

“It’s the story of storytelling”

(Mechteld van Wezel, Graduation thesis, 2011)

Graduation thesis of...

“It’s the story of storytelling”

Eindhoven, 07 – 06 – 2011

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Preface – No guts, no glory

Writing my thesis was a new and exciting challenge that started in January 2011. In this few months many things happened. It started with my job application at Schneider Electric in Paris. An impulsive 'I can try' and 'why not' action that resulted in a graduation period abroad at one of the biggest companies in the world. A migration from the small, Dutch Eindhoven, to the huge, French, city of love, Paris. A change of home, education, work, environment, language, friends, food and everyday life to grasp this fantastic opportunity. Because: No guts no glory!

Besides for new experiences and a lot of fun, I was in Paris to write my thesis and to experience the communication field in real life. During this four months I learned that every story has a begin, middle and end. There is a hero who encounters a conflict in the middle part of the story, also called the reversal. After the reversal, the hero solves the problem and becomes a wiser and better person. This also applies for me.

The beginning of this report is the assignment as it was when I started my internship. How closer the middle part came to me, the more critical insights and question marks occurred. This led to the reversal, a refocus of the thesis assignment. In the second half of this report, the conflict is solved, a solution is found, the process is created and a decent advice is formulized. In the end I became a wiser person.

At this moment I can say that I have no regrets. I lived the Parisian, working life and I enjoyed it to the fullest!

Of course, I could not do all this by myself. So I want to use this preface to send some love and thanks to the people who made this memorable and educational period and my thesis possible. First of all, Kim Beddard-Fontaine who gave me the opportunity to join the corporate Internal Communication team in the headquarters of Schneider Electric in Rueil Malmaison. Second, my Schneider Electric supervisor, Simona Radu, who gave me a lot to consider and stimulated me to rethink everything more than twice. Related to this, I want to thank all my colleagues for their time, openness, sincerity and all the great moments we shared together. Furthermore a big thanks too Nicole Toebast, supervising teacher, who motivated me to never give up and convince everybody of my professional added value. My roommates, Elselien Küpers and Camille Havis, who were always there. And last but not least, a special thanks to my very good friend, Alex Malone, who came to visit me in Paris but had to give up her sightseeing Sunday to have an extended brainstorm with me about the corporate storytelling concept.

"It is not about the life you lived, but about the stories you can tell about it"

(Gabriel Garcia Marquez)

Because of the complexity of the organization and assignment, the peak and down moments, the distance from my old life, all the new experience and the creating of a new life, I look back on a wonderful, inspiring and educational period. A once in a life time experience and a great story to tell.

Mechteld van Wezel
07 – 06 – 2011

“Employees should become ambassadors of Schneider Electric. They should be able to explain everything to other people. And express themselves. Like people who love fashion. They can talk about it for hours. They read about it, know about it, think about it. It should be the same for Schneider Electric in employees’ minds.”

(Simona Radu, 2011)



Summary – Let me tell you what I heard...

Schneider Electric

“Between energy generation and its usage, Schneider Electric provides technology and integrated solutions to optimize energy usage in markets like energy & infrastructure, industry, data centers, buildings and residential. The organization has always been driven by an international, innovative and responsible mindset to shape the transformation of the industry it was evolving in. This was steel in the 19th century, electrical distribution in the 20th and energy management in the 21st.”

This evolution needs sharing, communication and reinforcement. One of the current tools for that is corporate storytelling. It gives a concrete context to abstract terms like vision, mission, core values and strategy. But nevertheless, at this moment a simple, understandable, general story is missing.

The main motivation for Schneider Electric to use corporate storytelling is that the complex story of the organization has to be explained to employees in a simple and understandable way. All people in the organization should see a clear connection between their position and the organization's objectives. Corporate storytelling helps them feel connected and committed to Schneider Electric.

Main question and sub questions

During the approach phase I formulated the following main question:

‘How can a business-to-business organization as Schneider Electric create a unique corporate story to generate a strong link between people and the company?’

With the purpose of answering the main question, eight sub questions are formulated.

1. What is Schneider Electric?
2. What is the power of a corporate story?
3. What is the difference between corporate stories for b-to-b and b-to-c organizations?
4. What are useful theories about corporate stories?
5. What is the best corporate story for a b-to-b organization and how can I create it?

6. What is the current status of the story that employees tell within and about Schneider Electric?
7. (“as is” diagnosis)
8. What is the corporate story of Schneider Electric?

Critical insights and question marks

Based on the analyze of the organization, literature and own knowledge, this critical insights and question marks occurred:

Critical insights

- A clear description of vision, mission statement and strategy of the organization is missing.
- Corporate storytelling is needed and desired. But a process for it is missing.
- Collaboration and empowerment need more practical implementation.
- The vision on internal communication is in line with the organization structure.
- Vision on internal communication, mission statement and Future of Internal Communication are not corresponding to each other.
- A shift from one-way communication to two-way communication is essential.
- Change is difficult in the organization structure of Schneider Electric. Mission statement and Future for Internal Communication are maybe not achievable for Schneider Electric.
- In a machine bureaucracy corporate storytelling is not possible.

Question marks

- What is relevant for my thesis?
- Is all employees the correct target audience?
- Is the main question concrete enough as a guideline for this thesis?
- Has the survey enough priority?
- Are the results of the survey really used?
- Is this survey really motivating for people to respond?
- Is the right thing measured?
- Is there really storytelling going on in Schneider Electric?
- What is the added value of this thesis for Internal Communication?
- What exactly does Internal Communication want from me?

Refocus

The consequence of all these critical insights and question marks was a refocus of the thesis assignment.

New main question and sub questions

In consultation with both supervisors a new main question is formulated:

'How can Internal Communication implement a structured and formalized process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric?'

The answer on the central question is based on new sub questions:

1. Who is the company that this story is about?
2. Who is Internal Communication?
3. What is internal communication?
4. What is corporate storytelling, its function and its objective?
5. What is the concept to improve the corporate storytelling process in Schneider Electric?
6. What other steps are needed to reach the objective of the corporate storytelling process?
7. How can the corporate storytelling process be implemented in Schneider Electric?

