify any gaps. Prewitt (2003) argue that this would be challenging for larger organisations that function in multiple sites across numerous cities or countries. For Davenport and Prusak (1997), they report on the importance of a common language for building trust and the role that trust will play in facilitating the culture. Several authors (Pillai et al., 1999; Gillespie and Mann, 2000; Tzafrir et al, 2004) discuss the need to create an atmosphere of trust where individuals can share and converse openly without fear of punishment.   Whereas Argyris (1996) argues that, a lack of trust can represent a significant barrier for an organisation.

Cultures can influence an individual's perception, communication and behavioural style. Hall states that *'culture is communication and communication is culture'* (1976: 54) reinforcing that the two elements are deeply entwined. Guirdham (1995) supports Hall (1976) pointing out that communication and culture can be closely connected. Martins and Terblanche (2003: 67) recognise organisational culture will be *'a critical factor in the success of any organisation.'* It would be true to say that *'management practices regarding walk the talk'* (Hoogervorst et al, 2004: 301) could be paramount in creating the right ambience to *'determine employee*[s] *behaviour'* (p. 289), as well as *'management styles'* (Daly et al, 2003: 155) within an organisation. Weick (1994: 72*) suggests* that *'individuals may come and go, but organisations preserve knowledge, behaviours, mental maps, norms, and values over time'.* However, the impact on organisations when individuals leave can be good. It can also have a damaging affect on those who remain increasing the *'possibility of inconsistency'* (Hoogervorst et al, 2004: 296) on individuals' future behaviour in the organisation.

According to Randolph (1995) and Whetten and Cameron (1998), sharing information can raise the level of employees' trust in management. In a similar vein, Shaw (1997) and Weatherup (1997) suggest that high level-trust culture will require the encouragement of openness and minimisation of inappropriate internal behaviour.

Weick (2001: 11) claims that the actions of others can be interpreted through observation. This might imply that individuals will watch their line managers behavioural pattern and decide how they will respond. Haggett (1975) provides a good précis of the many definitions for culture:

'Culture describes patterns of behaviour that form a durable template by which ideas and images can be transferred from one generation to another or from one group to another' (p.238).

Three aspects of this definition will need further explanation. First, the transfer of behaviour may not take place through inheritance but *'instead takes place through the social interaction between members'* (Wilson, 2001: 354). Secondly, according to culture pattern theory (Benedict, 1934) the various elements of a culture can form a relatively stable harmonious system and therefore any culture template will be durable and slow to change (Wilson, 2001). Kotter and Heskett (1992) believe that culture can evolve as a result of the turnover of group members, and changes in the company's environment. This overtime could introduce a mixture of *'sub-cultural differences within* [the] *organisation's boundaries'* (Wilson, 2001: 357). Thirdly, the ideas and images of culture could provide a guide for the conduct of acceptable behaviour. That said, it could be difficult to police commitment (Metcalfe and Dick, 2000) between the different *'cultural attitudes between geographical regions as well as differences between different levels of social strata'* (Wilson, 2001: 359). Identifying acceptable behaviour could be challenging due to the different variables likely to be present within the realm of the organisation. The presence of multiple cultures (Kotter and Heskett, 1992) or subcultures (Wilson, 1997) can be associated with the different functional or geographical groups. These groups could be a series of vocational disciplines, such as human resources, engineering (mechanical & electrical and civil & structural), finance, business development, and information technology. Even the organisation's very own management board can be included. They also will have their own culture, which will be familiar to its members. Such groupings will work independently, with either limited or non-existing fertilisation across the various groupings creating unified feedback to the main senior board. As such, each group will be dependent on their historical relationships to *'reinforce their power and domination'* (Dainty et al, 1999: 246) within the hierarchy structure.

Tams and Arthur (2007: 93) raises questions about such groups and, *'the influences of such working practices'* on the remaining workforce. Van Maanan (1991) in his study of Disneyland found certain groups of employees who considered themselves as distinct. These subcultures can be related to different jobs, different levels of organisational status gender and class. Wilson (1997), in his examination of a bank found a nested set of subcultures, the dominant influence being membership of a particular service delivery team followed by the hierarchical status of the employees. What is distinctive about a certain organisation's culture can be the particular mix of sub cultural differences within its organisational boundaries. Wilson (2001) goes on to suggest that where *'conflict or sub cultural differentiation occur that it [could be] portrayed as being a weak or negative culture'* (p. 357). The assumption is also made by Wilson (2001) that organisations might be able to differentiate between weak or negative to recognise their own cultural environment. Steyn and Puth (2000) acknowledged that some chief executive's may not know enough about communication or their own culture to lead the organisation to excellence. If this is true, it could provide some explanation as to why companies fail to meet their employees' expectations.

Parasuraman et al, (1985, 1988) highlight the differences that can occur between the messages promoted, and the actions taken by their staff. Normann (1991) supports this argument. He views no other component will be more crucial to the actions of personnel and the messages they communicate than organisational culture. Wilson (2001: 353) points out that these key personnel will be *'the face of the organisation, and a company's effective use of the face is dependent on understanding the organisational culture'.* However, Schneider (1988) argues that for this practice to occur then all parties will have to share and appreciate *'what the norms and values of the organisation are'* (p. 353). Unlike Wilson (2001) and Schneider (1988), Hofstede (1984) depicts that the *'system of values and the values [of the individuals can] among the building blocks* of [an organisation's] *culture'* (p. 18). These building (or obstructive) blocks can influence perceptions, communication, and behavioural styles in the microenvironment.

Von Vergen et al. (1998) believe in the *'need to develop good working relationships'* (p. 12) with the different working groups throughout the business will aid effective communication. Kirk and Belovics (2006) supports Von Vergen et al. (1998) suggesting that this approach will *'contribute to the long-term success'* (p. 55) for the organisation. Baruch (2004: 59) also proposes that *'organisational structures, culture'* and *'coping with barriers'* (Dainty et al, 2000: 246) will be *'accumulated as a result of one's'* (Seibert and

Kraimer, 2001: 2) understanding of their environment. These barriers can be transient or emerge structurally, culturally, which might be problematic (Dainty et al, 2000). To enable organisations to improve communication and *'face [their] greater barriers'* (Tams and Arthur, 2007: 96) will be to understand how these obstructions changes the culture. They clearly believe that this will emerge by examining individuals cultural values. It is proposed that this approach might build on the assumption that cultural transmission has a pervasive psychological influence on people. Although this method can offer greater reliability it should not be underestimated the influence of other contextual variables. Cook (2006) believes that a better understanding of the microenvironment will *'encourage a more positive, inclusive working environment'* (p. 32).

Tams and Arthur (2007: 87) states that simply introducing an inclusive environment may not be enough to contribute to the success for both the *'organisation and individual*[s].*'* Elving (2005: 130) believes that it will be imperative on *'understanding the problems organisations have to face'* in seeking to improve, *'motivate or influence behaviour'* (Daft, 1997: 560) between employees and management. Kitchen (1997) highlights the fact that the type of business, size, organisational culture, and managerial style will influence the approach taken to internal communication. Kotter and Heskett (1992: 4) describes the values that can be shared by a group or management board *'tend to persist over time even when group membership changes.'* This might suggest that the senior management board's *'culture represents the behaviour patterns or style of an organisation that new employees [will be] encouraged to follow by their fellow employees'* (p. 4). However, newcomers could be in a vulnerable position because long serving employees who they have not had enough time to build a working relationship will be in a powerful position to influence them. They believe that this could be detrimental because *'each level of culture [could have] a tendency to influence the other' (*p. 4), which implies that sub-cultural environments will be inevitably*.*

Schein (1991: 9) raise the point that trained by fellow members on the *'correct way to perceive, think, and relate'* could indicate the importance placed upon organisations to create the right behavioural traits with its new recruits. Selecting the right communicators who will be recognised by the internal staff as exemplars will be important for the organisation. For instance, these identified individuals could be team leaders. Therefore, these team leaders will be important because they could be senior directors. Bearing this in mind will be vital for any organisation to consider what type of communicator (role model or potential leader) they would like managing their workforce.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & METHOD

> *'We have some very smart key personnel in the business, but they are very short-sighted. Therefore, having the right business skills are paramount…'*
> **Company H1**

4.2.1 Setting the Scene…

Since 2001, the host organisation has conducted a company-wide, web based employee survey. Therefore, to enable the host to measure their performance each year normally the same set of questions are used. However, the 2006 and 2007 survey was changed. The reason behind this will be explained later on in this document.

On initiating Document Four, it was envisaged that a questionnaire would be devised to send out within the host organisation. However, the proposed plan was changed because the organisation was about to issue their yearly company employee survey. Therefore, as the company survey would cover similar areas of interest it was imprudent to issue another questionnaire, as the likelihood is that the response rate would be low. This decision taken by me had its limitations to the amount of information that could be obtained, but it was considered an acceptable compromise by using the available secondary data.

4.2.2 The Research Questions in Focus

The research topic lends itself to a mixture of empirical, normative, and conceptual type questions. It is hoped that these questions will become more focused as the entire DBA research plan unfolds. In relation to Document Four, the following questions were explored:

1. Are Employee Staff surveys an effective and valid tool to interpret individuals' attitudes and gain an understanding to their behavioural attributes within a microenvironment?
   - Can internal discrepancies within the (multi-discipline) host organisation influence the yearly staff survey process?

2. Do the staff survey results reveal any independent variables that may affect the level of employees trust in their management?

- Are there any comparisons between the independent variables across the various UK operating companies?

3. Does the level of employees' empowerment influence the trust in their management?

4. Do the staff survey results provide insight into how the organisation can improve communication within its internal environment?

It is hoped that as this document unfolds, it will become evident to the reader that quantitative data can be interpreted within the wider environment and that the research question can be observed as suitable for structured, survey-based research.

4.2.3 The Research Method used within the Study

The research method used within the study is related to the inductive tradition, but this would be an over-generalisation to categorise it solely in this way. Primarily, the study is based upon the survey method, as a standardised questionnaire been applied to allow for comparison of data. There are some advantages and disadvantages of using purely quantitative methods, but the main advantage appears to be the reliance upon maintaining the conventional scientific world of reliance upon what is taken to be empirical objectivity. This will be achieved by focusing upon the research process and its outcomes, rather than my own position. The study can been seen as grounded theory with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) definition which will allow the process to emerge out of the research material rather than being forced out by the use of predetermined ideas or theories.

The process adopted to collect the results of the host organisation's staff survey questionnaires was carried out by a request to the UK HR Manager and subsequently, the UK Training Manager. However, the initial approach did not work and an alternative method had to be sort.   A direct appeal to all the managing directors to approve for the data to be released to me and authorising their HR personnel to provide the necessary assistance.   That said, the HR personnel were able to control the contents released to me. In this respect, I did not have the authority to challenge or demand additional data and therefore, had to be appreciative on their willingness to supply the data within the requested time frame. From the variables identified within the staff survey results and the subsequent management concepts, the relationship between the two theories is

investigated. The direction of influence, the casual relationship between sets of variables is explained, correlations are tested to gain a more distinct view of the relationship. Adopting a quantitative and qualitative provided a multi-method approach. This process will allow for triangulation to take place, recognising that each method has its own unique profile of strengths and weaknesses This will help to counter-balance the effects and hopefully lead to more robust conclusions.

4.2.4 Sample Size and Response Rate

For the purpose of this paper, the sample size was 2,526 staff between Company B1 and Company E1. The response rates are as follows:

Company B1

- 83% of staff (1,734 out of 2,084) completed the survey. The response rate had improved from the previous year, which stood at 76%.

Company E1

- 75% of staff (331 out of 442) completed the staff survey. The same ratio was also recorded in 2006.

4.2.5 Shortcomings of the Research Method

As with any research, the setting for the empirical analysis must be identified, including the approach used to assess the application in an attempt to achieve a better understanding of the results. Keefe (2005: 43) claim that good quality surveys should probe how staff feel and why they feel it. They can be '*extraordinarily powerful'* tools to use, if it is the only communicational method used to reach all their staff. However, when organisations do not survey the workforce, it could be hard to understand the reasons why staff might be optimistic, or in some cases pessimistic towards the organisation. Surveys can be viewed as a key element in encouraging *'dialogue between employer and employee'* (Keefe, 2005: 43). It could be argued that it should not be the only formation of communication to staff, which may be a yearly exercise. This will be important for companies with multi-office locations to have other means of communicating with their staff.

It is important for organisations to have clarity in the beginning about why they are going down the survey route because when they receive the results they can be floundering. That said it would be paramount for management to communicate to staff the rationale

for taking such measures, their objective upon receiving the results, and feedback to staff. Kelly (2000) suggest that management will need to ensure their own perceptions do not cloud their judgment on *'how [they] perceive people, their motives, and intentions'* (p. 96). Daly et al (2003) argue that this could easily influence how staff might perceive management will feedback positive or negative findings. Organisations the world over will have a reason for introducing a survey, like: *'we think the culture is not that great here and we want to know why'* or '*we think everything is just dandy!*' However, to address these concerns and any others that may be relevant to the organisation it will be important for management to understand and know how to tap into the *'hearts and minds'* of their staff.

Authors like Huselid, (1995), Delaney and Huselid, (1996), and Guest, (1997) recommend managers should focus *'on those practices* [or even concerns] *that tap employee motivation and direct individual behaviour towards the achievement of organisational goals.'* Arthur (1994) argues to fulfil this will require *'develop*[ing] *committed employees who can be trusted to use their discretion'* (p. 672), and *'serve to strengthen rather – than weaken – management control'* (Marchington and Grugulis, 2000: 1110). Gould-Williams (2004) believe that surveys can be *'designed to meet the needs of the organisation rather than the employee'* (p. 63). He states that conducting a staff survey may provide the views of employees *'perceptions of management'* (p. 63), and possibly reveal their commitment level towards the organisational goals. Even if we might accept this *'nice rhetoric but harsh realities'* (Marchington and Grugulis, 2000: 1005, 1109) it can still create a sense of importance around it, making it more than just a one-off event. It is perceived that surveys may be a credible channel for gathering employee opinions.

4.3 ANALYSISES & DISCUSSIONS

> *'I asked a business unit director to encourage more cross-selling with one of his team leader's, and was told not to make any unnecessary waves…'*
> **Company B1A - SA**

4.3.1 The Host's Employee Survey – Questionnaire Structure

The host's employee survey focuses on five areas. They are as follows:

- Organisational support;
- personal work situation;
- teamwork / knowledge sharing ***;
- empowerment ***; and
- leadership ***.

For the purpose of Document Four the themes marked with an (*) were chosen for further analysis to demonstrate a relationship between the concepts identified in Document Three, which were: trust, structure and history. An external company called Company ABC based in Sweden conducted the 2007 Employee survey.

Anonymity

Prior to completing the yearly staff survey it is made clear that *'all submissions will be treated anonymously'*. However, respondents are required to use their individual login details to fill-in the web-based questionnaire, which also includes completing the following compulsory information:

- Company
- Office location
- Grade
- Role
- Age
- Gender
- Length of service

Whilst it is uncertain whether respondents' details are used the idea of anonymity might be lost, which could influence the response rate. Within the 3-weeks period, regular

reminders may be sent only to non-respondents who have not completed the web-based questionnaire. That said, the anonymity protection will be false, and could cause the potential of not generating a meaningful and sincere set of results.

Statistical Analysis

An appropriate statistical technique was selected to analyse the survey data and address the research questions. The primary concern was to establish the strength of relationships between the selected variables, and a parametric technique used in the analysis of the data. This was undertaken by inputting the data using the built-in analytical features of Microsoft Excel. Notably, the Pearson's correlation function was chosen to explore the strength or relationship that would link certain variables. In strict statistical terms, Pearson's correlation is designed to interpret free-range responses rather than step responses such as a scale of 1 to 5. However, in practical terms the type of analysis used will still provide a valid interpretation of the results.

4.3.2 Human Capital Management Statistics

The host has invested in a single standardised Human resource database programme (Snowdrop) used in conjunction with a report-writing tool (Crystal) to run a variety of management reports. According to the UK Training Manager,

'Each company, including [Company E1] must run standard reports each year for [Company B1].' (April 2008)

However, the HR consultant for Company E1 later explained that,

'Each company uses 'Snowdrop' and 'Crystal' programme to analyse their information differently on the areas they monitor within their respective company.' (April 2008)

Later in Document Four, the abovementioned statement will reveal how this diverse approach taken by each of the companies can hinder the host organisation. The HR advisor for Company B1A supported the statement, and explained the reason for the lack of information provided. She stated that,

'Problems tend to occur when trying to retrieve historical data. It can be a hit and miss effort with high % of inaccurate information produced.' (April 2008)

Therefore, because there is no common platform to accumulate data inconsistency can occur. Given these weaknesses, some of the demographic data have not been used in the analysis, which is reported in this paper.

Comparison between Company B1 and Company E1

In order to make some comparisons between Company B1 and Company E1, four companies were investigated separately. They were Company B1A, Company B1B, Company B1C, and Company E1. These companies were chosen because they provided the following historical statistics from their HR database to undertake further investigative work. The other companies promised to provide the information but after several weeks, and numerous reminders nothing materialised.

Staff Turnover (2005 – 2007)

Company B1A: At the end of 2005, the company had a 13% voluntary staff turnover, which rose to 14% by December 2006. By 2007, the figure had increased to 15%. However, the HR director for Company B1A revealed that the figure was closer to 18%. She confirmed that,

'In 2007, there were 116 (graduates) voluntary leavers against a total of 156 leavers. The graduates' turnover in 2007 was 18%. This figure was higher than Company B1A's turnover as a whole and in contrast to 2006, which was almost 4%.' (May 2008)

The above statement challenged the total staff turnover for the company, which suggests that the turnover to be much higher than previously collated by the HR database.

Company B1B's voluntary staff turnover was higher than Company B1A in 2005, with a year-end turnover of 20%. Company B1B were able to improve their staff turnover from 17% (2006), to 12% by the end of 2007.

Company B1C's voluntary staff turnover was 14%. However, in 2006, the number increased to 18%, and remained unchanged the following year.

Company E1 experienced a 15% staff turnover, which rose (2006) to 20%[1]. By the end of 2007, Company E1's voluntary staff turnover within the UK had risen to 21%. This was not a good result for the business, and actions were being taken by the senior management board to seek to reduce the turnover for 2008. However, this year (2008) would be significant for the business because if the numbers have not improved by the year-end it could indicate further problems for the senior management board to resolve.

A further appeal was made to the four companies for additional breakdown information of voluntary turnover by skills levels, age, gender, and length of service. It was advised by the HR personnel (within each company) that the request was too long and complicated. However, only Company E1 attempted to produce the reports, but it seemed to be an impossible task. Therefore, no further assessment could be undertaken in this section.

In addition, the results from the questionnaires cited a number of other questions, which proposed a number of connections between the various responses could connect to the initial hypotheses. To explore this further a number of relationships were tested to determine which of these independent variables provided the strongest influence within the host organisation. Therefore, the Pearson's Correlation was used to evaluate, and explain the *'strength of linear relationships between two variables'* (Buglear, 2005:232), and inter-relationships among a number of variables. These hypotheses were based on assumptions that most, if not all, respondents would have experienced which could stimulus how trust can be put into practice, and hindered within the organisation. In reality, this could be the case if the different responses and potential internal influencing factors involved; all of which will be revealed as the analysis unfolds.

The first to be assessed was the possible link between staff turnover and the size of the various businesses. The results are presented in Table 3. There is a small but strong positive connection between staff turnover and the size of the relevant business. The analysis shows this is stronger with the female gender within Company B1 (Company B1A, and Company B1C) over the 3-year period.

	2005			**2006**			**2007**		
	Staff Turnover	**Age (M)**	**Age (F)**	**Staff Turnover**	**Age (M)**	**Age (F)**	**Staff Turnover**	**Age (M)**	**Age (F)**
Company B1A	13%	-	-	14%	-	-	15%	-0.877	0.982
Company B1C	14%	-0.507	0.651	18%	-0.877	0.982	18%	-0.864	-0.948

[1] A senior director confirmed that the staff turnover was in the region of 25%+ and not 20% as stated in the report.

Company B1B	18%	-0.999	**-0.878**		17%	-0.969	**-0.5**		12%	-0.969	**-0.5**
Company E1	15%	**-0.892**	-0.125		20%	-0.996	-0.138		21%	-0.982	**-0.607**

Table 3 Association between Size of the Business and Staff Turnover

During 2005 to 2006, Company B1C progressed from moderate (*r* = 0.651) to strong positive (*r* = 0.982). In 2007, this positioning reversed to strong negative (*r* = -0.948). According to their human capital management statistics provided they recruited more females, (17%) compared to males. Company B1C lost -74% of its female workforce, and increased its male workforce by 48%. It is assumed that there were a series of internal factors to affect only the female workforce rather than the male gender the 3-year period. This could have been due to the lack of promotional opportunities, transfer to another company, marital life, and motherhood.

However, this was not the case for Company B1B and Company E1 implicating that there was no relationship between the size of the business and staff turnover, and perhaps other factors could be influencing the staff turnover, which are explored later in this paper.

Length of Service

Company B1A: At the time of the request, no specific information was available as to the length of service of employees. Therefore, it was not possible to compare respondents within the total population. According to the HR director, Company B1A:

'As a person's length of service increases, the risk of them leaving decreases. During 2007, only 24 leavers had more than 5 years service. However, this is set in the context of our employee profile; 33% of the organisation has more than 5 years service, therefore this turnover figure represents c. 9% of the headcount in this range. In contrast, 53 people who left in 2007 had less than 2 years service, this accounts for 45.7% of leavers. However, nearly 40% of Company B1A employees have less than 2 years service, therefore the turnover figure in this range is 16.7%. This represents a significant risk and cost to the business as the return on investment increases with length of service.' (May 2008)

Company B1B experienced a positive result retaining staff with less than 2 years service by 100%. This grouping was the only fortunate one for the company. However, the results were disappointing for those who had served more than 2-years with

Company B1B. The findings suggest that as employees length of service increases their retention to remain with the company declines. For instance, staff who had between 2-4 years service, their retention figure reduced by -33%; staff who had 5-9 years service, declined by -34%; and staff with 10-14 years service, decreased by -35%. It is assumed that those with 20+ years service were likely to be reaching retirement age, and as a result, it is anticipated within the service bracket a high volume of leavers. Over the 3-year period, the company had repeatedly experienced a decrease number of staff after completing 2 years with the company.

Company B1C experienced a major loss -83% of staff with less than 2 years service. In spite of this, those who had served 2-4 years rose by 44%, and between 5-9 years by 115%. No additional information was provided for staff with 10+ year's service.
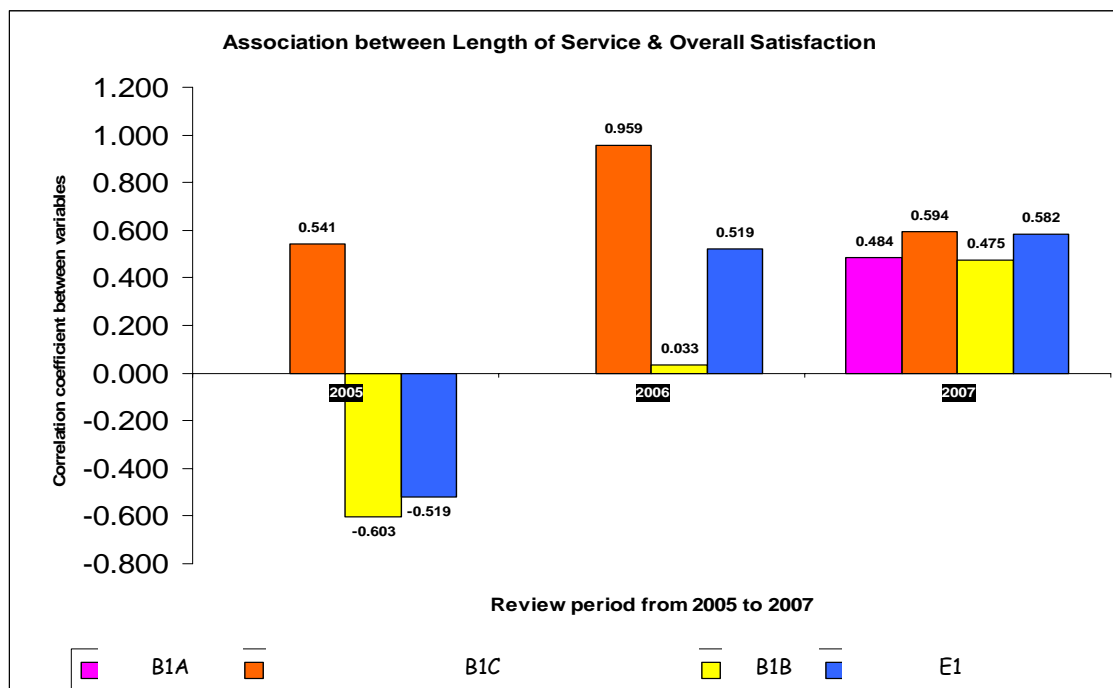
Company E1

At the end of 2006, Company E1 had experienced a 24% drop in retention of staff for the first 2 years of their employment. The company managed to bridge the gap by recovering 10% of its staff. In total, 16% of staff left in the first 2 years of their employment. This category seems to be the key problem for the company. Further investigative research would be required to understand why this particular set experienced the highest turnover of staff. The next bracket 2 – 4 years was very low with a 3% growth. However, the set managed to expand over the length of time with a positive 88% increase. In addition, those who served between 5–9 years did slightly better with a 10% improvement. There had been continuous growth over the 3-year period, which enhanced to 97%. Once more, the 2-year service appears to be the primary problem for the organisation.

A variety of internal factors could have provided the ingredients for many to depart so soon after commencing with Company E1. According to the director for the Midlands:

'Management had made promises during the year, which were not fulfilled for one reason or another. Training development and excellent salary increases were promised to all staff. To the end, neither of these came to fruition. This influenced the timely delivery of the yearly staff survey because staff morale was already low.' (October 2007)

Some of these individuals may easily have been young graduates (under the age of 24) out of university who represented a decrease of 41% leaving the business. It is assumed that these individuals may have been disillusioned by unfulfilled promises.

It was important to establish whether there was a relationship, if any, between length of service and the overall satisfaction of staff within the host organisation, and would it explain why the host was experiencing a retention problem. Chart 1 reveals a positive link between length of service, and overall satisfaction. During 2006 and 2007, the relationship was more apparent. In 2006, Company B1C encountered its strongest link ($r = 0.959$), which indicated something took place to influence a number of employees with less than 2-years service to leave the company. Company B1C was the only company to experience a continuous positive linkage over the 3-year period. In 2007, all the UK companies were subjected to staffing problems.

Chart 1 Association between Length of Service & Overall Satisfaction

In the case of Company E1, the following statement could explain why the organisation experienced such concern in the year:

'In 2006, the UK business experienced financial difficulty. When any part of the global business does not reach its target – the UK business has to cover that financial gap. This was a major problem for the business. All UK personnel were put under extreme

pressure to help bridge the gap. However, once the problem was resolved – there was no reward on offer for the staff hard work.'

<div align="right">Director – Midlands (October, 2007)</div>

It seems that false assurances were made to staff to go the extra mile on the pretence that they would be rewarded for their hard work at the end of the year. Therefore, if these promises turned out to be untrue, and were not fulfilled this could have created problems for the organisation, and thus formulate a workforce not willing to trust any communication from its management board. In these circumstances, it would take time to rebuild the trust between management and staff.

However, Chart 2 indicates that there were no connections between length of service and the various skills level within the host organisation, signifying that other factors might have been influencing the internal environment. Company E1 was the only company to show a positive ($r = 0.215$), though small, association between length of service and skills level. This was not significant to influence the business. The next set of variables will provide some further insight.
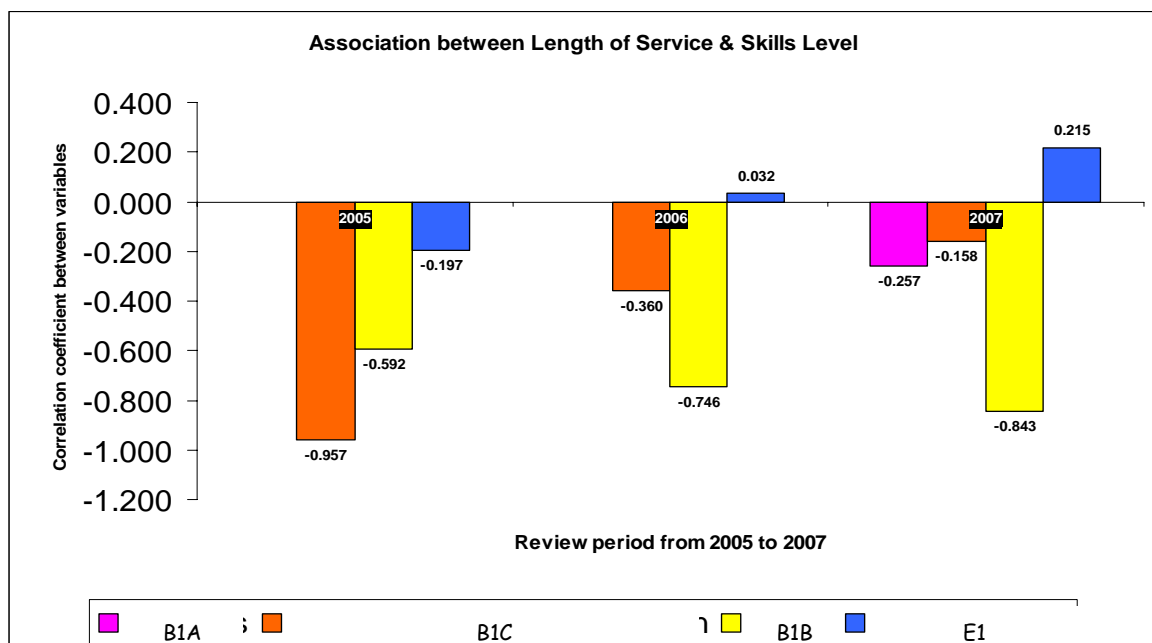
Chart 2 Association between Length of Service & Skills Level

Gender and Age

Company B1A – At the time of the request, no specific information was available as to the make-up and age of employees within the operating company. Therefore, it was not possible to compare respondents with the total population.

Company B1B increased the number of staff under the age of 24 years – male by 19%, and female up 80%. However, it is unknown whether the increase is an improvement or not. That said this group steadily grew over the 3-year period. Although between 25–29 age group the numbers declined, male 28%, and female 57%. The number of staff continued to dwindle with the majority being females. The 30–34 group saw a -17% decrease for the males, and -47% for females. The 40–44 band experienced a similar depletion of staff – 46% of females, and 14% male. However, the 35–39 and 40–44 grouping saw a reduction of around -28% of male, and 17% for females in the organisation.

Company B1C did slightly better than Company B1B. For the second successive year the 24 and under group showed mixed results – male gender rose 48%, while females reduced by -74%. Over the 3-year period, the company retained 35% of the male workforce, but lost -70% of the female staff. The 25–29 set experienced the largest growth with 88% male, and 200% female. The 35–39 group rose with 11% male, and 78% female. The remainder of the groups showed a reduction. The worse being the 40–44 group, which lost -43% of females, and -2% males. The 30–34 grouping declined by -6% men, and -30% female. Between 2005 and 2007, the company grew its male counterparts by 30%, and lost -60% of its females. No further data was provided for the 45+ grouping.

Company E1

During 2005 and 2007, the company lost 12% of its male workforce under 24 years of age compared to 20% of it females in the same category. Unfortunately, the workforce reduced for both genders over the 3 years. The male group lost a staggering 48%, and the female group 11%. This was not the only age group to lose personnel. Within the 25–29 years of age group, the male workforce lost 5% of its staff, while the female group increased by 29%. For the duration of the 3-years, the organisation lost 14% of the male gender and increased the females by 50%. The 30–34 years of age group experienced a flux of activity for both genders. The males had diminished by 13%, whilst the females increased their staffing levels by 31%. Although between 2005 and 2006, the male

gender experienced a positive intake within this group of 9%. This unfortunately did not compensate for the full period and declined 5%. The females came out positive with 41% for Company E1.

On a positive note the 35–39 years age group experienced a relatively stable staffing level improvement in numbers. The male gender grew by 21% and the female counterparts by 17%, which equated to a growth of 60% for the men and 100% for the females over the 3-year period. Similar developments were experienced in the 40-44 and 45-49 age category for both genders in the organisation.