New role

My new role is to use the gained experiences, critical insights and question marks to support Internal Communication by finding the answer to the new main question. With this thesis I try to open their eyes about their current status and what is needed to improve the corporate storytelling by themselves.

Internal communication

To receive a better insight in Internal Communication its functions and vision, interviews with several members of the department are done. By these interviews, new critical insights and question marks occurred:

Critical insights

- The vision of the team is in accordance with the previous mentioned vision related to the machine bureaucracy.
- According to corporate Internal Communication employees, informed people are connected people.

- Vision is indeed not in line with mission statement and Future for Internal Communication

Question marks

- Is 'to who we are and what we do' not top-down?
- What and for who is a business partner intended?
- What is the objective of Internal Communication?
- Are they really going in the right direction?
- How can you deliver One communication experience without an objective?
- Are the right tools used?

Two visions on internal communication

The solution to these critical insights and question is found in theory. Erik Reijnders says that there are two distinct visions on internal communication.

- The action vision on internal communication. This is a more traditional vision which focuses on internal communication as a (management) tool. It is about transferring the key messages.
- The interaction vision on communication. This more recent view focuses on internal communication as two-way communication and is about the interpretation of the meaning of a message.

Two visions on corporate storytelling

With the insight that there are two visions on internal communication, it can be said that there are two visions on corporate storytelling as well.

- Storytelling based on the action vision – 'your story'
- and storytelling based on the interaction vision – 'our story'.

Corporate storytelling process

Now organization, Internal Communication and theory about corporate storytelling are analyzed, the other steps to implement a structured and formalized process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric can be filled in.

The content consists of 'what – the conflict', 'who – the hero', and 'where – the environment'. This is the basis for the concept that can be executed in both visions on corporate storytelling. The last elements, consisting of the 'how' and 'when' are executed by a collaborative workshop with the corporate Internal Communication team.

Index – play list of the story

• Preface – No guts, no glory	2	5. ... so, meet the hero...	21
• Summary – Let me tell you what I heard...	3	5.1 ...named the Internal Communication team...	21
1. Introduction – Once upon a time...	6	5.2 ...with a vision on internal communication...	22
1.1 ...there was an organization...	6	5.3 ...that provides critical insights...	22
1.2 ...that had a motivation...	6	5.4 ...and question marks	23
1.3 ...for an assignment...	6	6. ...and the vision on internal communication of others...	25
1.4 ...with a practical starting point...	6	6.1 ...in theory...	25
1.5 ...and an aim...	7	6.2 ...and my vision on internal communication	27
1.6 ...that result in a main question...	7	7. ...but also listen to what the wise men say...	30
1.7 ...with sub questions...	7	7.1 ...about storytelling...	30
1.8 ...that needs a good approach...	7	7.2 ...and its function and objective	31
1.9 ...and some notes in advance	8	8. ...about raw materials for the story setting...	35
2. ...there was a multinational company...	9	8.1 ...that consists of content...	35
2.1 ...called Schneider Electric...	9	8.2 ...covers all conditions...	37
2.2 ...that is divided in divisions...	10	8.3 ...and is based on a great inspiration...	37
2.3 ...has a structure...	10	8.4 ...that provides the concept that covers all...	38
2.4 ...and an Internal Communication department...	10	8.5 ...can be executed in both visions...	40
3. ...with some critical insights...	12	8.6 ...and provides two different roles for Internal Communication	41
3.1 ...in organisation and Internal Communication...	12	9. ...and how the story comes alive...	43
3.2 ...and question marks in my thesis	13	9.1 ...by a workshop with the team...	43
4. ...that resulted in a refocus...	16	9.2 ...and suggestions for the next steps	43
4.1 ...based on all previous elements...	16	10. ...so that in the end, they lived happily ever after...	45
4.2 ...and discussions with my supervisor...	16	10.1 ...with my advice	45
4.3 ...I changed the thesis assignment...	17	• Sources – Inspirational stories are everywhere...	47
4.4 ...and choose a new approach...	18	• Attachments – ...for the ones who want to read more	49
4.5 ...with extra conclusions and notes in advance	20		

1. Introduction – Once upon a time...

- 1.1 ...there was an organization...
- 1.2 ...that had a motivation...
- 1.3 ...for an assignment...
- 1.4 ...with a practical starting point
- 1.5 ...and an aim...
- 1.6 ...that result in a main question...
- 1.7 ...with sub questions...
- 1.8 ...that needs a good approach...
- 1.9 ...and some notes in advance

1. Introduction – Once upon a time...

1.1 ...there was an organization...

“Between energy generation and its usage, Schneider Electric provides technology and integrated solutions to optimize energy usage in markets like energy & infrastructure, industry, data centers, buildings and residential. With a unique portfolio in electrical distribution, industrial automation, critical power & cooling, building management and security, Schneider Electric is the only global specialist in energy management and a world leader in energy efficiency”.¹

Schneider Electric is a company that offers products and solutions related to energy usage. It has a diverse history and a promising present and future. “Schneider Electric has always been driven by an international, innovative and responsible mindset to shape the transformation of the industry it was evolving in. This was steel in the 19th century, electrical distribution in the 20th and energy management in the 21st”.² This evolution needs sharing, communication and reinforcement. One of the current tools for that is corporate storytelling.

1.2 ...that had a motivation...

A corporate story builds a bridge between organization and communication. At this moment most organizations only communicate their mission and core values to the internal and external target groups. The disadvantage of these statements is that they are rarely unique. But a corporate story is, because it gives context to the mission and the values. This is important for the employees to really understand the organization.

“I love to work, as long it is work that I love”

(Johan Cruijff)

The main motivation for Schneider Electric to shape a corporate story is that the complex story of the organization has to be explained to employees in a simple and understandable way. With a corporate story Schneider Electric wants to create a better motivated pool of employees made up of the best people and

who are proud of working in this organization. Furthermore employees should see a clear connection between their position and the organization’s objectives. That is why the process is an important part of the creating of a corporate story. Corporate storytelling helps them feel connected and committed to Schneider Electric.