Chart 3 shows a strong positive correlation between length of service by age and gender. Company B1C had the strongest link ($r = 0.957$) (females) over the 3-year period. It is clear from the results that age and gender was a strong factor on whether individuals remained with the host organisation. This was certainly the case for Company B1C losing 74% of its female's workforce under the age of 24-years, and with less than 2-years service. However, in 2007, the (female) relationship weakened ($r = -0.297$) suggesting other factors had altered the reasoning for female staff leaving.
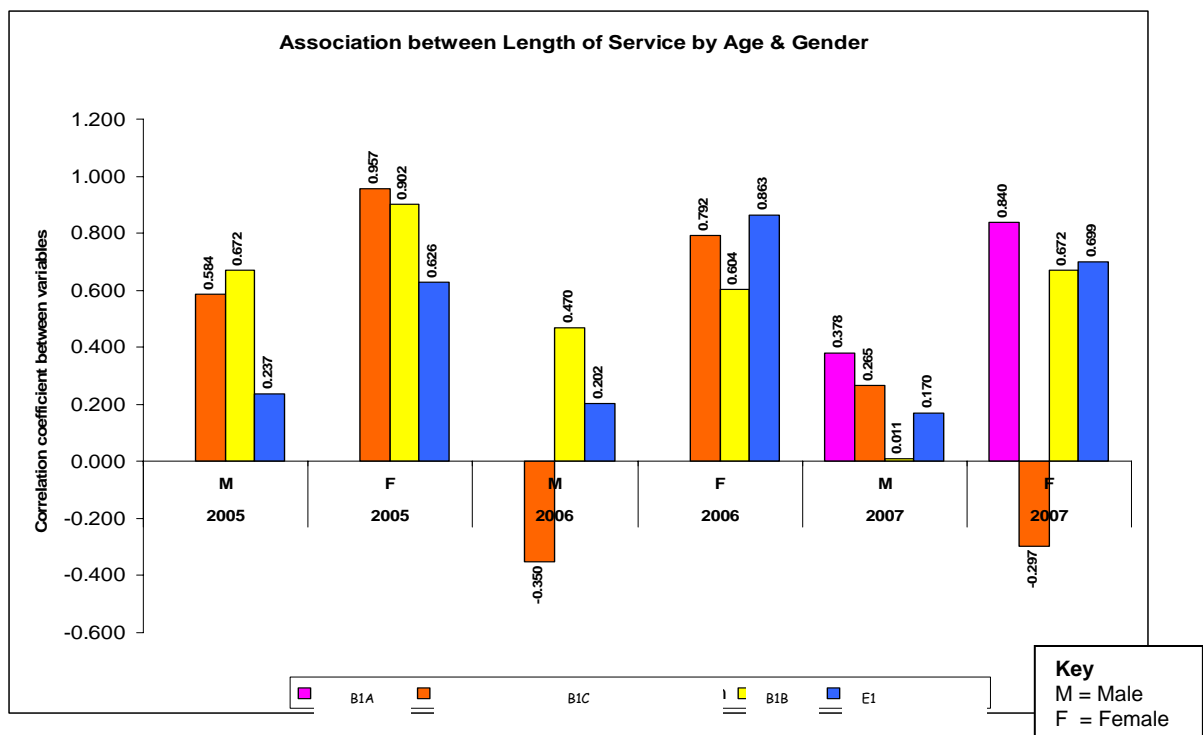

Chart 3 Association between Length of Service by Age & Gender

Similarly, Company B1B and Company E1 maintained a strong (r = 0.902) to moderate (r = 0.604) positive link through the duration. Again, this was with its female workforce demonstrating a gender retention problem. The next section looks at the skills levels within the host.

Discipline by Skills Levels

Between 2005 and 2007, the largest UK company**, Company B1A** maintained a steady increase across the majority of its skills level. The number of employees between technical directors and senior engineers rose on average by 6%. Over the 3–year period, the figure had grown by 16%. However, principal engineers and undergraduate engineers declined by 33%. Similarly, CAD technicians[2] were reduced by 28% and business support[3] by 26%. Only the graduate group went through a continuous increase of 50% over each year. Overall, within the 3-year period the company had increased their workforce by 32%.

Company B1B went through a difficult period suffering losses between associate directors to business support. The business saw its biggest loss 40% of its graduates. From a recruitment perspective, this could have been a major retention failure for the senior management board. During 2005 and 2006, the workforce reduced by 23%. In comparison to 2006, Company B1B made a reasonable recovery in the following year. However, this did not appear to resolve 2006's results instead it only exacerbated the situation. The majority of the senior levels (associates to senior technical directors) showed good recovery with positive increase around c. 21%. Whereas senior engineers made a substantial turnaround from -30% in 2006, to 28% growth. Over the duration, the company had not completely recovered and continued to experience a skills shortage of -9%. Other levels showed no improvement and continued to reduce in numbers. For example, the 'principle engineers' group was reviewed and showed that in 2006, the figure stood at -33%. By 2007, this number dropped to -19%, and over the course had lost -46% of its staff. The engineers experienced a similar fate. In 2006, the set had depleted by -26%, and by the end of 2007, had reduced to 14%. Over time this particular skills level had reduced by -36%. The same occurrence took place for graduates; their numbers continually diminished from year (-40%, 2006) on year (-3%, 2007). Over the period they had reduced to -42%. That said, by the end of 2007, the company increased by 4%, but over time had endured a -20% decrease in its workforce.

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[2] In 2006, Company B1A were involved in a cost-saving initiative sending work over to India to be completed. This project was revoked a year later due to quality issues.
[3] Business Support includes administration, business development & marketing, legal, and clerk of works.

Company B1C endured similar difficulty like Company B1B. The company lost a staggering 60% of its associate directors within the year, but it is uncertain why this figure was so high. It is assumed that the company went through a re-structuring exercise. However, the HR team did not confirm this. If the figure accounted for voluntary turnover it could have been damaging for the company. Therefore, it is believed the turnover figures provided, and shown in Table 3 may be inaccurate. To make matters worse the number of engineers dwindled by 44%; principal engineers, -37%; and senior engineers -21%. On a positive note, the graduates and the business support group jointly strengthened by 49%. Within the period the company's skill levels had reduced by 25%.

During 2005 and 2007, **Company E1** maintained a steady increase across its four-discipline skills level, which were:

- Business leaders;
- project leaders;
- engineers / technicians; and
- business support.

During the abovementioned period, the senior level (business leaders, which includes the managing director, senior directors, and technical directors) increased 36%. The project leaders grew at a higher rate of 39%. However, engineers / technicians and business support experienced a slight downturn of 3%. At the end of 2007, the business support level increased by 32% compared to -3% the previous year. Over time, this particular level grew by 29%. Between 2005 and 2007, the company saw a 7.5% increase in staffing levels across all the disciplines with an overall increase of 17% over the 3 years.

As previously shown in Chart 3, there is a clear strong positive link between the length of service of employees by age and gender. However, altering the variables might have provided a different story, which is shown in Chart 4. This demonstrated the skills level had a negative connection to employees' length of service. In 2005, Company B1C received the strongest negative ($r = -0.957$) result. This figure reduced considerably in 2007, by ($r = -0.158$), which revealed this could be a concern for the business, especially as Company B1C had experienced serious losses amongst its various skills level.
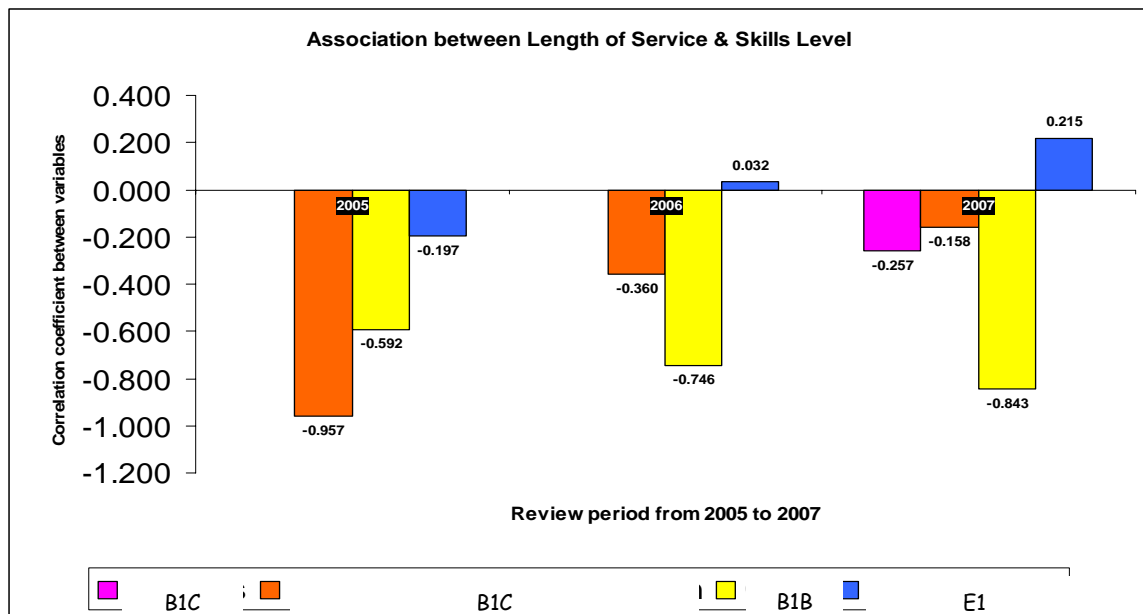
Chart 4 Association between Length of Service & Skills Level

In the same period (2005), Company B1B encountered a negative result scoring a weak (r = -0.592) link, and by the end of 2007, had increased to a moderate (r = -0.843) negative. However, Company E1 showed a connection although minor (r = 0.032) in 2006, which rose to (r = 0.215) in 2007. However, altering the variables reveals another story, which is shown in Chart 5.

Chart 5 shows there is a moderate correlation between the skills level by age and gender. In 2005, Company E1 was the only company to maintain a positive link, although minor (r = 0.257), and by the end of 2006, had increased to a moderate (r = 0.743) link.   The strongest relationship was demonstrated by the male gender. The female gender made only a significant impact to the business in 2007, with a weak (r = 0.560) positive link.   In addition, this can illustrate a retention problem of the respective skills according to the gender. These findings supports Chart 4 (Length of Service by Age & Gender), which corroborated that the business was experiencing retention problems with staff leaving before or after 2-years service.

For Company B1A, Chart 5 will illustrate a positive (r = 0.201), though small connection for the male gender in 2007, but this is not significant to impact on the business.
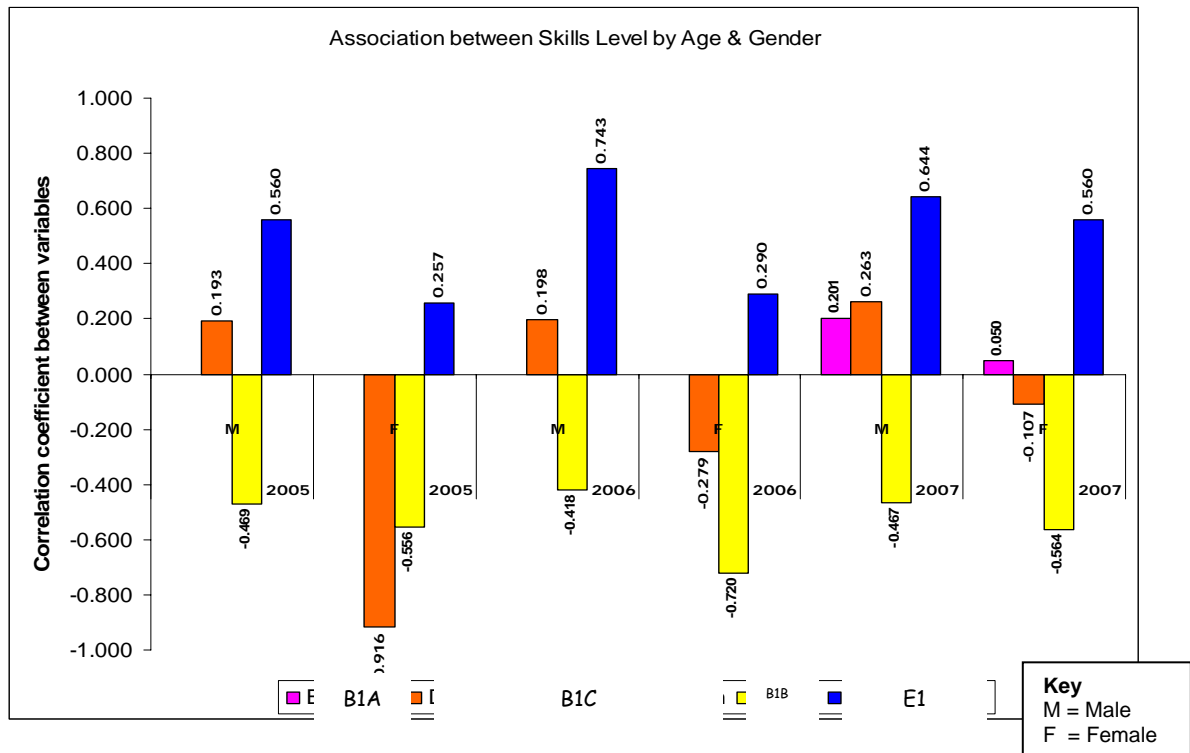
Chart 5 Association between Skills Level by Age & Gender

Similarly, Company B1C had a weak positive link ranging from (r = 0.193) in 2005, which rose to (r = 0.263) at the end of 2007, for the male gender, which was a factor for staff to leave the company. This was not the case for the female gender. In 2005, this group shows a strong (r = -0.916) negative association between skills level by gender and age. However, by the end of 2007, the association between the two variables had decrease to a weak (r = -0.107) link. Chart 4 strengthens the results that Company B1C has a female-age retention problem, which suggests that other internal factors might be influencing the females to leave the company.

Company B1B is the only company to show a negative association between skills level by age and gender over the 3-year period. Both genders maintained a negative score which ranged from weak (r = -0.418) in 2005, to moderate (r = -0.720), in 2007, suggesting that other factors are the cause of the staff retention.

Overall findings from Pearson Correlation

Following the various variable testing, the strongest relationships for the host organisation were:

- Overall satisfaction by length of service;
- length of service by age & gender; and

- skills level by age & gender.

The next stage of the analysis was to compare these against the results from the Staff Employee Survey, 2007. It was important to undertake further comparisons between the abovementioned, and other variables identified in the survey results.

4.3.3 The Results of the Employee Survey, 2007

<u>What</u> <u>Environment</u> <u>do</u> <u>Company</u> <u>A1</u> <u>Employees</u> <u>Meet</u> <u>–</u> <u>Satisfaction</u> <u>or</u> <u>Motivational?</u>

At the outset, the Company ABC strategic report sets the scene in providing a Tri*M Typology matrix (Appendix 1), which was used to interpret if employees were satisfied and / or motivated in their working environment. Chart 6 (Company B1), and Chart 7 (Company E1) reveals that the host organisation experienced a diversity of working environments, which could have influenced the UK, and the global business.
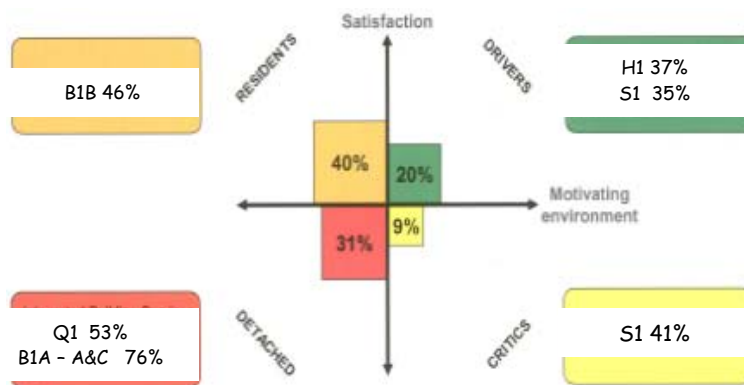
Chart 6 What climate do the employees meet: Company B1, 2007

Company B1

As previously mentioned, Appendix 1 explains the symbols (residents, drivers, detached, and critics) used to categorise the various divisions within the host organisation.

Chart 6, shows the UK results against the four-abovementioned indicators. The largest segment is the 'residents' area containing 40% of the overall UK results. This section suggests that employees are satisfied with their circumstances, but are not motivated by their working environment. That said, Company B1B was the only company, with a score of 46% to be based in the 'residents' segment.

The second highest fragment is the 'detached' area with a score of 31%. This group indicates that employees appears to be unsatisfied with their working environment, and might be detached from the company. Two divisions reside in this section, which are Company S1[4] (76%), and Company Q1 (53%). Their results may show employees feel unfulfilled within their working environment. The third grouping is the drivers with a UK total of 20%. This set shows that individuals will understand and connect with the corporate goals, and might be loyal towards the company. This segment consists of Company H1 (37%), and Company S1 (35%), which might demonstrate a strong motivational working environment for employees. The final grouping of the matrix is the 'critics' with a UK score of 9%. Although employees might be supportive of the competitive nature of the working environment, they may not willing to accept it on a personal level and therefore can be critical. Company S1 (41%) was the only division to occupy this last piece, and the only company to be represented over two areas ('drivers' and 'critics'). However, not all the UK companies were shown in the above matrix. Companies B1A and B1C were not mentioned. It is unusual that these two companies results were not made known. The training manager did not provide an explanation for this variance and lack of transparency across the whole of the UK business.