Storytelling for internal motivation

Storytelling gives meaning, context, direction and insight into an organization and provides a framework for the internal target group. By telling stories, people make sense of situations and give meaning to their work. This thesis focuses on this group, consisting of all employees including management.

Storytelling for external motivation

The corporate story enhances employees to live the brand. As an organization you can communicate these real stories to the external target group. In this way you can optimize the stakeholders experience and their involvement because they feel committed and fascinated by the organization. An interesting target group but in my thesis I do not focus on them.

1.3 ...for an assignment...

Schneider Electric is a business-to-business organization. This asks for another culture and way of working for the employees than within a business-to-consumer organization. Since products and solutions are more complex in a b-to-b organization, the story of the company is more complex as well. Even so the similarity remains that in the end both types of organizations work with and for people. This asks for a unique corporate storytelling strategy.

Steps

- Do a research to corporate story strategies, combine them and add some steps to create a corporate story strategy for b-to-b organizations.
- Find the right solution for Schneider Electric to create one corporate story for all countries, entities and business.
- Involve, connect, bind, inspire and motivate all employees in a simple, clear and easy to understand strategic corporate storytelling approach.

1.4 ...with a practical starting point

Besides the corporate story part, I received an extra assignment of Internal Communication. As a starting point for the corporate storytelling my colleagues, Marie and Simona, and I have to set up a survey to analyze the current status

¹ <http://www.schneider-electric.com/sites/corporate/en/group/company-profile.page>

² <http://www.schneider-electric.com/sites/corporate/en/group/company-profile.page>

of Schneider Electrics Internal Communication. Is the story that internal communication sends to the employees the same as what they tell about the organization to other people? Do people actually understand the internal communication as it was intended? Or is there a gap between what the employees tell and where the organization wants to go? If yes, what is the gap exactly? And how can strategic corporate storytelling improve this? By this practical starting point I can learn a lot about the organization and its employees. This will bring essential insights for my thesis.

For the survey a structure is needed. That is why, together with the corporate Internal Communication colleagues, we deliver format, content, questions, a profile of the people who are needed, how many people and reactions are necessary for a reliable result, make a mailing list and find a balance between qualitative and quantitative research methods. After this is set up, a team working usually with surveys will refine the structure and questions based on our guidelines. Eventually the survey will be executed in a technical way and the answers reverted to Internal Communication. The conclusions will be translated into further actions. Personally I use these as an “as is” diagnosis of the environment.

1.5 ...and an aim...

The aim of this thesis is to advice Schneider Electric how a corporate story can help employees to see a clear connection between their position and the organization's objectives. This is done in order for employees to feel more connected and committed to Schneider Electric as they are now.

1.6 ...that result in a main question...

During the approach phase I formulized the main question. By finding the answer to this question I provide a decent advice for Internal Communication.

Main question

‘How can a business-to-business organization as Schneider Electric create a unique corporate story to generate a strong link between people and the company?’

1.7 ...with sub questions...

With the purpose of answering the main question, eight sub questions are formulized.

9. What is Schneider Electric?
10. What is the power of a corporate story?
11. What is the difference between corporate stories for b-to-b and b-to-c organizations?
12. What are useful theories about corporate stories?
13. What is the best corporate story for a b-to-b organization and how can I create it?
14. What is the current status of the story that employees tell within and about Schneider Electric?
15. (“as is” diagnosis)
16. What is the corporate story of Schneider Electric?

1.8 ...that needs a good approach

Based on the sub questions, several approach steps are defined:

1. **Explanation, introduction and practical approach phase**
Just as important as the stories themselves is the dynamic, telling, catching and formulating of the story. Therefore I need to discover the stories about the organization and discover the brand. That is why I start with exploring the organization.
2. **Survey phase**
A survey for all employees is needed in order to see what employees think of their internal communication and to measure the understanding and impact of Internal Communication. An extra assignment given to me by corporate Internal Communication.
3. **Theoretical phase**
There are theories about storytelling. I want to research and analyze them in order to combine them to one ideal theory for business-to-business companies.
4. **Proposal phase**
Find the right solution for Schneider Electric to create one corporate story for all countries, entities and businesses. If the diagnosis results will need further analysis, I will take part in face-to-face meetings and interviews with selected employees.
5. **Advice phase**
Describe these elements into a graduation thesis.

1.9 ...and some notes in advance

- The structure of this thesis is determined by the chronicle order of my thesis period. It starts with my initial, to abstract plan of approach in chapter 1, works to a concrete refocus in chapter 4. The second half of this report follows a complete process that results in a thorough advice in chapter 10.
- By using literature, own knowledge and results of desk and field research, the sub questions are answered.
- The thesis is written in English because of the international aspect of Schneider Electric and the internship abroad.
- 'Internal Communication' with capital letters is the Internal Communication department in Schneider Electric.
- 'internal communication' without capital letters is the execution of the function internal communication.
- This thesis is about internal communication and storytelling. These terms are represented in the structure, lay-out and writing style of this thesis. Not too scientific, but an easily written story, that can be read fluently. This is a conscious choice.
- Different colours are used in the chapters. Black and grey are the main thesis. Green is statements of Schneider Electric and its employees. Pink are essential insights and question marks.

2. ...there was a multinational company...

2.1 ...called Schneider Electric...

2.2 ...that is divided in divisions...

2.3 ...has a structure...

2.4 ...and an Internal Communication department...



2. ...there was a multinational company...

In this chapter the main elements of the analyze phase are described. It gives an insight in who Schneider Electric is and how its Internal Communication department looks like.

2.1 ...called Schneider Electric...

'Schneider Electric is the world leader and specialist in energy management and efficiency. With over 100.000 employees in over 100 countries, Schneider Electric offers integrated solutions and technology to optimise energy. They make it safe, reliable, efficient, productive and green. Market segments are energy & infrastructure, industry, data centres, buildings and residential.' (Schneider Electric, 2011³)

2.1.1 Vision

A vision is the frame of reference, beliefs, viewpoint and perception of the organization. It shows Schneider Electrics view on life and society (Michels, 2011⁴) : 'A world where we can all achieve more while using less of our common planet'.