Company E1

Chart 7 reveals the largest number of business units were located in the *'critics'* section, which included Company E1, Company T1, Company K1, Company V1, and Company U1[5].

Chart 7 What climate do the employees meet: Company E1, 2007

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[4] A new acquisition for Company A1, June 2007.
[5] A new acquisition for Company E1, May 2007

Company E1G is a new acquisition to the portfolio. These results should be of concern to Company A1. It would be important to find out what created the perception for this new workforce. The second cluster, the *'residents'* segment, contains Company E1, Company E1E, Company T1, and Company P1. Even though this group will be satisfied with their situation, their working environment may not motivate them. The only positive group was the drivers. This portion consists of Company V1, Company P1, Company K1, and Company E1. It will be critical for the conglomerate business to research the various business units because it could influence the UK business. Although the UK business is the only company to reside within all four segments.
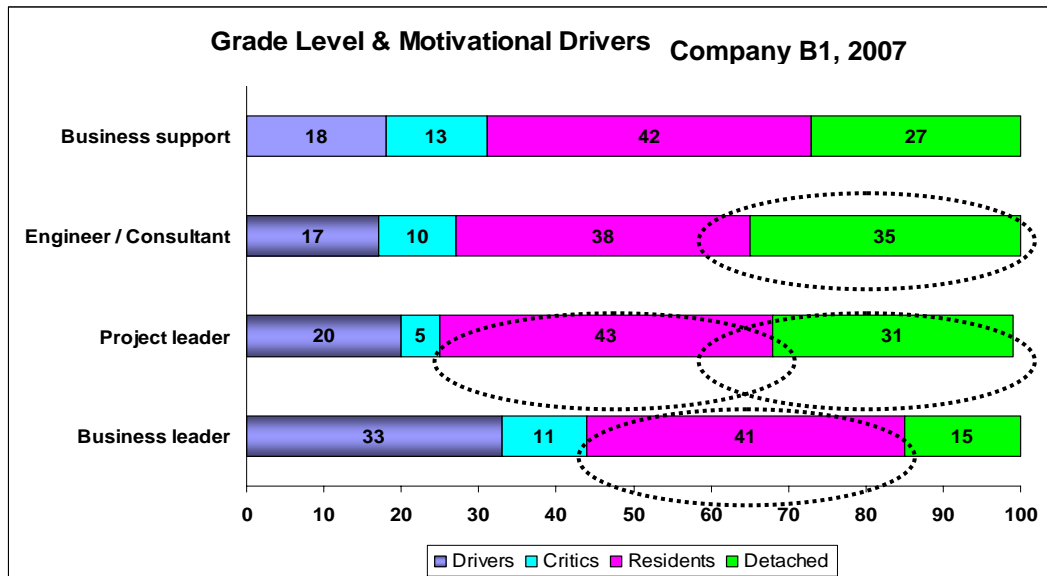
Grade Level & Motivational Drivers: Company B1

Chart 8 shows a breakdown of how each of the grade levels was made up of the four drivers. Overall, the Business leaders will require further investigative research to find out why this senior group received a low result. However, it was not made clear from the breakdown which company the various business leaders represented. To observe only 41% of business leaders might be satisfied[6] with their position, but their working environment may be in need of stimulation. It is assumed that if these business leaders were yearning for inspiration for themselves how could they be expected to motivate their subordinates. The opinions of the business leaders may transfer to their immediate personnel who will cascade it through the hierarchy.

Similarly, project leaders showed concern, particularly as this is the next managerial level after business leaders. In this instance, 43% of project leaders were satisfied with their post but might be in need of encouragement from their business leaders or working environment. These individuals are supposedly responsible for their operational environment. Therefore, it is uncertain the justification for seeking inspiration from an alternative source. The remaining project leaders (31%) were unenthusiastic by the working environment, but could feel disengaged from the organisation. This unsettled senior level management can influence the rest of the personnel within their respective directive. The engineer / consultant group could demonstrate this theory.

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[6] It should be recognised that each business leader would have their own interpretation on defining being satisfied with their position.
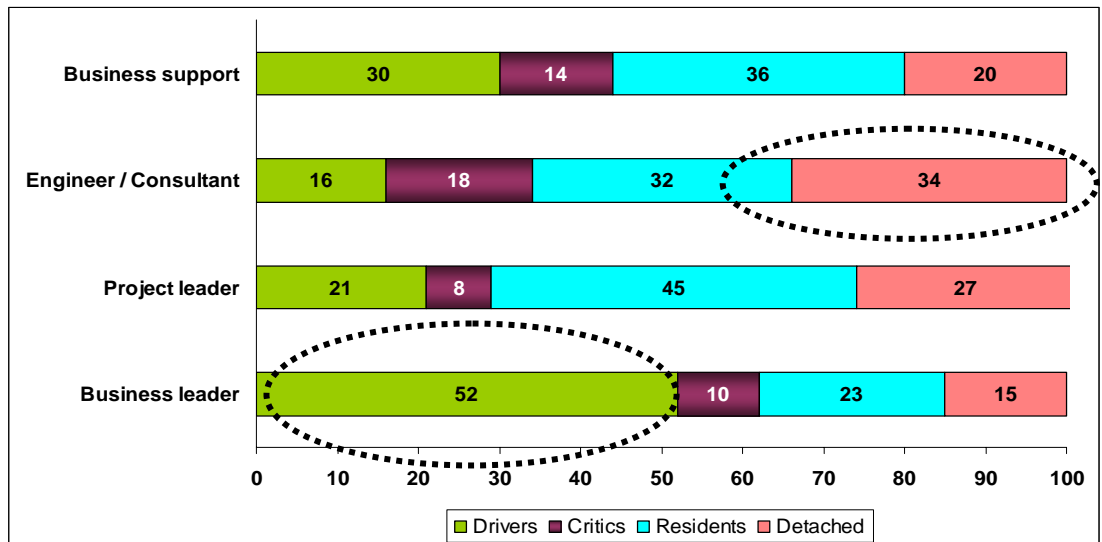
Chart 8 Grade level & motivational drivers, Company B1, 2007

Equally, project leaders, engineer / consultant were divided into identical two segments – residents (38%) and detached (35%). This area will be critical for the organisation, and with 73%, either requiring enthusiasm or feeling isolated could be disastrous for the organisation. However, business support seems to have experienced a similar fate. The group is not recognised as an important area to the business.

Grade Level & Motivational Drivers: Company E1

Similarly, to Company B1, Chart 9 will provide an overview for each of the grade levels. Once again, business leaders would require further investigation to ascertain why this senior group only managed to sustain over 50% positive personnel. However, it is unclear whether the remaining 48% of the business leaders represented the UK or the global business. The major concerns will be the engineers / consultants segment, which represents the principal skills level for the business had 34% of its workforce situated in the detached matrix. This could have been detrimental for the business. Chart 4 will reveal why they endured a decrease in this particular discipline.

Chart 9 Grade level & motivational drivers: Company E1, 2007

Company A1

The Company ABC report highlights the key strengths, which had been maintained through Company A1. The key factors were supposedly:

- *'Open work environment;*
- *support from colleagues when problems arise in the work; and*
- *sharing knowledge and experience within Business Unit.'*

(Company ABC, 2007: 46)

However, the engineers and consultants believe that information and communication may be the biggest hindrance at work suggesting that:

'Communication between the different companies within Company A1 needs to change, there is an us and them attitude which sometimes affects staff morale.' (Company ABC, 2007: 51)

The above statement could explain why Company B1 received a below average score on Empowerment. For instance:

'authority needed.' (Company ABC, 2007: 52)

The following question is associated with the above account:

'I have the authority I need in order to take decisions and implement them in all situations.' (Company ABC, 2007: 66)

From the above findings it appears that *empowerment*, and *trust* may have been hampered within the organisation. Chart 10 supports this revealing that a strong connection of employees could be feeling unsatisfied with their working environment. The strongest correlation was Company B1A scoring (*r* = 0.917), and Company B1B with a score of (*r* = 0.881). Company B1B experienced a strong link over the 3-year period.
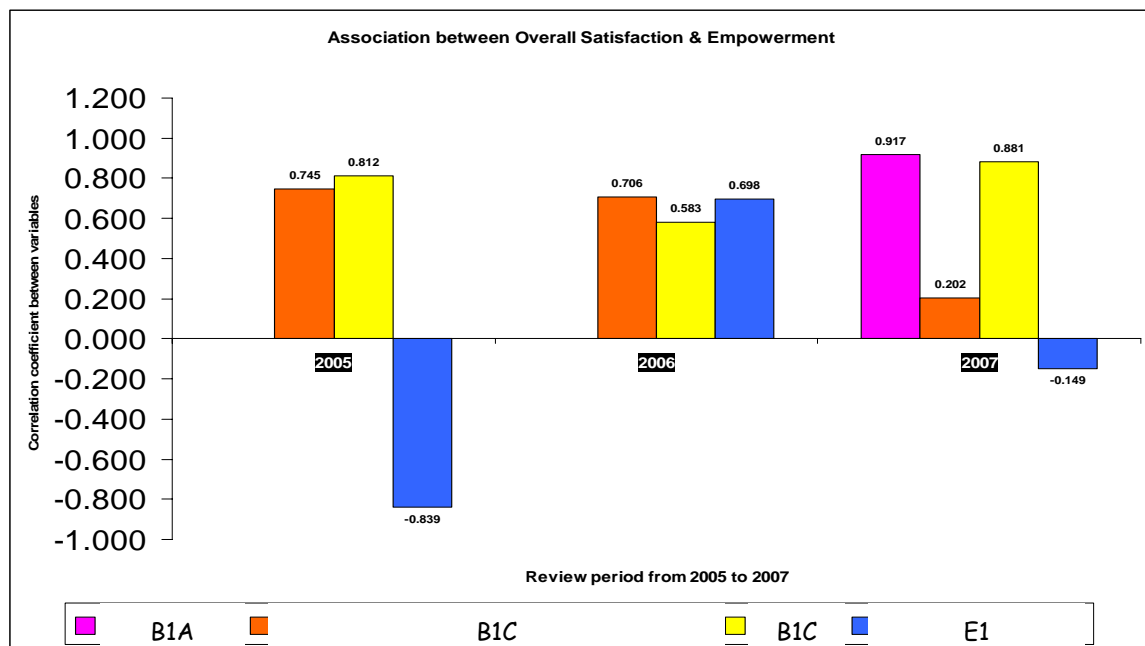
Chart 10 Association between Overall Satisfaction & Empowerment

Company E1

The Company ABC's report stated that Company E1 scored above average on *Empowerment* demonstrating positive results on:

- *'Influence on my work on day-to-day basis*
- *Authority to take decisions.'* (Company ABC, 2007: 50)

Upon reviewing one of the above sample questions more closely. It showed that:

'I have a significant influence on how my work is carried out on a day-to-day basis.' (Company ABC, 2007: 63)

In 2005, Company E1 encountered a reverse affect relationship on *empowerment* with a moderate negative (*r* = -0.889), and by the end of 2006, the link had risen to a moderate positive *(r* = 0.698). This turnaround could have been influenced by the recent event. In spite of this Chart 11 reinforced the theory that empowerment could also affect staff retention. This could have been damaging for employees who felt powerless to fulfil their respective roles..
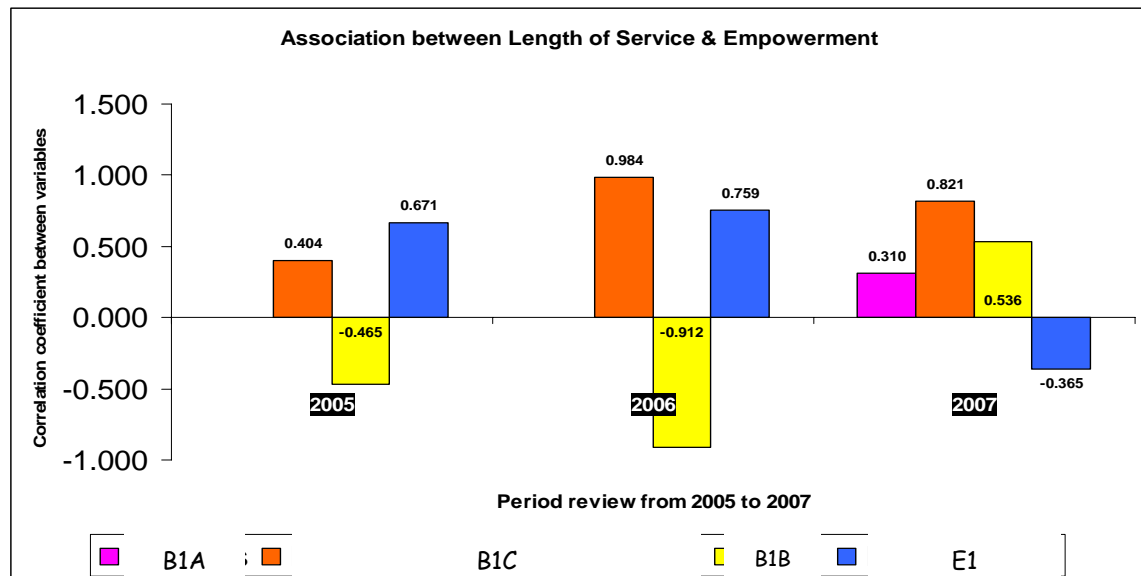
Chart 11 Association between Length of Service & Empowerment

That said, Company B1C revealed the strongest relationship between length of service and empowerment. In 2006 the strongest connection was experienced (*r* = 0.984). In 2007, the link reduced moderately to (*r* = 0.821). Even so, this was a strong relationship, which could have influenced the overall satisfaction for staff to remain with the host organisation. Unlike Chart 10, Company B1B experienced a strong to moderate relationship with staff being dissatisfied with their working environment. In Chart 11, it appears that this did not affect the company until 2007. Therefore, other factors might be influencing staff to leave the host organisation.

Company E1 had a much stronger link between 2005 (*r* = 0.671) to 2006 (*r* = 0.759). However, in 2007, the link weakened to a negative connection to (*r* = -0.365), which demonstrates that empowerment (trust) might have begun to be restored within the UK workforce. To test whether empowerment might be the primary attribute the next stage was to review staff's intention to remain with the host in 2008.

Intention to Stay with Company B1 in 2008

From the Employee Survey, 2007, staff were asked the following question:

'I intend to stay with Company A1 in the next year.' (Company ABC, 2007: 85)

On reviewing the strategic reports for Company B1 and Company E1, it appeared that both parts of the business received positive scores showing that the majority of staff intended to stay the following year (2008). However, Chart 12 offered an alternative opinion when introduced to a new variable. Chart 12 revealed a connection between *'overall satisfaction and staff intention to stay'* with the host organisation. Company B1 had the strongest link ($r = 0.866$) revealing that individuals could leave the organisation during the year (2008) because they were unsatisfied. Similarly, Company E1 encountered a positive (though moderate) relationship ($r = 0.699$), which could lead to the business experiencing another high staff turnover.

Chart 12 Association between Overall Satisfaction and Intention to stay or not stay

That said both sides might be subjected to losing staff. However, those *not intending to stay* had a stronger negative relationship, ($r = -0.970$), which could signify other factors were affecting the workforce. As previously mentioned *empowerment* appears to be the major attribute for the host organisation and Chart 13 supports this theory. There seems

to be a strong connection between individuals *intending to stay* with the host in 2008, on the condition that they will be empowered. Company E1 experienced the strongest positive link (*r* = 0.982), which suggests that the business will lose staff if empowerment is not enforced within the realm of its workforce. Company B1 encountered a positive though moderate connection (*r* = 0.866), which indicated a similar position as Company E1 during this year, 2008. However, Company B1 endured a strong negative (*r* = -0.970) association signifying other factors could influence individuals not intending to stay.

Teamwork and Knowledge Sharing: Company B1

The next stage of the analysis will explore the relationship between empowerment and knowledge sharing, and the implications if the link is hampered.