2.1.2 Mission

The mission is related to the vision. It describes why the organization exists, what people in the organization want to matter for each other, the organization and the society. (Koeleman, 2008⁵) Schneider Electric has a clear mission:

'Helping people make the most of our energy'.

This must lead to 'The global specialist in energy management'. (Schneider Electric⁶)

2.1.3 Core values

De core values of an organization are what it characterizes. It makes the organization different from other organizations. It is the soul and uniqueness of

the company. (Van Eck, Willems and Leenhouts, 2008⁷) Schneider Electric clearly defined its core values⁸:

- *Passionate – Passion for Customers, Passion for People, Positive*
- *Open – Curious, Collaborative, Cultivates Diversity*
- *Straightforward – Walk the Talk, Integrity, Talk Straight*
- *Effective – High Performance, Pragmatic, Fast*

2.1.4 Strategy

To me, strategy is the way the organization interacts with its internal and external environment. Schneider Electric has a strategy that is described by CEO Jean-Pascal Tricoire as follows: "Schneider Electric has a very clear vision of its strategy. We want to become the energy manager of our customers. We want to help our customers to make the most of their energy."⁹

2.1.5 Tactics

Schneider Electric uses tactics to achieve the strategy. As CEO Jean-Pascal Tricoire said: "We need a change of tactics. From managers decisions only, to collaboration and empowerment". (Schneider Electric Leadership Forum¹⁰)

Collaboration:

- Encourage honesty, transparency, open dialogue.
- Share talents, resources and know-how.
- Build bridges across functions and organizational boundaries.

Empowerment

- Delegate responsibility at the lowest level.
- Engage employees in dialogue and strategy.
- Reward employee's participation in the development of new ideas and initiatives.

⁷ Eck van, M., Willems, N., Leenhouts, E., Internal branding in de praktijk, Prentice Hall, 2008, page 116

⁸ <http://www.schneider-electric.com/sites/corporate/en/group/company-profile.page>

⁹ <http://aaf0110.fr.schneider-electric.com/global/corp/one/en/publication.nsf/F?ReadForm&ID=5472990E5180893BC12575EC0041EB2E&>

¹⁰ Video with feedback from the 2011 Leadership Forum Schneider Electric, Deauville, 02/02/2011 (available on the Intranet)

³ <http://www.schneider-electric.com/sites/corporate/en/group/company-profile.page>

⁴ Michels, W., Communicatie handboek, Noordhoff Uitgevers B.V., 2011, page 44

⁵ Koeleman, H., Interne communicatie als managementinstrument, Kluwer, 2008, page 69

⁶ <http://www.schneider-electric.com/sites/corporate/en/group/company-profile.page>

2.2 ...that is divided in divisions...

Schneider Electric is a multinational company with heterogeneous products and markets with offices and factories in different countries over the world. organization activities are grouped and divided in divisions (Van Dam & Marcus¹¹). These divisions are called entities by Schneider Electric.

The CEO is responsible for the general strategic planning and manages and monitors the results of the entities. For that, he uses the services of specialist departments. These departments can also be consulted by the entities. In addition, the entities have considerable autonomy and scope to attract private support services. One of these departments is Internal Communication.

2.3 ...has a structure...

Structure is the division of task, responsibility and competence and its compensation. The structure of an organization has to be defined in a way that communication is as efficient as possible. Structure divides the organization and Internal Communication heals it again. (Koeleman, 2008¹²) Mintzberg provides an important overview of common structures with different coordination mechanism and structure elements. (Mintzberg, 1991¹³)

2.3.1 Machine bureaucracy

According to Mintzberg, the organization structure of Schneider Electric is a machine bureaucracy. These organizations are most of the time big, old companies in mass production and mass services. They are characterized by a high amount of staff divisions who offer preparation of policy. Divisions have relatively high power because of the high level of specialization in the organization. Machine bureaucracies are log, slow and difficult to change. (Koeleman, 2008¹⁴)

2.3.2 Identity structure

Because of several acquisitions through the years, Schneider Electric has several brands, products and backgrounds. Identity structure is how an

organization links these different brands, products and backgrounds together. It creates uniformity in diversity and diversity is possible in unity. (Michels, 2011¹⁵)

Schneider Electric has an endorsed identity. Each brand has its own style, but the identity of Schneider Electric is also visible.

2.4 ...and an Internal Communication department...

The Schneider Electric charts start with the CEO, Jean-Pascal Tricoire, on the top. He has 18 top managers directly in his management team. One of them is Aaron Davis, top manager of Global Marketing. He has eleven people in his team, including Kim Beddard-Fontaine. She is manager of Managerial and Internal Communication. In my thesis called Internal Communication. (Schneider Electric charts, 2011¹⁶)

2.4.1 Vision on Internal Communication

Is not explicitly defined.

2.4.2 Mission statement of Internal Communication

A mission statement describes the basis philosophy of an organization. In one paragraph are core values and ambition described. (Michels, 2011¹⁷)

The mission statement of Schneider Electric is: 'Internal Communication acts as a business partner & internal consultant and, through timely, effective communication to our managers and all employees, a strong lever to:

- Serving the business ensuring understanding for strategy and direction and driving transformations through the organisation
- Alignment
- Employee engagement
- Facilitating the breaking of the silos between entities
- Ensuring confusion is eliminated! Make things simple!

This mission statement results in: 'Delivering 1 internal communication experience'.¹⁸

¹¹ Van Dam, N. & Marcus, J., Een praktijkgerichte benadering van Organisatie en Management, Wolters Noordhoff, 2005, page 425

¹² Koeleman, H., Interne communicatie als managementinstrument, Kluwer, 2008, page 71

¹³ Koeleman, H., Interne communicatie als managementinstrument, Kluwer, 2008, page 71

¹⁴ Koeleman, H., Interne communicatie als managementinstrument, Kluwer, 2008, page 73

¹⁵ Michels, W., Communicatie handboek, Noordhoff Uitgevers B.V., 2011, page 52

¹⁶ http://othello.fr.schneider-electric.com/organization_charts/index.htm

¹⁷ Michels, W., Communicatie handboek, Noordhoff Uitgevers B.V., 2011, page 45

¹⁸ <http://comagency.schneider-electric.com/comagency/en/sitemgr.nsf/HomePage?ReadForm>

2.4.3 The future of Internal Communication

An important guideline for Internal Communication and the future for the department is Melcrums research that is called: 'The future for Internal Communication'. Melcrum is a Strategic Communication Research Forum. It is an exclusive global membership group for senior internal communicators of several organizations who face the challenges of communicating in large, complex companies. Through best-practice research, the Forum provides insight, information and tools to communicate more effectively.¹⁹

In March 2011 there was an Internal Communication seminar in Barcelona. The whole corporate Internal Communication team (including me) and several local Internal Communication employees attended this three day meeting. During this meeting the future for Internal Communication of Melcrum is discussed related to Schneider Electric.

The future is about building trust in the organization. Dialogue and simplicity are important to make clear what Schneider Electric expects from its employees, but also vice versa. They have to manage the global/local balance and its different cultures and rituals. The company is heading to a collaborative workplace. They assess opportunities for transparency, openness and true dialogue and are arming managers to operate in a more open and autonomous environment. Sharing knowledge and motivating own initiatives provide commitment of employees and a more effective company.²⁰

2.4.4 Machine bureaucracy

Internal communication in a machine bureaucracy is standardized. When a written direction is not available, the decision is up to management. Coordination of the horizontal communication is difficult, because of the high specialization of the departments. Top-down communication is mostly written communication. Bottom-up communication is strictly formalized. (Koeleman, 2008²¹)

2.4.5 Identity structure

Schneider Electric has an endorsed identity. Because of several acquisitions through the years, it has several brands with a lot of different backgrounds. The brands and backgrounds are still visible within Schneider Electric. This makes it more complex to 'deliver 1 internal communication experience'. Although the complexity, the organization has to proof with their internal communication that the acquisitions have advantages for everybody in the organization.

¹⁹ <http://melcrum.com/index.shtml>

²⁰ Melcrum, Future for Internal Communication, 2011

²¹ Koeleman, H., Interne communicatie als managementinstrument, Kluwer, 2008, page 73

3. ...with some critical insights...

3.1 ...in organization and Internal Communication...

3.2 ...and question marks in my thesis

3. ...with some critical insights...

After the organization is analyzed, critical insights and question marks occurred. They are described in this section. Chapter 2 and 3 together give answer to the sub question 'Who is the company that this story is about?'

3.1 ...in organization and Internal Communication...

By the description of the elements that are mentioned in the previous paragraph I draw critical insights.

Critical insight 1 – A clear description of vision, mission statement and strategy of the organization is missing.

Schneider Electric is a b-to-b multinational with complex products and solutions. It has over 100.000 employees in over 100 countries divided in entities. Because of several acquisitions through the years, Schneider Electric has several brands, products and backgrounds and an endorsed identity. Vision, mission, core values and strategy are formulized. But the descriptions are abstract and not concrete enough to really understand. Not only for external stakeholders but also for all people in the company.

“Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification”

(Martin Fischer)

Critical insight 2 – Corporate storytelling is needed and desired. But a process for it is missing.

Corporate storytelling is used by organizations to give a context to their abstract information as a vision, mission and values. It is a unique, authentic process that explains the company in a simple, real and emotional way. This is important for the employees to really understand the organization. If they understand, it is easier to involve, connect, bind, inspire and motivate them in a short and clear way to the organization. (Michels & Michels, 2011²²)

Related to the complexity of the organization and the endorsed identity that is occurred by the several acquisitions, it is useful to create a corporate story for

the organization. It makes the organization able to tell their story in a simple and understandable way. According to Simona, my supervisor, and Kim, manager of Internal Communication, Schneider Electric has a corporate story based on a great history and a promising present and future. They try to share, communicate and reinforce the story in an explicit way. A good choice! But until now, a structured and formalized process for corporate storytelling is missing.

Critical insight 3 – Collaboration and empowerment need more practical implementation.

Schneider Electric uses tactics to achieve the strategy. From managers decisions only, to collaboration and empowerment. In Schneider Electric itself, these tactics are implemented in some departments and entities.

But after working in Internal Communication for several months I do not see much collaboration and empowerment in the internal communication of Schneider Electric. Employees from other departments are asked for input, but that is where it stops. Execution is done by the Internal Communication employee. For feedback, opinion, ideas and own initiatives, employees are only active in the space they get from the Internal Communication to respond.

Critical insight 4 – The vision on internal communication is in line with the organization structure.

The vision on Internal Communication is not explicitly defined. During the several months I contributed in Internal Communication, I noticed that their vision on Internal Communication is in accordance to the organization structure, a machine bureaucracy. The communication style is one-way and top-down. Internal communication informs and persuades by written, announcement and influencing tools. Bottom-up communication is strictly formalized and hardly possible.

Critical insight 5 – Vision on internal communication, mission statement and Future of Internal Communication are not corresponding to each other.

Mission statement and Melcrums future of Internal Communication are more or less in line with each other. Internal Communication has to become a business partner and internal consultant. But this is contradictory to the top-down vision of Internal Communication. In my opinion a business partner and internal consultant is a specialty that is available for both management and employees.