Association between Intention to Stay and Empowerment
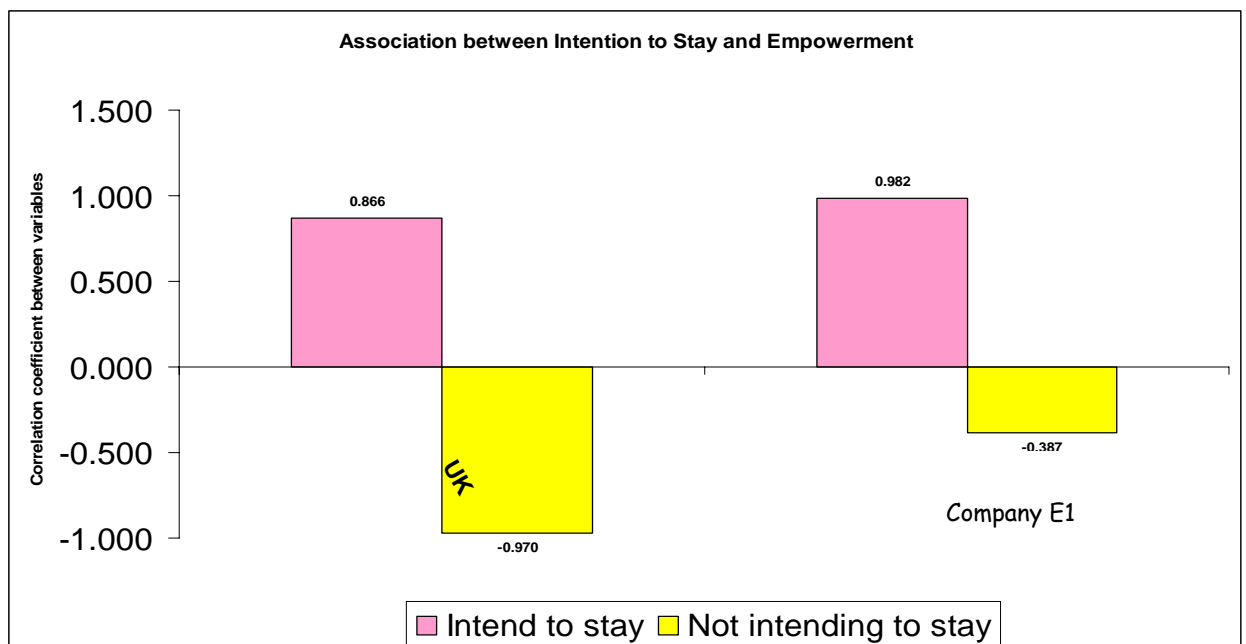
Chart 13 Association between Intention to Stay & Empowerment

As indicated earlier, the other 'above average' attribute for the host was *knowledge sharing*. These were as follows.

- *'Sharing knowledge worldwide*
- *Following up mistakes.'* (Company ABC, 2007: 52)

The following sample question was examined against the above statements.

'In my business unit, we follow up our mistakes and try to learn from them.' (Company ABC, 2007: 69)

Overall, Company B1 achieved a positive score of 36% on the abovementioned statement with -29% of staff disagreeing with it. However, these results do not appear to be a successful *above average* scores. This suggests that *business units do not follow up their mistakes and try to learn from them.* Charts 14, 15, and 16 reviewed each company independently. If the assumption is true, how widespread is the problem? In light of the example shown above, the report reveals that:

'Engineers / consultants feel that information / communication is the biggest efficiency hindrance at work.' (Company ABC, 2007: 51)

Chart 14 focuses on Company B1A's results, which depicts a mixture of findings between the various regional offices. London received the lowest positive score of 49%, and the highest negative result, of -35%. Taking into account London M&E and London C&S reside in the same location; their results were so dissimilar.
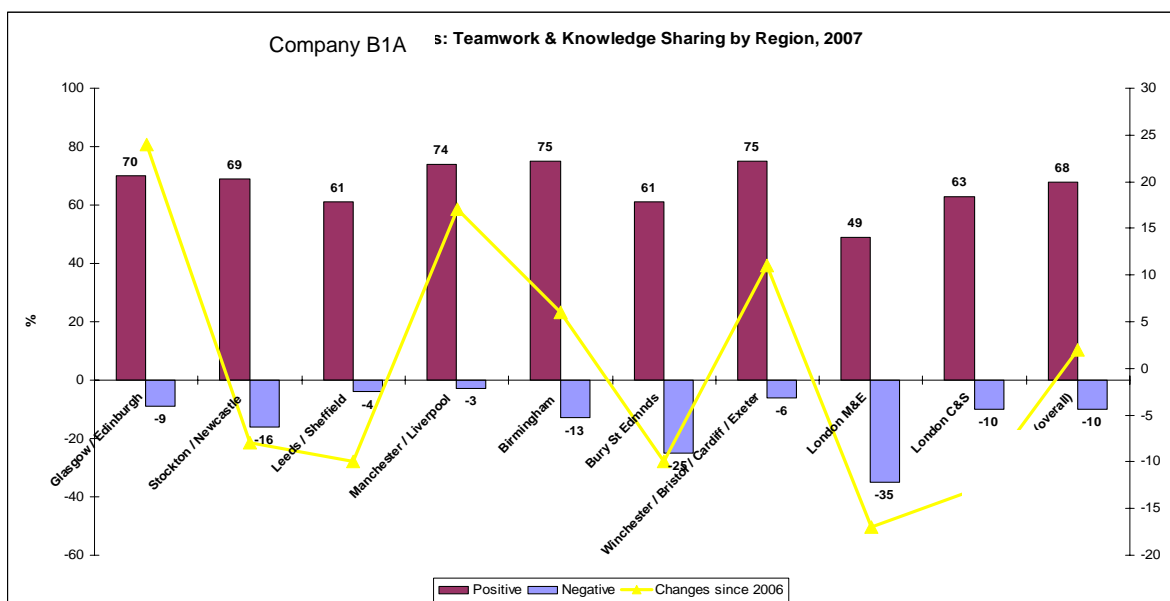
Chart 14 Teamwork and Knowledge Sharing, Company B1A, 2007

Therefore, it was assumed that London C&S demonstrated a teamwork and knowledge sharing working environment compared to London M&E, which seems to exhibit a lack of trust. Since 2006, this finding reinforced the lack of progress that had been made. In addition, Bury St Edmunds obtained a slightly better positive result (61%) than London

M&E, and -25% negative results, which showed a -10% decrease (change) from the previous year. Only two regional offices showed a positive result and improvements, which were Manchester & Liverpool, and Winchester[7] (which included Bristol, Cardiff, and Exeter). Further exploratory work will be required to find out the reason behind these variations.

Unlike Company B1A, Chart 15 reveals a different story for Company B1C. The company scored (positive) on average 63% across the five regions with the exception of the London region; the only one to achieve under 45%. Since 2006, the other regions had shown significant changes. In 2007, the London region was the only one to incur no improvement. Chart 14 and 15 seems to suggest some areas of concern.
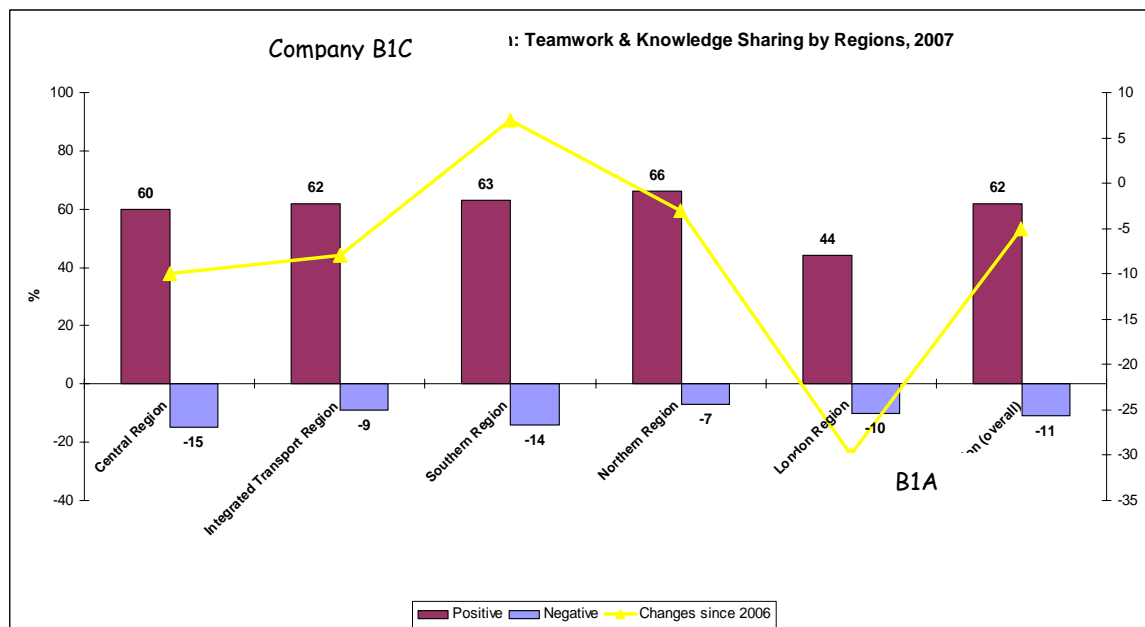
Chart 15 Teamwork and Knowledge Sharing, Company B1C, 2007

Teamwork and Knowledge Sharing: Company E1

In relation to teamwork and knowledge sharing, it is assumed that trust could have been affected by the lack of collaboration, which might have changed the culture of the UK business. This could have been influenced by the various global operational units not exchanging knowledge (information), which might explain why Company E1 received a below average score on the following statement:

- *'Informed what is going on in the business unit*

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[7] Between January – December 2007, there were no staff turnover in the Winchester office.

- *Cooperation between other business units…'* (Company ABC, 2007: 50)

This specific statement *teamwork and knowledge sharing* received the lowest results on the staff survey. Staff were asked:

> *'Within [Company A1] we understand how to make best use of sharing knowledge worldwide...'* (Company ABC, 2007: 67)

The results revealed a negative score of 69% for the business. This could have been an adverse situation being experienced by the global business. Chart 16 will demonstrate the consequences of the problem.
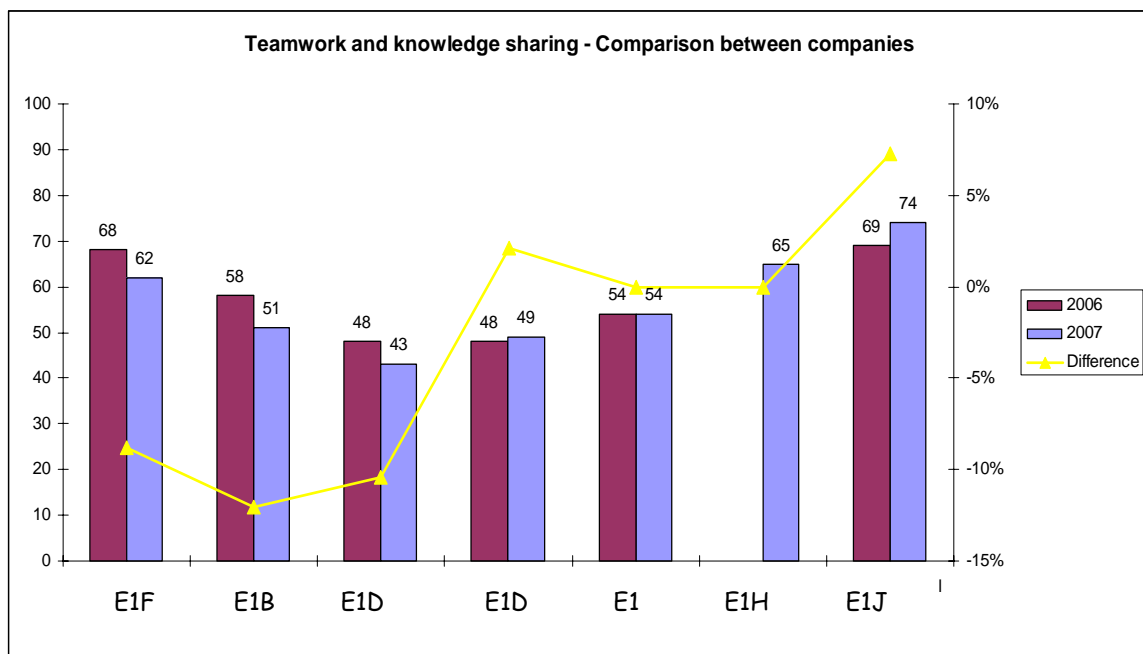
Chart 16 Teamwork and Knowledge Sharing, Company E1, 2007

The majority of the business units experienced a maximum decline of 12% over the year (2007). Company E1J increased by 7%, and Company E1E by 2%, whilst Company B1 scored the same as last year. This may not have been a surprise for Company B1. As the global business has increased in size outside of the UK there will be additional pressure placed financially to deliver for the UK and for any part of the global entity underperforming. This could be the reason why staff turnover has remained extremely high.

Upon examining the *knowledge sharing* section more closely revealed a parallel link with the empowerment section. The two concepts appear to require each other's mutual collaboration to work in harmony. Chart 17 shows a good positive correlation over the 3-year period between overall satisfaction and knowledge sharing. In 2006, Company B1C had the strongest positive link (r = 0.904), which slightly reduced in 2005 to a moderate connection (r = 0.733). By 2007, it had reduced to a weak relationship (r = 0.547). However, Company B1B retained a weak (r = 0.469) to moderate (r = 0.6.98) positive connection. In 2007, Company B1A encountered a positive moderate link (r = 0.684). These results suggest that staff may not be satisfied, and unwilling to work collaboratively with each other.
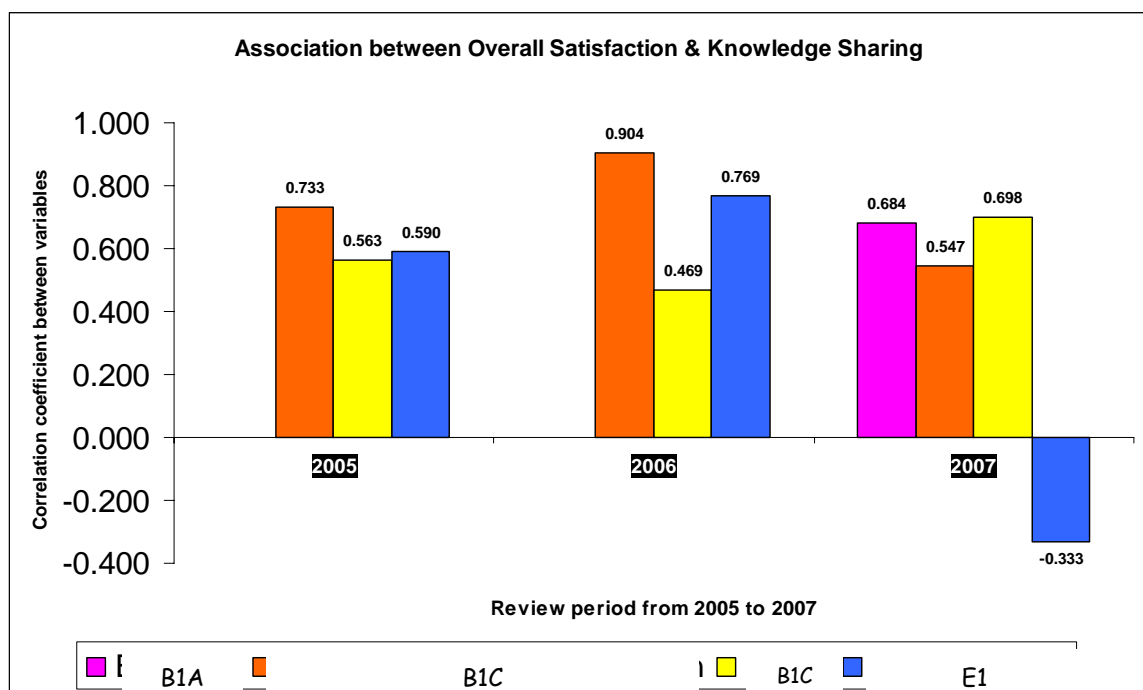
Chart 17 Association between Overall Satisfaction & Knowledge Sharing

Company E1 experienced the opposite between 2005 and 2006, and had a positive (weak to moderate) relationship. However, in 2007, the link turned into a negative (r = -0.333), suggesting that there may not be no connection between the two variables. However, Chart 18 seem to reveal a stronger association between *length of service & Knowledge sharing* in the host organisation.