²² Michels, W. & Michels, Y., Focus op Fans, Thema, 2011

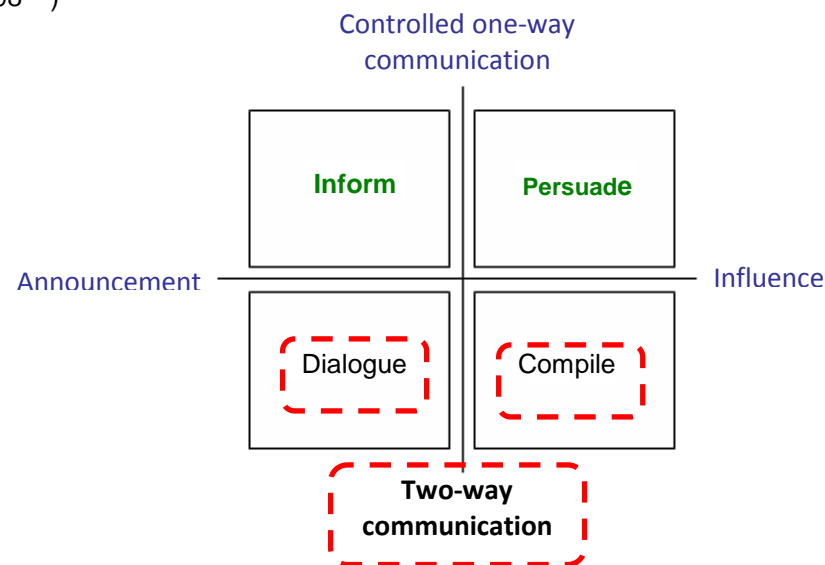
Within the top-down vision is Internal Communication indeed becoming more and more of a business partner. A business partner for management but not a business partner for the rest of the employees. Schneider Electric needs all people to make the organization happen. Internal Communication 'strives to deliver One Communication Experience.'²³ But is it really One Communication Experience?

Critical insight 6 – A shift from one-way communication to two-way communication is essential.

"If you have everything under control, you are not going fast enough"

(Ayrton Senna)

To reach the future for Internal Communication, a shift from only controlled one-way communication to also two-way communication is essential. Besides informing and persuading employees with organizational facts, Internal Communication needs to compile and provide dialogue as well. (Betteke van Ruler, 1998²⁴)



Critical insight 7 – Change is difficult in the organization structure of Schneider Electric. Mission statement and Future for Internal Communication are maybe not achievable for Schneider Electric.

As said in critical insight 7, a shift from one-way communication to two-way communication is essential. But as described in the organization structure, a machine bureaucracy is difficult to change. That is why I am wondering if mission statement and the Future for Internal Communication are reachable.

Critical insight 8 – In a machine bureaucracy corporate storytelling is not possible.

Mintzberg's description of a machine bureaucracy fits Schneider Electric's vision on Internal Communication. Top-down communication is mostly written communication. Bottom-up communication is strictly formalized in for example a survey.

According to me 'true' two-way communication is essential for corporate storytelling but not possible in this type of organization structure. Because a machine bureaucracy is difficult to change, I question if a corporate story is realizable. * Note: This was a critical insight before the refocus. In chapter 7 I come back to this.

3.2 ...and question marks in my thesis

The critical insights that are mentioned in the previous paragraph are clearly described and all relevant for my thesis insight. But during the analyze phase of my thesis I had some other question marks as well.

3.2.1 Funderingsschema

Question mark 1 – What is relevant for my thesis?

I started analyzing the organization based on the 'funderingsschema'. A Dutch theory scheme that helps you to analyse all aspects of the organization compared to all aspects of communication within the company. Schneider Electric is such a complex company that it took me more than two months to fill in the 'funderingsschema'. I needed the scheme and the amount of time to understand the company. It gave me insight in a lot of different elements of the organization. But in the end it turned out that my statements were not substantiated enough. I could not prove what I said and a lot of information was not relevant for this thesis. It was too extended. I had to converge all information till only important elements. This was hard, because there is so much to mention. What is relevant for my thesis?

²³ One Internal ComUnity - issue #4 May 2011

²⁴ Michels, W., Communicatie handboek, Noordhoff Uitgevers B.V., 2011, page 268

3.2.2 Target audience

Question mark 2 – Is all employees the correct target audience?

Related to filling in the 'funderingsschema' I noticed that it was really hard to substantiate the elements of the schema. Schneider Electric is a multinational with more than 100.000 employees in over 100 countries. But I was based in the headquarters in Rueil Malmaison (near Paris), France. My scope on the organization was based on my contribution and research in this building. It was not possible to draw conclusions that are relevant for the whole organization. Schneider Electric is based all over the world, in different countries, with diverse cultures and several levels of hierarchy. My view was just the Internal Communication department, based in the headquarters, in a very high level of the organization. So, the question occurred: Is it feasible to take all employees in the whole organization as my target audience?

3.2.3 Assignment

Question mark 3 – Is the main question concrete enough as a guideline for this thesis?

Related to the first two question marks, I started to wonder if the main question, as I formulized it in my plan of approach, was concrete enough. If I could converge it to a better structured and defined main question with a more specific target audience, the relevant elements of the analyse phase would become more clear.

3.2.4 Survey

In the introduction I mention a survey as a starting point for this thesis. The aim of this survey is to hear what employees think of their internal communication and to measure the understanding and impact of Internal Communication. (See attachment 1)

Question mark 4 – Has the survey enough priority?

The survey is important for Internal Communication because it shows their current status. It is a huge survey for employees all over the world that is translated in more than 10 languages. It should be a basis survey for many years. In my first week in Schneider Electric, Simona, Marie and I started to set up this survey. My contribution in setting up the survey was very high, but after four months, the survey is still not sent. It has the lowest priority of my colleagues. Ellen van den Haak (former Philips) gives a general statement about surveys: "I found the effort often missing in a survey. It is done because it

has to be done, but most of the time it has lowest priority." ²⁵ In the analyze phase I mentioned the machine bureaucracy of Schneider Electric. I understand that these types of organizations are log and slow. But in my opinion it is not an excuse for the fact that the survey is still not sent. That is why I question: is the Internal Communication survey done because it has to be done? And has it priority? If it has priority, where is the effort?

Question mark 5 – Are the results of the survey really used?

Related to the question mark, if the survey has priority, I question what will be done with the results of the survey. If you ask people to fill in a survey to measure your performance, you need to show that you take these answers for serious. At this moment I cannot say if the results will be used by Internal Communication, but I am critical curious to it.

Question mark 6 – Is this survey really motivating for people to respond?

From the beginning of this project I doubt the effect of this survey. People are tired of getting surveys. As local Internal Communication employee Alejandra Berendonk said: "I notice that employees of Schneider Electric are tired of receiving surveys. People experience this as: 'no not again'. We are not hip enough yet to use for example Twitter or that kind of tools. They are very effective to measure quickly." Perhaps there can be thought of a more out of the box possibilities to ask peoples opinion. Besides that, this survey has 19, extended questions. I am curious what the response rate will be. Because is this survey really motivating people to respond to?