Company B1B and Company B1C had the strongest (continuous) positive relationship between the two variables. In 2005, Company E1 experienced its only strongest moderate positive link. However, in 2006 the relationship turned negative (r = -0.298),

and in 2007, the association begun to levitate to a positive (weak) link. As might be appreciated, the results confirmed that the length of service served would deter individuals from sharing their knowledge within the host organisation.
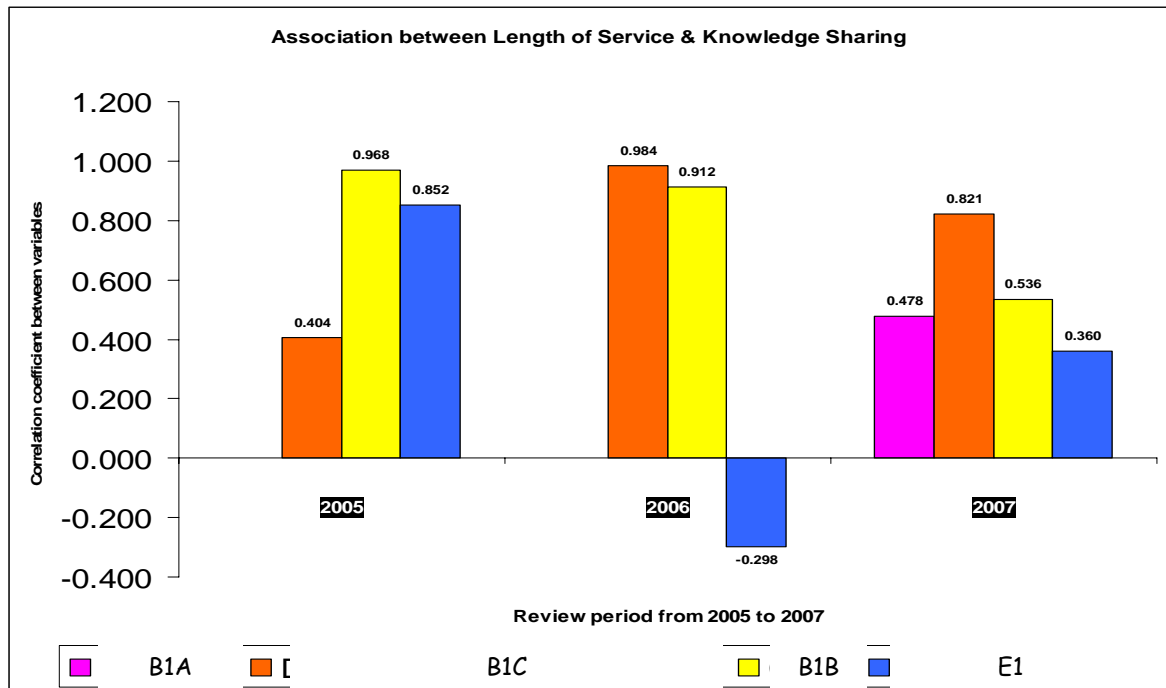
Chart 18 Association between Length of Service & Knowledge Sharing

However, Chart 18 reveal the unwillingness to share information amongst each other and could affect Chart 19, which shows that Company B1 and Company E1 can affect their employees' intention to stay if collaboration to share knowledge is subdued.
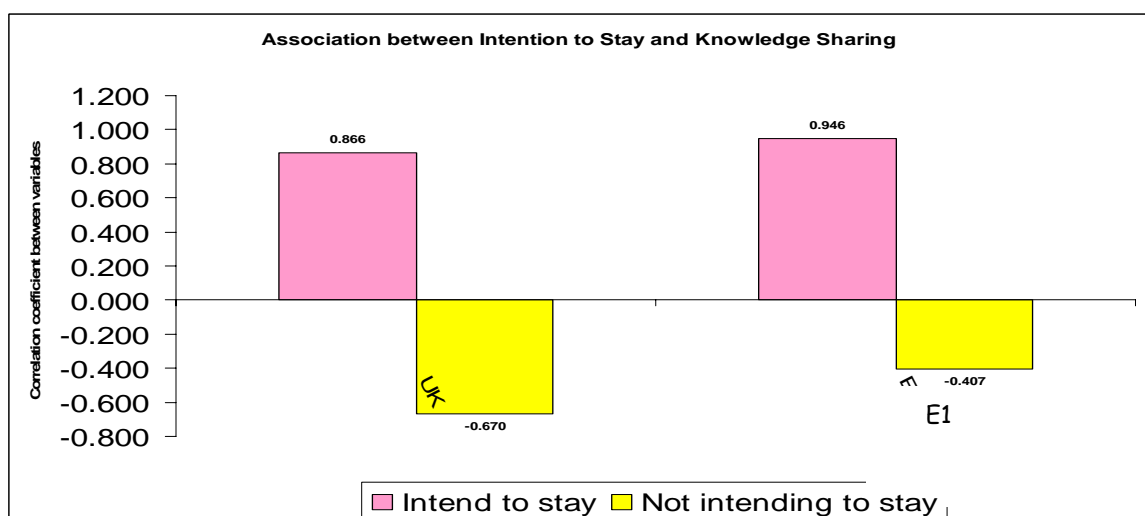
Chart 19 Association between Intention to Stay and Knowledge Sharing

The findings illustrated in Chart 19 suggest that both parts of the business exhibited strong positive links between the two variables, which could indicate potential problems for the host organisation. This appears to also stem within and between the various companies across the UK remit. The next section will conclude the results.

4.4 CONCLUSION

> *'Has Company A1 now become a dictatorial business, where sector champions are no longer allowed to make any acumen decisions…?'*
> **Company B1A**

It is important to note that a supposedly single business to the outside world can be so dissimilar within its own internal structures. The ways in which the various companies utilise the HR (database) management programme to gather and maintain basic statistics of its workforce. However, to obtain the initial data from each of the companies was the most difficult part of the process. Even after several requests, the remaining UK companies did not provide the information. As previously mentioned, so long as all the UK companies supply their yearly data they can use the HR management programme as they see fit. However, this laissez-faire approach can create a variation of data, which could be misinterpreted by the end-user. This is because the information can be collated in a variety of ways. However, these reports can be altered to produce a much positive outlook for the respective company. This may be acceptable HR practice for *creative number crunching* behaviour. If the host organisation is not going to be accurate with its own internal HR statistics – what chance can the yearly employee survey survive? Considering that the results can be altered (polished over) or not made public to resolve issues raised by staff.

The various HR personnel has access to the actual results before it is presented to the respective managing directors and their board of directors. This approach could place uncertainty on the facts being reported. As Brown (1995), suggests that HR managers can claim ownership of the internal culture as their own territory. They believe that they can influence the microenvironment. It will be difficult to interpret the *'motives and intentions'* (McEvily et al. 2006: 52) of these individuals, and whether they are striving towards their own agenda or as a collective entity.

My personal encounter with the HR personnel observed a sub-cultural behaviour, which appeared to be transparent across this vocational team. This group demonstrated their *'position of higher power'* (Kramer, 2006: 74). As Brewer (1979) argues, they can be less cooperative, honest and trustworthy, and tend to expect less positive behaviour from members outside of their group. This seems to suggest that they will not trust anyone else accept themselves. Kramer et al. (2006) claims that, membership in a

collectivity or group can be taken to signal trustworthiness, without each member having to demonstrate his or her trustworthiness directly to all other parties.

The Employee Survey results on their own lacked actual depth to determine the real problems from the findings. That said, by undertaking a number of independent variable tests against the themes identified in the strategic report could have highlighted the underline issue for the host organisation. These analyses suggest that there might be a strong presence of 'mistrust' between management and staff, which could have influenced individuals' overall satisfaction, and desire to stay with the company. The results revealed that trust can be fragmented (McEvily et al., 2003) within the host, which could have spread from the respective companies to the regional offices. This in turn will have caused knowledge sharing to be subdued. This could have also created a ring fencing of information being retained in certain parts of the business. It is uncertain what benefit this behaviour could have for the host organisation. I believe that the financial cost for this genre of behaviour could limit the potential opportunities for the host organisation as a whole.

The results of this document support Document Three's findings that trust might be a major disincentive for individuals to communicate openly with each other.   The implications of not sharing information with each other will create an unhealthy working environment.   However, it is believed that if trust is a key core value for the host organisation then *'information exchanged [should] be more accurate, comprehensive, and timely'* (Chiles and McMackin, 1996: 89). This was confirmed by Company E1 that in difficult times the core values - *trust*, *sharing and supporting* can be hampered if internal problems rises. As stated earlier, in 2006, the Company E1 was under pressure to help the global business out of financial difficult. The UK employees were promised career and training opportunities once the problem was resolved.   The staff never received their rewards, which could have hindered trusting their management. However, whether the actions taken by Company E1 board were justified due to the unforeseen circumstances on meeting their *obligations* and not *'keeping* [their] *promises'* (Dietz, and Den Hartog, 2006: 560) can affect an organisation.

However, for trust to develop to such an extent it should be linked to the organisation's culture, which was highlighted in Document Three. The combination of the two concepts (trust and culture) can influence and manipulate effective communication. As indicated earlier, in Document Three – history will continue to influence the organisation

throughout its operational life. This will create an array of tribal behavioural traits between the various companies. That said, the continuous growth of the host organisation (organic growth or by acquisition) may not resolve the managerial problems. In fact, it could highlight the significance of integrating acquisitions into the business. These companies will without doubt come with their own interpretations, which will may not fit into the master jigsaw puzzle. When first introduced into the business the transitional period will be important to create the right ethos to demonstrate the core values.

The core values are the hallmark for the host organisation but it does not seem to have persuaded or influenced the behavioural traits of the workforce. People will continue to function as separate entities, which can create *'barriers between each other by their fragmented thoughts* [which, might be] *no longer relevant in* [the] *changing world'* (April, 1999: 233). As Senge (1995) points out once an organisation *'loses this capacity* [to have a rich conversation], *all that [might be] left is a cacophony of voices battling it out to see who wins and who loses'* (p. 19). Documents Three and Four have illustrated how the lack of trust can influence how individuals interact with each other and how the implications of transferring knowledge can play a major role if trust is not present within the working environment. Bachmann (1998) states that tacit knowledge will be important *'to how trust works'* (p. 305) in an working environment. Lewicki and Bunker, (1996: 121-2) they believe that this will be recognisable in *'different contexts, and noticing reactions to different situations.'* As might be appreciated, the microenvironment has significant influence on how individuals will engage with each other and what the implications if no measure of trust is present within the relationship. This will influence the behaviour and motivational attitude on whether an individual (or group) will be inclusive or exclusive to the internal environment of the host organisation.

As we have seen, for communication to have any chance of survival the *'entire organisation* [will be] *speaking with a single voice'* (Langer and Thorup, 2006: 374). Braithwaite et al (2007) points out that if communication is hampered *'trusting relationships and open communication, the normal social glue that makes well-performing organisations work'* (p. 356) will be compromised. They also argue that this could create a *'greater mistrust, and less sharing of information'* (p. 356). From a pragmatic point of view they also claim that organisations will observe fragmented *'tribalism and blaming behaviours'* (p. 363). Argyris (1996) agrees that knowledge-hoarding behaviour will contribute to the ambiguity of the microenvironment. Although,

Kiffin-Petersen and Cordery (2003) believe that, these behavioural patterns will affect *'individuals decision-making on trust'* (p. 107) between the various working groups within the organisation.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

> *'One thing I have learnt, there are statistics… and statistics'*
> **Company E1 – A&C**

I believe that there were some shortcomings in the approach and the mechanics of the survey. Based on the results, I will put forward the following recommendations for the host organisation to take under consideration.

- There will be a need to improve the process of the HR management programme and to ensure that there is a consistency from all the UK companies, including Company E1 using the same platform effectively. This approach should identify any barriers to the inconsistency of such task. It will be important to get all parties to buy-in to and agree the standard application because currently it is not providing an accurate picture of the workforce. There are too many interpretations offered, which can lead to conflicting information.

- The distribution of the yearly staff employee survey should be reconsidered. Currently, not enough time allocation by the host organisation (management) to fulfil any key objectives identified from the yearly results before issuing the next round of questionnaires. Reasonable amount of time should be set aside to measure the success rate. This could be in the formation of an interim (six monthly) follow-up exercise undertaken by a random selection of the population that includes representation from senior, middle management, graduates, and support staff. The questionnaire should focus on the areas raised to test whether the views of the staff have changed before the next round of surveys. This interim exercise will highlight if the organisation has managed to resolve the areas of concern or require additional time to implement alternative initiatives. If the results identifies that perceptions have not changed, a decision by management to defer the survey until such time will be appropriate. The current scheduling might be too short, which is why the same issues will occur each year. By introducing a 6-monthly, follow-up survey will save time, and allow the organisation to focus on the areas that will be of value to the staff.

- Introducing focus groups could provide the right formation to remove individuals (misguided) perceptions about each other, and help to improve and encourage better cross-operating company working relationships.

- The proposed suggestion to introduce a single employee survey to every office location (10,000 staff), should be reconsidered. The host is a conglomerate business. The language barrier will be a key factor when communicating with individuals around the globe. Introducing a one size 'fit all' attitude will be difficult in such a diverse business. It is envisaged that the response rate will be extremely low because each country will misinterpret the questions, and might be reluctant to complete the questionnaire. It is suggested that the questionnaire should be split into appropriate sections, which may include:

  - Global information: this section will have common themes that all participants (regardless of location) will know.
  - Corporate core values: this section will review how each part of the conglomerate business might interpret and incorporate the values in to their working practices.
  - There should be flexibility for each country identifying local topics that will be important to their staff. These local results communicated to the UK to collate and analyse the information, which will provide a true picture of the various issues from around the global business.

4.6 LOOKING FORWARD – DOCUMENT FIVE

> *'We've been chasing this client for payment for the past 9 months. When we eventually get paid then people will stop doubting the need for sector champions...'*
> **Company F1**

This document will enter the fifth stage of this continuous journey. It would be wrong to assume that things will fall into place. However, this part of the journey has had its fair share of obstacles to overcome within the host organisation. I propose to undertake a closer analysis on trust in Document Five to ascertain connectivity between narratives, trust, and reciprocation between individuals within the organisation. To undertake Document Five, it will be my intention to select one regional office, which has representation from all the UK companies to carry out an indicative interpretative research.

For the next part of the DBA research plan it is anticipated that a sample of participants from the population will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview process to establish the following questions. The objective will be to investigate if the organisation's own internal stories might have caused effective communication to take place, and trust not to be part of the ethos. In addition, whether these stories could have created misinterpretation, and may have influenced the senior managerial level and cascaded through the numerous management hierarchies.

1. Over the past 6 months, has trust been an important factor when engaging with the other operating companies?

2. What are the key factors when engaging with other companies?

3. Has there been a recent event, which has concerned you engaging with another company?

4. Was your decision based on the current situation or was it influenced by the story?

5. What was the story and in what circumstances did you hear about it?

6. What are the feelings within your company about:

- Company B1A
- Company B1B
- Company B1C
- Company E1

7. What were the main reason(s) for your assumption(s)?

8. Has this affected the core values, in particular trust within and between the companies?

These aspects will be able to determine the attributes, which could influence employees to engage in effective communication. The answers provided to these types of questions will be interpreted via the identification of emerging the themes, and perceptions. These findings will be presented as Document Five in the partial submission of the DBA to the Nottingham Trent University.

4.7 REFLECTIVE MOMENT…

> *'I've only been here for 6 months, and have come across trust as a major issue, with structure and history being secondary…'*
> **Company B1C**

4.7.1 The Unforeseen Hurdles…

The following story describes the chain of events that I went through with the various HR representatives in gaining access to the host organisation's staff survey results.

In its sixth consecutive year, the host organisation has undertaken its yearly company-wide, web based employee survey. The questionnaires are distributed in September, with a 3-week timeframe to complete the survey. The web-based survey has grown significantly in its coverage. Currently, the survey covers the UK, Sweden, Finland, South Africa, the Middle East, USA. However, due to the language complications Asia was not included in 2007. It is anticipated Asia will be included in the next round in 2008. At present, there are twelve different versions of the employee survey issued within Company A1. However, the UK training manager advised me that in September 2008, there would only be one version distributed around the entire business. This would be a critical changeover to take considering the diversity of languages within the global business.

Company A1 has been consistent with its set of questions over the past 2-years. However, it has not retained the same external provider in analysing the organisation's data. Upon enquiring about accessing the raw data for 2006 to use as background information, I was advised that this was not possible because the actual data was still in the possession of the previous provider. It seems that the HR personnel did not take the necessary steps in retrieving all the data before changing over to the new the provider. Therefore, to obtain any raw data from the provider would have been an immense cost to me, and not the organisation. To overcome the setback of obtaining the data for the previous year (2006), and with the understanding (instructed by the UK training manager) not to divulge the contents – a copy of the UK survey report results was made available. A similar request was made to Company E1 for a copy of their 2006 report.

Once the 2007 survey deadline had passed and all the responses were gathered and presented to the host organisation (end of November) in the form of a PowerPoint

presentation[8] and a report. The senior management board was presented with an overall picture of the group's results. However, this is where the consistency begins and ends. Each company would have to pay extra if they wanted further breakdown details of their company's results. Some of the companies appear to be selective on requesting additional information.

Company A1 spends time and money promoting this initiative each year. Regular announcements via the Intranet seek to encourage staff to complete the survey and the importance of having 'their say'! However, it appears that the HR group (consisting of the HR & communications director – Company K1, UK training manager and all UK HR managers from each of the companies) agree on information format to feedback to their respective managing director and board members. The only anomaly to this arrangement is that Company E1's HR director and support team is excluded from the above grouping. This positioning by the HR personnel can be perceived as influencing the outcome of the exercise because they can control what might be revealed to the wider audience. If the group decides not to reveal bad news to the senior management board and staff, they may hide the actual results behind innocuous feedback, which could mislead the audience. If this is the case why undertake the yearly exercise to gather staff opinions if they are not willing to face the facts? This inept approach by the HR group could jeopardise the organisation's core values. The HR team might have taken it upon themselves to misrepresent and fabricate the results, which could create a false image of the workforce that can backfire, and damage the integrity of their group. However, it is uncertain whether the HR group might be receiving instructions from the managing directors to create a positive picture.

In an attempt to acquire the results from all of the companies, an oral and written request was sent to the UK HR manager asking for a set of the UK employee survey results for 2007. A similar request was made to the HR director for Company E1. Company E1 sent through their information followed by a telephone call from the HR director. However, the same reception was not received from the UK HR manager[9]. During the brief telephone conversation, he was very vague and aloof. For the duration of the conversation, it became apparent he wanted no involvement, and suggested that I contacted the UK training manager. The conversation with the UK training manager was

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[8] Although I stressed the importance of my submission deadline for this document I was advised by the UK Training manager that I would not receive a copy of the results before the findings were presented to the senior management board.

[9] Previously highlighted in Document One the interaction between both parties was non-existent even after several attempts had been made to rectify the situation. One last try was made during the conversation to open the line of communication and invite the UK HR manager to meet in order to provide a progress report. Unfortunately, the offer was declined.

on par as the UK HR manager, but a little more receptive. I am not part of the HR community, and therefore it would be wrong to dismiss the assumption that I maybe regarded as the *'enemy within'* by the group. This could be understandable; after all, there has not been any prior contact with the majority of the members within this group until now.

In Document One, I met with all the senior personnel of the host organisation including the HR & communications director to gain their views. It was made clear at the initial meeting with the HR & communications director that there was no opportunity to move into HR upon completing this programme. Bearing in mind this was the first time we had met each other and, to hear those words was disheartening. However, it made it easier to identify myself as the *'enemy within'*, and to be conscious of any future interaction.

Several attempts to contact the UK training manager by telephone and email were futile. One last effort was made to remind her to send through the results. This did not change and the wall of silence remained intact. Due to the unexpected setback, I decided to contact each of the managing directors. This direct approach was more successful and the results were immediately received except for one. The HR manager for Company H1 would not release their results even after instructions by her respective managing director's Personal Assistant. An email from the managing director to his HR manager quickly resolved the situation, and the results were released. These continuous barriers from the HR group highlighted my feelings as being seen as an *'enemy within'*, and any future interaction would need to be handled with extreme care.

4.7.2 An Expected Dead End….

Document Four has been a real turning point in my continuous journey. It would be true to say that, I have been converted into a cynical individual. Whether the transition was supposed to happen, it was certainly a surprise to me. It has been difficult to change my position from an interpretative to a positivist stance, and be comfortable with the conversion. The exposure to quantitative statistics has left doubts in my mind on how accurate it might be to use such approach for management research. That said my views could have been different if I had originated the employee survey. However, because I was not allowed access to the raw data before the results were polished up and presented to staff for feedback; has left some uncertainty. The notion of being creative with the truth, and manipulating the data, could challenge the validity of

producing a piece of work, which has personally been difficult for me to complete Document Four.

Concerning exposure – it has put me into an unfamiliar arena with the various HR personnel, which is why I have called myself the *'Enemy Within'*. I may have either made a few new allies or introduced some potential challengers. Either way I am in the middle of a very small vocational group, who will either accept me as a new member or reject me as a threat! At present, it is difficult to flip a coin, and know which side of the fence might be my house of residence.

Some of the individuals perceptions seem to be starting to change. Although it is too early to surmise this as a good or bad move as it could highlight some potential challenges ahead. Being seen as a potential threat to those I have had to interact with to obtain the information for this document. Some of these individuals have been either supporters or blockers in this part of the journey. I do not expect the relationship to blossom in the future unless it has some recognisable value to the various individuals. Past collaboration with HR personnel has left scepticism of their intentions, and participating in any joint activities. At present, the odds are not in their favour.

Although it has been on the back of my mind, it has taken Document Four to face reality that I am on my own with no opportunities to gain access or invitation to join any internal (specialist) networks. That said I may experience further difficulty climbing the greasy career ladder, which leads me to believe that my time within the host will eventually end. In order for the organisation to carry on sponsoring future staff through their continuous professional development, my exit strategy will be crucial not to cause any aftershock problems for potential candidates. The next few months will be the most challenging time of my life, as I can see the end of my journey drawing near. The next and final chapter will be the grand finale. The following passage expresses my personal thoughts.

What have we been prepared to do?
'The pieces will continue to fall into place throughout your life, but right now you can look back at all that has happened and ask yourself: From the influence of my early family through all the synchronistic twists and turns, the dead ends, mistakes, and successes, what, as a result of all these events, was I being prepared to tell the world?...'

<div align="right">(Redfield, 1997: 121)</div>

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> **Company B1A**

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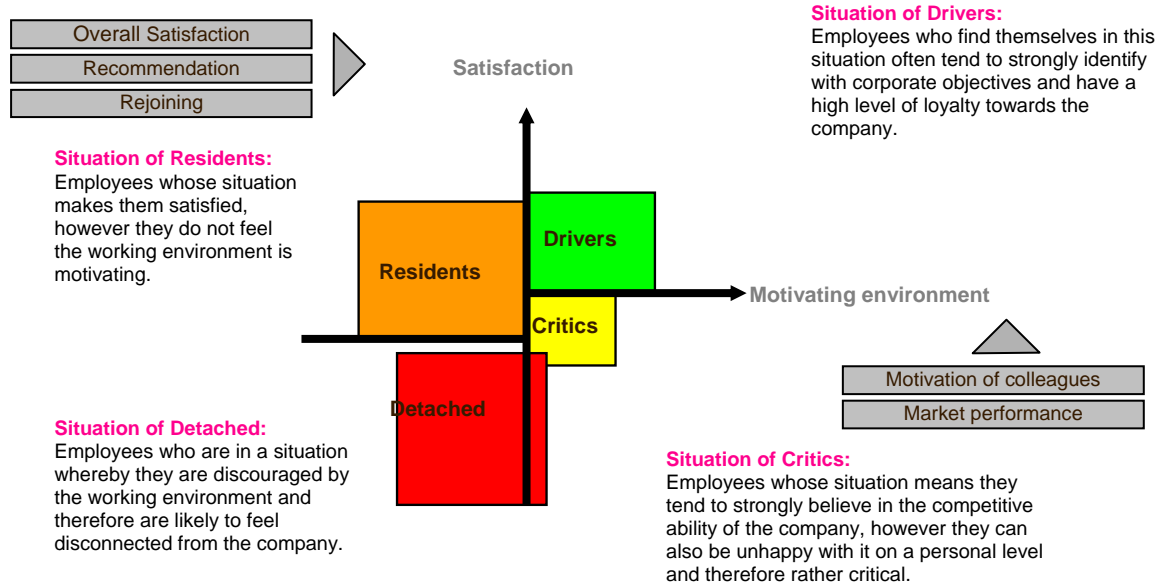
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Company ABC: TRI*M Typology of Employee Situation - Interpretation

Overall Satisfaction
Recommendation
Rejoining

Satisfaction

Situation of Drivers:
Employees who find themselves in this situation often tend to strongly identify with corporate objectives and have a high level of loyalty towards the company.

Situation of Residents:
Employees whose situation makes them satisfied, however they do not feel the working environment is motivating.

Residents

Drivers

Critics

Motivating environment

Motivation of colleagues
Market performance

Detached

Situation of Detached:
Employees who are in a situation whereby they are discouraged by the working environment and therefore are likely to feel disconnected from the company.

Situation of Critics:
Employees whose situation means they tend to strongly believe in the competitive ability of the company, however they can also be unhappy with it on a personal level and therefore rather critical.

Document Six

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: A Reflection of Me

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Document Six submitted in part fulfilment of the requirement of the Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctorate of Business Administration

CONTENTS

6.0   INTRODUCTION

This document is the final one in a series of six, written as part of my DBA investigation into storytelling in the context of Organisation Communication. In the following sections, I will discuss my personal reflections on the DBA experience primarily from an Action Learning Set (ALS) perspective. I will also examine the events surrounding Documents One to Five. The discussions are focussed around three main areas:

- Personal Development
- Professional Development
- Research Development

While these categories could be viewed as not being associated, my personal development is likely to affect my professional development and vice versa. Organising the material in this way provided structure for the discussion. I believe that such a structure will assist both the reader and me to gather my thoughts. I am mindful that it will make the investigation experience appear less disorganised. This document has provided me with the opportunity to avoid a structured approach, and to input a part of my persona.

At the beginning of this journey, a diary was kept of significant incidents, thoughts, and emotions as they occurred during the duration of the DBA programme. More specifically, it may be right to ask: Stories about whom? Stories for whom? (Cochran-Smith, 2000). My first entry in the diary was a self-critical question: *'Oh my … did I really sign up to do this?!'* The question challenged my own ability to be here! By here, I mean Nottingham Trent Business School. Yes, I suppose the question arrived too late, especially as I was now seated in a classroom full of eager hopefuls ready to commence the programme. The key issues circulating in my inner thoughts were the following.

(a) Did I have the right calibre to consider this prominent academic level?
(b) Were my current education passport and my work experience catalogue sufficient for me to be a member of this elite grouping?

From the start, I was not stimulated by the chosen theme *'communication'*. It could be argued *'that is when the problem start[ed]'* (Weick, 1984: p. 48). Senior personnel within my organisation originally influenced the focus of my DBA study. However, as part of

my training and development agreement to obtain financial support and the approval to use the organisation as a learning vehicle, the organisation had the final decision on which topic I would undertake. Upon reflection, it did take some time to get a foothold on how to move the research forward. In this case, there were several attempts to construct some ideas. However, the unexpected departure of both my research champions caused further uncertainty. In other words, I was now on my own. I felt that it was not possible to continue on the current path with the original proposal that was unclear. At this early stage, I did not wish to *'hold the [research] hostage to the past'* (Ford and Ford, 1995: p. 553). It was important that the remaining management board was not hung up or stuck (Smith & Berg, 1987), to recognise the identified organisation issues. Failure to provide awareness to the board could have forced me to abandon the research.

There could be occasions when *'it is dangerous to stop, think, [and reflect]'* (Schön, 1995: p. 278). Consider, for a moment, the thought of having to face your deepest recollection. This potential exposure and sequence of events may reveal experiential learning that has been a constant reminder in our thoughts. As stated by Arendt (1971), a thought that does not serve knowledge and is not guided by practical needs and aims is out of order. Reflecting back over the DBA, I can identify many educational experiences, some more or less significant than others. However, for the intention of this document I will concentrate on what I described as critical incidents, mostly represented by the encounters and writing associated with the previous five documents, as well as the overall experience.

6.1 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Given my background in business administration, I was of the open mind that I would view things in different ways and challenge my primary thoughts. I immediately realised that although my organisational and problem solving skills would come in handy I did not have the theoretical awareness to help me articulate the concept of this challenge or how it could be met. With extensive work experience and all the intricate social interactions I had encountered, I was aware that events do not always happen as expected; instead there is a facet of *'I did not anticipate that would happen…'.* To my surprise, the MA studies did not in fact develop this thinking any further; rather they underpinned it in that they appeared concerned with management procedures and theories that on the whole indicated 'good methods'. However, these preconceived

views could be changed by 'setting influences' including the behaviour of the individuals involved. As such, I was not at a confident point where I could relinquish my own ideas, and it was with my understanding in this perplexed state that I commenced the DBA.

The early exposure to methodological perspectives opened my mind to alternative ways of thinking. At the outset, I found the language and concepts complicated. As I was apprehensive about sharing my concerns with my cohort, I attempted to go single-handedly to decipher the conundrum. During the initial phase of the research (Document 3), I became more comfortable in befriending an interpretative view, considering that this part of the study was qualitative in nature. I could see that this research suited an interpretative approach. Perhaps I am drawn to interpretative research due to my MA in Human Resources Development. I have always been interested in human behaviour. Seeking answers to difficult work-related questions in conditions of ambiguity and misunderstanding with the help of others to interpret their world. That said my thinking mode was challenged even more with the fourth part of the study impending as this was to be quantitative research (Document 4), which would seek to align my views towards positivism. I was not comfortable with this method. The notion that the world can be viewed as a whole without understanding the surrounding conditions could affect the outcome. In this instance, *'the outcome comes before the decision [is in hand, which could be too late to go] back to find the why'* (Garfinkel, 1967: pp. 114–115).

The overall approach encouraged for the DBA is one of action learning (Revans, 1971). More specifically:

> *"In action learning real managers share ideas and tackle real problems with their counterparts, which effect change in the real world by helping each other."* (Newbold, 1982, cited in McLaughlin and Thorpe, 1993: p. 19).

Therefore, the real manager should seek to display a group-orientated approach to learning. The value of learning implies that as individuals we can suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine thinking together (Senge, 1990). The myth of what an ALS is supposed to provide could give cause for further clarification. The initial belief is that individuals will come to know themselves and their temporary setting much better. In particular, they will become aware of the dominance of political competition and the influence of power on decision-making. Such an understanding provides awareness of

the forces working within the ALS. Arguably, it could be recognised that it is beneficial to have these temporary working settings. By extension, these groupings could encourage openness, engagement, creativity, and shared learning between team members.

Upon reflection, if I had known at the time that I would conclude my research investigating storytelling I could have taken my ALS meetings more closely. This is not to say that I did not learn from my peers. On the contrary, I learnt a great deal from my cohort. However, at the time, I was more cautious about being in an ALS. Bearing in mind that this was not the first appearance on which I had been in one. I had previously endured the experience whilst I was undertaking my Masters of Arts (MA) and prior to that the Diploma of Management Studies (DMS) course. However, I had wrongly assumed that I had experienced every possible classroom situation in academia. Consequently, I had convinced myself that I would be interacting with professional people and would not encounter any identity power games. Oh boy, was I mistaken! The next entry in my diary was *'here we go again.'* The emotions that unfolded appeared stronger than in previous experiences. At that point, I was apprehensive about what I would face ahead with regards to individuals' attitudes and behaviours. The implication of my last assertion was that I could not exclude myself from the equation. In fact, I was more intrigued to understand more of what was about to happen to me.

6.1.1 Allocation to an action learning set

Initially assigned to the *'South Nottingham Learning Set'*, the group started with eight members, half of which were lecturers from various universities, including Nottingham Trent University. Mistakenly I had thought that the assembling of people from different working sectors (academia, public, and private sectors) would provide the opportunity to share knowledge across the identified boundaries. To my dismay, this was not the case. The group, my peers – if I could use that word with the same intent – would act with an air of egotism.

The colleagues who provided continual support were not the other members of my ALS. At the time, the support came in the shape of other members on the DBA cohort programme and my two academic supervisors. On occasion, support also came from academic friends in other universities. The main type of support that I would have

expected each member to provide to the other related to the process rather than the specifics of each other's study – that was discussed with supervisors.

After the third ALS meeting, my diary entry said *'there must be a get-out-clause'*, as I would have taken it. As my research was not set in concrete, I felt unsure and nervous because everyone in the ALS displayed an air of confidence. In this instance, it appeared that some of the members were *'construct[ing] reality through authoritative acts'* (Weick, 1995: p. 31). However, I then wrote in my diary: *'Are the other members hiding their uncertainty?'* While I did not share the others' sureness, it did put me at a disadvantage not only with the other members, but also with my two assigned academic supervisors.

I acknowledge that I was very hesitant about my research. As such, this also reflected in the supervisory meetings with my academic supervisors. As the DBA cohort classes and supervisory meetings progressed, this particular fear was aggravated, to be replaced by my underlined note *'I think that I am going to fail at the first hurdle.'* My fears were eventually confirmed when I was informed that Document One had been failed by both supervisors. I remember arriving home from work and seeing a pile of letters addressed to me. I quickly sifted through the envelopes and saw one postmarked 'NBS'. 'I will open this one first', I told myself once I had had a hot drink to calm down from the day's pressures. After reading the contents of the letter, I should have had a double brandy instead. I was in shock and so extremely upset that I could not focus on anything else. My immediate reaction was to telephone a friend; however, whom could I speak to in the DBA cohort? At this point, I did not know whom to trust, and as such, I was panicking.

The next time the ALS group met, I took the risk and spoke to the members about my predicament. At the time, I thought that it was worth sharing with the group, as it was possible that I might be surprised. If I could have turned back time and erased the memories of everyone seated in the room, I would have. It was the worse reception I have had to experience. I remained emotionally withdrawn for the rest of my time with the group. Arguably, it could be perceived that *'people are [not] concerned with getting along'* (O'Brien, 1990: 347) regardless of the circumstance.