Question mark 7 – Is the right thing measured?

The aim of the survey is to understand the perception, satisfaction, expectations and needs of managers and employees. Marie, Simona and I talked a lot about what kind of questions we needed. But I am still wondering if the survey measures the right things.

The questions are about which tools and sources of information employees use, how well they are informed by strategy, organization and activities and other elements related to receiving information. The answers to the current questions are mostly known already by Internal Communication. It only confirms what they already know.

²⁵ [http://www.reputationinstitute.com/press/InterviewInterne CommunicatieSMALL.pdf](http://www.reputationinstitute.com/press/InterviewInterne%20CommunicatieSMALL.pdf)

But what I suggest to survey next time is the information need of people. McQuail and Katz distinct five types of information need:

- Cognitive needs
- Affective needs
- Needs for personal integration
- Needs for social integration
- Needs to relief tension ²⁶

Questions that can be asked to understand the information need are what kind of internal communication do employees need to function in the organization? Is the existing internal communication connected to this information need? What kind of information do employees want? Or even better: do they want information or communication? What kind of two-way communication possibilities do they want? And how do employees want to express their ideas?

²⁷

My survey opinion in short

As Internal Communication you have to measure your internal communication. That is good! But you need to know what you want to measure. Not just measuring, because you want to measure something. And you need to put effort in it. Approach your people proactive, in an original way, to motivate them to respond. Measure what you need to measure and not what you already know. And most important: really use the results of the survey.

3.2.5 Storytelling

Question mark 8 – Is there really storytelling going on in Schneider Electric?

During the theoretical phase I read a lot of books about corporate storytelling in order to understand its process. In all the books I noticed that two-way communication is essential for effective corporate storytelling. My opinion about two-way communication is based on the Communication Square of Betteke van Ruler as mentioned in paragraph 3.1. It is about dialogue and compiling. To really let all people in the company contribute to the story.

This vision on storytelling I did not see in the current Internal Communication of Schneider Electric. So I discussed this topic with Simona Radu, my supervisor.

She told me: “there is a lot of storytelling going on in the company already. All articles and videos on the Intranet Global Portal are created by the input of people in the company.” That is correct, but after the input it stops. The articles and videos itself are created and published as information by Internal Communication. So, controlled one-way communication. My question mark: is there really storytelling going on in Schneider Electric?

3.2.6 Storytelling project team.

Question mark 9 – What is the added value of this thesis for Internal Communication?

The storytelling project team exists of Kim Beddard-Fontaine, manager of Internal Communication, Simona Radu, Dominique Hadria, external consultant, and me. The aim of this project team is to find three different angels to improve the corporate storytelling process in Schneider Electric.

Half way of my thesis period, we had a first meeting with this team. During this meeting, the aim and expectations of this team were presented. It turned out that Dominique, as external party, was asked to work on a corporate storytelling process as well. So I asked my question: What is the added value of my thesis for Internal Communication if you prefer to use an external company?

Question mark 10 – What exactly does Internal Communication want from me?

Kim and Simona explained that Dominique presents a proposal based on her ‘third party input’. A professional advice from someone who works in the field. At the end of this thesis period, I present a proposal based on theory and my ideas as a semi-outsider of the company. Kim and Simona prepare a proposal based on Dominique’s and my pitch and their own knowledge as insider of Schneider Electric. A clear explanation. But not completely in line with how I saw my assignment. So a new question mark occurred: what does Internal Communication really want from me?

²⁶ Van de Weijer, I., Storytelling, Biblion Uitgeverij, Davidsfonds/Literair, 2009, page 123

²⁷ Van de Weijer, I., Storytelling, Biblion Uitgeverij, Davidsfonds/Literair, 2009, page 121

4. ...that resulted in a refocus...

- 4.1 ...based all previous elements...
- 4.2 ...and discussions with my supervisor...
- 4.3 ...I changed the thesis assignment...
- 4.4 ...and choose a new approach...
- 4.5 ...with extra conclusions and notes in advance

4. ...that results in a refocus...

The critical insights and question marks provide the reversal of this thesis story. To solve the 'conflict' a refocus of the thesis assignment is needed. This refocus and its approach is described in this chapter.

4.1 ...based all previous elements...

The consequence of all these critical insights and question marks was a personal struggle. After the analyze and theoretical phase I noticed that I was not in line with the ideas of Schneider Electric's Internal Communication and my supervisor. It was their 'A' against my 'B'. It caused tension and made me realize that I was not on the right track. I already passed half of the thesis period, I could not use my analyze document, I had some good critical insights but also a lot of question marks and it turned out that the assignment was not clear, concrete and focussed enough.

Besides that I was abroad, in France, far from home and school. I could not go to school to ask for advice. Or exchange experiences with my friends about how they do their graduation thesis. My thesis and internship are all in English. A barrier in order to express myself clearly. Suddenly I regretted so hard that I did not do a duo graduation. That I had no one to talk to, to brainstorm with and that I had nobody as a backup.

**“Over there you hang, tied up and confused. All wires
and lines you've laid, woven and tied together in
commitment and free will maybe a bit too much?
Search hard, the scissors hangs somewhere in
between.”**

(Diederik Vos)

All these elements together made me realize that I needed to radically refocus my thesis.

4.2 ...and discussions with my supervisor...

In order to really understand what Internal Communication wanted from me and my thesis, I had some extended meetings with my supervisor Simona.

4.2.1 What Internal Communication said

“We already do a lot of storytelling! Different initiatives exist. For example, in our Open magazine are two clear sections that are filled with employee initiatives. But we need to structure it. That is why we want to formalize the corporate storytelling process. We need a global framework for all the storytelling.”
(Simona Radu, thesis meeting 14-04-2011)

Furthermore Simona said that my mission is to contribute in the team, trying to find the right angle and to put the storytelling in the right direction. For that it is useful to inventory what types of storytelling already exist in the company. Analyse 'where are we?', what is already done and how can it be combined to one corporate storytelling concept?