Subsequent to this event, I attended the next DBA cohort class with the intention that that would be my last time at NBS. On the morning of the class, I drove up to

Nottingham, which felt like driving to my own *'execution.'* I sat through all the classes but was oblivious to their contents. Various cohort members tried to converse with me, but my emotions were getting the better of me.

Upon meeting with Colin Fisher and Jim Stewart, I was given the opportunity to change both academic supervisors. With the change of academic supervisors, I eventually jumped the first hurdle. Upon receiving the *'confirmation letter'* from the University for Document One, my next diary entry said *'Bloody hell … I do believe that I can do this!'* I continued to meet the ALS, although the stimulus to engage became harder, especially when I heard other members saying *'Well, why do we have to have these sets? I do not have any problems.'* After several ALS meetings listening to a member repeat the same abovementioned phrase it did not take long before a member of the group decided to leave and join another team. I should have followed but I did not. *'Why not?'* I hear you ask? Even though this individual annoyed me, it was not enough to make me leave the family nest. That said this person was no different to some colleagues that I speak with every day at work. Besides, part of the process was that I wanted to test my own behaviour and attitude to the situation.

Personally, I consider myself a quiet person, although some of my work colleagues, friends, and family would argue with that self-description. Nevertheless, people who have to play centre stage always intrigue me. As stated by William O'Brien, it could be argued that *'the disease of games playing [could] dominate people's behaviour in face-to-face meetings'* (cited in Senge, 1990: p. 182). On these special occasions, I tend to shift my focus to how often the individual stops to take a breath of air. Sometimes, the fear of someone else taking the limelight tends to encourage the individual to continue to converse without the use of oxygen. As the saying goes, *'it is always good to allow someone who loves to talk to talk, because sooner or later you'll find out how full of "it" they really are.'*

The attempt to catch up with the rest of the DBA cohort became impossible. As such, the attendance of the classes was worrying, as I was not aligned with the course input. That said I would go forward to the next stage of the research with a more optimistic attitude. The feedback received for the completion of Document Two was '*pass with minor amendments'*, which was well received. The change of direction in the research appeared to be a good decision. Now I was looking forward to Document Three to undertake some actual investigative work in my organisation.

The turning point came when I commenced Document Three. This paper allowed me to be engrossed in the experience and find my true approach to undertaking research – interpretative research. Although the group had served me a heavy blow, I thought that I would attempt to continue to interact with them, because I did not wish to isolate myself from the group. The advantage would be to gain from their advanced knowledge in the preparation of the impending documents. I appeared to be invisible to the group; therefore, I took the opportunity to make some valuable notes. Although it was disheartening to be in a recurring *'Groundhog Day'* dream, I did see a light at the end of the tunnel.

6.1.2 The unforeseen timeout

All the lecture sessions had ended whilst undertaking Document Three. However, I felt uncertain whether I could continue without some form of guidance. I anticipated that I would not receive any help from my ALS, as the group was on target to complete the DBA programme. However, I had urgent matters to worry about – I found out that I would have to be subjected to a short time in hospital. Of course, my thoughts were diverted, as I now had another decision to make which could hinder my presence at work and university. At university, it was no longer a necessity to inform my ALS. Therefore, I utilised the timeout to complete Document Three.

During a supervisory visit to meet with Colin Fisher, I received some very good feedback on Document Three. This was good news considering that I was on sick leave at the time. It was my intent to ask whether it was possible to attend the current cohort classes in order to allow me to maintain contact with another ALS. Subsequent to a discussion with Colin Fisher, it was agreed that I could resume classes with the latest DBA cohort. After what I had recently gone through, I felt that I could not experience anything more shocking. Were these famous last words about to serve me another blow?

6.1.3 Is someone smiling down on me?

I attended the lectures with the new cohort. This provided the opportunity to repeat the experience of working with another ALS. In addition, it allowed me to participate in the programmed taught sessions. My next diary entry said *'Is someone smiling down on me?'* This cohort was different from the previous group that I had had the privilege to

meet. As such, the two-day session went well. I was relieved that I had taken the decision to attend the classes again. The next log entry said *'Things can only get better.'*

I found the new ALS refreshing to work with. The group had a good mix of individuals who were not influenced by power status. In fact, these group members actually engaged and shared their ideas and problems. This welcoming and safe environment encouraged me to contribute to the discussions without fear of making mistakes or being ignored. The dialogue within the ALS was diverse and enjoyable. It is easy to ask why I did not meet this cohort earlier on. However, I am a believer that things happen in our lives for a reason.

6.1.4 The guardian angel

Whilst undertaking Document Four, I experienced some access problems within my organisation, which could have hindered the completion of this paper and perhaps the rest of the research. After discussing the issues with my ALS, the group advised me to ask the course lecturers about the possibility of having a mentor. That said, as I work in a predominantly male environment, this proposed mentor would need to be a female. This request was by no means a reflection on the two assigned course supervisors. I believed that I was at an unwinnable point of my journey at work, which needed a feminine perspective. I had anticipated that this relationship would be brief. However, the brief encounter could provide the reassurance to continue my journey. A discussion with Colin Fisher and Susanne Tietze appeared to answer my prayer. Upon receipt of an email about a potential contact, the decision remained with me to pursue further. The preliminary meeting with the potential individual proved to be a success. It was agreed that my mentor would meet me on a regular basis to *'inject some reassurance, and keep me on the path.'* I did not miss an opportunity to meet with the assigned mentor. She provided the additional strength and encouragement to stay focussed. Personally, I would recommend that the university offer this mentoring support to students who might not receive appropriate guidance from their respective organisations. The support of the ALS and the mentor is a good formula to help a potential student to continue on his or her journey.

6.1.5 Should this really be happening?

With the continuous internal politics taking place in the HR group, this part of the research, obtaining information for Document Four, was an *'undesirable situation'* (Smith: 1988: p. 1491). On several occasions, I asked myself *'Why am I doing this?'* To *'move through the barriers'* was the answer (Senge, 1990: p. 5), and having experienced so many knocks I had contemplated leaving the organisation. However, after several discussions with friends, family members, course supervisors, and my mentor I decided to remain with the organisation until I completed my studies.

Perhaps it is hard for other individuals to envisage what I have had to sacrifice to consider such an academic course. I anticipate that many people might not appreciate the decision made to undertake this journey. As such, I have lost and found new friends on this expedition. Arguably, it has not been easy to explain why I could not come out to play because I have to finish my homework. The life that I knew before has been dormant whilst I adventure on this path. I do not imagine that I can return to the way things were. In fact, why would I consider such a choice? The flux of emotions experienced during the programme has at times made me uncertain of my capabilities. This impression remains unchanged.

6.1.6 Time to believe in myself

A latecomer to the cohort, it was refreshing not to encounter any of the previous group problems. This ALS undoubtedly made a difference by allowing me to repeat the classes and participate with a group. As a group, we were investigating different topics; however, we were able to share and converse about ideas and problems. To me, this setting did demonstrate action learning in practice. For instance, it enabled the team to learn through the *'processes of problem-solving and reflection'* (Harker and Brennan, 2003: p. 420). Although a temporary scenario, it allowed me to experience open communication, which included a level of trust between us. It is interesting to reflect on why these group members seem to work well together. I believe that the *'willingness to try'* (Kuhn, 1970a: p. 91) to learn through challenging our understanding to develop our competencies was a key component.

For my part, the *'evolution of [my] consciousness'* (Senge, 1990: p. 347) to seek confidence has taken time to grow. There is, though, another part to convert and *'this is the need for a leap of faith'* (McLaughlin and Thorpe, 2001: p. 25). The notion to *'cope*

alone using essentially a diary' (Baker and Berenbaum, 2007: p. 115) was a constructive approach to capture and follow my development over the DBA programme. It should also be noted that *'Me-Here-and-Now'* (Revans, 1982: p. 636) enables me to continue to reflect and endeavour to develop myself the ability to discover new methods (Tolstoy, 1967). I believe that this is supposed to happen.

6.1.7 So what have I become?

The exposure to working in different forms of research has broadened my development skills for undertaking investigative work. Documents Three and Five provided the opportunity to do interpretative study, which I preferred. Perhaps, because I prefer interacting with individuals to seek the answers to organisations practices, traditions, and rituals. Most of all, individuals reaffirm what organisations do tend to take for granted about their values and beliefs. Document Four (structured research) was both the least and most difficult paper to complete. This was due to my scepticism about the information provided by the organisation and the internal barriers that I had to endure. If I had undertaken the necessary research work myself, then perhaps I would have been more receptive to the data.

As such, I am mindful that I have become assertive about challenging and questioning *'whatever is handed'* (Weick, 1995: p. 113) to me on a plate. Is this the supposed behaviour of a researcher in the making? Weick's work has been valuable to me in my research and understanding of sense-making in connection with organisational communication. His proposal to *'use one's own life as data'* (p. 191) has changed the way I perceive and interpret everyday events. Whenever possible, I automatically go into investigative mode to interpret the situation or circumstances and then *'deliberately look for disconfirming data'* (Weick, 1979: pp. 224–228). It appears that I have turned into a disbeliever; however, this self-analysis does not fit well with me. Alternatively, I would describe myself as an investigator, a new 'Columbo'. Like in the TV programme, the crime or problem has already been committed, and the Lieutenant has to find the culprit and the cause.

This enlightened awareness has provided an understanding about the use of language in organisational storytelling. Even corporate communication has been subject to this new scrutiny. However, this has progressively developed during the final part of my

research. Considering that I have examined organisational communication, perhaps this outcome should not come as a surprise.

6.2 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Once again, I acknowledge that my previous experience of being a university student did not prepare me for the DBA programme. My knowledge of doing literature reviews for my Master's degree was not nearly as extensive as required for this programme. I took the liberty of comparing both levels of work, and there is a massive gap between them. The difficulty that I now encountered for the DBA related to the management and organisation of the literature gathered: how would I keep track of what could be useful literature and references?

As previously mentioned in Documents Four and Five, I am unconvinced that I will receive any recognition within my organisation for my achievement. Arguably, my present working environment appears not to provide the appropriate space to grow and continue my development. As such, I believe that the current working setting is not the ideal way forward to ensure exposure in the right arena. That said I am at a crossroad of my continuous journey where I do not feel that whatever is conveyed could satisfy my needs and expectations. I have taken this journey on my own without being a member of a group within my organisation. The support of the Champions (Managing Director), in other words *'phone-a-friend'*, provided the vehicle to guarantee a clear passage. That said, whatever is said, I believe will be insincere, and perhaps I am likely to focus on what they are not saying! However, several work colleagues have repeatedly told me that I will not hear any senior management say *'thank you'* – it will never happen and I should take my head out of the clouds.

In Document Five, Chapter 5.9, I mentioned my lack of confidence. In Document Six, Section 6.1.5, I discussed my emotions and the missing self-belief. I believe that these thoughts are beginning to change. To assist this new development, I have started to attend various peer-working networks. The first was an inaugural lecture by Professor Sue McKnight, my mentor. That was an experiential evening. I had intended to be inconspicuous; however, my mentor had alternative plans. Several family members and departmental colleagues were introduced to me during the course of the evening. As such, I found that a change of social environment certainly seemed to make a difference to my behaviour regarding conversing in confidence. That evening my diary entry said, *'I*

should attend more events like these.' On that premise, I have done as I set out to do. A recent *'Yes We Will'* Education Initiative in Birmingham that is aimed at under-achieving children provided me with the opportunity to utilise my skills with proficient teachers, parents, and Senior Education Advisors. As such, I have been invited as a speaker for the second phase of the programme.

In addition, I have attended a 'Teachers' Network Forum' in Birmingham as a non-participant observer. However, my position changed as the group members (30 in total) wanted to hear about my experiences and whether they could be converted to a classroom situation. At the end of the evening, an exchange of contact details was undertaken. Furthermore, I had to promise to present at the next meeting in a few months' time. Recently, I attended a one-day Vitae workshop at Nottingham University for 'Part-Time Researchers …' The course was for PhD and DBA students. The meeting provided the opportunity to meet peers from two different camps. In addition, the session provided further development and training opportunities for postgraduate researchers, of which I intend to take full advantage. I shared the information with the other cohort members to make use of the available links. At work, I was introduced to a client who is currently doing a PhD. He requested an audience with me to compare notes on writing up our theses. During our brief meeting, we discussed our relevant research topics. He was very interested in my topic, and requested that we meet again.

Perhaps it should no longer come as a surprise that I have more interest in the research outside my own organisation. As expected, the individuals who participated in the study are the only ones who appear to want to know about my progress. As such, my intent is to continue to interact with the ALS and partake in equivalent professional networks to engage with peers and practitioners. The introduction to these external sources of expertise has given me the self-confidence to emerge in public. To strengthen my confidence I will continue to pursue this path.

6.3   RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

In this section, I reflect on aspects of my experience associated with how the DBA project developed and how I managed that development. As discussed, the start of this journey did not go as positively as would be expected. Even now, I am unsure of whether I have embellished this fact too much. However, this element appears to be at the forefront of my predicament. That said I am at a turning point where which I feel

more comfortable about my achievements. My research has evolved to meet a level of expectation that I honestly did not believe I could fulfil. I am not a betting person; however, if I were to be in the Grand National, I would probably be the *'outsider'* who is predicted to come in last or not finish the course.

As previously mentioned, I had not previously undertaken a literature review on such a large scale. Now I was faced with the mammoth task of collating and documenting the information. As I got further into the literature not only did I start to appreciate that many themes could be seen to encroach on my subject area, but also I had to be more focussed on deciding which of them were key and needed to be taken forward. The result of this experience and subsequent reflection was that I reviewed and revised my conceptual framework to allow the research to evolve. The multifaceted concoction of the *'quantity, ambiguity, and variety of information'* (Weick, 1995: p. 87) available was overwhelming. As the load multiplied, it became unmanageable, and as such, I began with the omission, filtering, and abstracting to endeavour to cope with the piles of collected data. I believe that the change of direction at the beginning of the research has provided a pragmatic approach to learning. On that notion, I believe that I have made a huge transformation to achieve this academic level. Thus, I have acquired a level of knowledge and the opportunity to share my expertise. I strongly believe that a *'person is not measured by success alone when they reach their pinnacle, but whether the individual provides the opportunity for others to follow.'* I consider that my fate for the future, which is shaping how I proceed.

6.4   THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE

I have found writing this document stimulating and as challenging as writing the previous five. I often read a few chapters of my previous documents to see how much my tone of voice has changed over time. I have undertaken this exercise on several occasions. I confess that I cringe at a poorly chosen word, or a distorted sentence. I cannot truthfully say, however, that in future years, I may find trivial errors in documents 5 and 6, and kick myself for not spotting them earlier. The ongoing attention to defining and monitoring my behaviour while on this emotional journey continue to play a part of my life. Despite the discomfort experienced, this supports the notion that:

> *"Through reflection, [we] can surface and criticise the tacit understanding that have grown up around the experiences of a specialised practice."* (Schön, 1995: p. 61)

I have found that taking a *'Reflective Moment'* after each document has been a continuous development experience in itself. As Weick (1995: p. 193) explains, *'it is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products. The mind now thinks; now acts; and each fit reproduces the other.'* I have completed a further Honey and Mumford (1986) Learning Style Questionnaire and discovered an interesting shift between my adopted learning styles in that there was an indication of some increased acceptance of both Activist and Reflector learning styles – possibly a demonstration of my improved thinking. I believe that my preference for being a Reflector no longer has a place at my table!

By undertaking the study, I have unavoidably put my own values at *'risk'* (Scot et al., 2004: p. 9). However, I would readily embark on the journey again. The result of these findings has provided the awareness and credence to illuminate my emotional concerns. It has often been observed that confidence is a *'crucial determinant'* (Weick, 1995: p. 184). I have appraised my impact on the research and how it has influenced me and I feel that I have achieved this objective through having been introduced to new ways of thinking and talking. Recognisably at work, I find myself able to converse in an articulate and logical way. I have also noticed that my vocabulary has been enhanced, which has changed the way in which people speak to me. As such, this is with the *'belief that this [change] will be for the better'* (McLaughlin and Thorpe, 1993: p. 20).

As pointed out by Harker and Brennan (2003: p. 422) the importance of action learning is *'best learned through experience.'* As such, the DBA experience has allowed me to venture out of my comfort zone to *'answer difficult work-related questions in conditions of risk and confusion'* (McLaughlin and Thorpe, 1993: p. 21). The development of the appropriate 'tools for thinking' should be used as a catalyst to reposition me in new dimensions. So what is in store for my next chapter? I cannot predict the future; however, I believe that I am in control of what I wish to pursue. As a result, perhaps *'people [can] learn about their identities by projecting them into an environment and observing the consequences'* (Weick, 1995: p. 23). Upon such a journey, can we then know who we really are?

6.5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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