Especially the 'where are we', in terms of internal communication towards employees and managers, part is important. Internal Communication needs to know the current status of their internal communication tools to improve their overall performance.

Simona told me to focus on what I did already: “Do not make it less. The survey is important because it shows the current status and your contribution in that is very high. Besides that you are part of the team that works on the storytelling process. It is a real project where you experience the real process. Visualize your contribution in these projects.

4.2.2 My opinion related to Internal Communications answer

Apparently there is a lot of storytelling within Schneider Electric already. I have not seen it yet. At least not in a two-way communication vision as it should be, according to the theory. I need to refocus my analyze phase on this and go looking for it.

Assuming that there is storytelling going on in the company. What is the corporate story? What is the link between the different initiatives? What is the general story? If you have a general corporate story, it is easier to structure it and to create one concept.

Storytelling is a long term process that will last for at least another year. This is what Kim said during our first meeting with Dominique. Storytelling is a basis and you can use during a period of changes, like switching to a new company program. There is a project team who accompanies the process. I give also an advice about how Internal Communication can approach the storytelling process.

4.2.3 My personal experience of Schneider Electric

During my analyse and theoretical phase I noticed that Schneider Electric works mostly top-down. They use a lot of formal communication that is based on information and persuasion. (Communication square – Betteke van Ruler.) This is controlled one-way communication.

I read a lot of books and articles about storytelling during my theory phase. In all these theories is said that storytelling is two-way communication. It is about dialogue and compiling with employees. It is a story of management but also about how employees feel about the company. What is their motivation to go to work every day? What is it that they like in working for the company? Why do they feel connected with Schneider Electric? So, it is bottom-up as well.

In March, I attended a seminar about the future of internal communication within the company. Internal communication is transforming from one-way communicator by messaging tools to two-way communication by supporting managers and engaging and motivating employees. At this moment, Schneider Electric is heading in the right direction. They understand the future of internal communication and work hard to create a collaborative environment. But looking to the current status of the organization and communication policy compared to the future, they still have some struggles.

I am curious if all Managerial & Internal Communication employees have the same vision on internal communication. Are they all heading into the same direction? The direction of their mission statement and the Future of Internal Communication? The direction of two-way communication? And how do they implement that in their work? It is important to ask this to the local internal communication employees as well. Can they implement two-way communication in their work? Are they a coach for their country? And are they coached by the corporate Internal Communication team? What needs do these employees have?

4.3 ...I changed the thesis assignment...

My new assignment is to give an advice how they can structure and create a concept for effective corporate storytelling. But I think they need to make some choices first:

- What is the general vision on internal communication? Is this a good basis for corporate storytelling? Or is the vision different and is corporate storytelling maybe not the best way to create commitment in such a big company? If they do have the same vision about internal communication related to corporate storytelling, are they in the possibility to guide this process?
- Who are key drivers in the corporate storytelling process?
- Who is the target group of the storytelling process? Only employees or other stakeholders as well? Only connected employees? Or employees in the plants as well? And what is the best way to reach the target audience? Is the current internal communication effective enough? Or is the perception and needs of employees different than the current performance of Global Internal Communication?

4.3.1 New target audience

Based on my experiences during the analyze phase, I defined a new target audience for this thesis. From all employees to Internal Communication employees. In first place the corporate department. In second place the internal communication employees in the countries.

***“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity;
an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty”***

(Winston Churchill)

4.3.2 New main question

While trying to find an answer to the previous main question I noticed that the assignment was not concretely formulized. In consultation with my supervisor and teacher, I formulized the following new main question:

‘How can Internal Communication implement a structured and formalized process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric?’

4.2.3 Sub questions

The answer on the central question is based on new sub questions:

1. Who is the company that this story is about?
2. Who is Internal Communication?
3. What is internal communication?
4. What is corporate storytelling, its function and its objective?
5. What is the concept to improve the corporate storytelling process in Schneider Electric?
6. What other steps are needed to reach the objective of the corporate storytelling process?
7. How can the corporate storytelling process be implemented in Schneider Electric?

4.4 ...and choose a new approach

To answer the new main question, a change of approach is needed as well. Information is gathered by the following approaches:

4.4.1 My role

My new role is still to work in the internal communication field and learn how Schneider Electric works. But it is not my task and responsibility to give the finalized solution to implement a structured and formalized process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric. I use the gained experiences, critical insights and question marks to support Internal Communication by finding the answer to their main question.

I facilitate a co-creation with the team by interviews and a workshop. A safe setting for Internal Communication in order for the team to collaborate on corporate storytelling in an empowered environment. With this thesis I try to open the eyes of Internal Communication about their current status and what is needed to improve the corporate storytelling by themselves.

4.4.2 Process

This thesis describes a structured and formalized process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric. Before starting it is important to know the definition of the term and which elements are needed in a process.

• Definition process

‘A process is a chain of activities that all together result in reaching a predetermined objective’²⁸. ‘A process involves steps and decisions in the way the objective is accomplished. The process that one follows is as important as the results that are produced by the process. Without understanding the underlying process, it is difficult to know how a certain set of results were achieved, or why they are good or bad’²⁹.

• Application

Effective corporate storytelling needs a process. Without a process, you do not know where you are, what your objectives are and what steps to take in between. It means that you are doing something without knowing where to go and for what.

First step of a process is the ‘where are we’. It is the starting point of a process. Second step is the formulation of ‘the objective’, the ultimate result of the process. If starting point and results are known, the steps in between can be formulized. These steps are done in order to reach the objective and consist of strategy, concept and execution.

• Note that:

1. People are the ones who execute the process. A good and set distribution of tasks, competences and responsibilities is crucial for an effective process.
2. Tools are means to an end, so used by people to execute the activities.
3. Every process has a frame of preconditions and circumstances that influence the process.
4. Measurement is important for a process. Every milestone in the execution of a process needs pre-determined measurable indicators.

4.4.3 Desk research

To analyse the Internal Communication department and the current and future storytelling process, content is found on the Intranet Global Portal, in news articles, videos and on www.schneider-electric.com.

²⁸ http://123management.nl/0/020_structuur/a212_structuur_01_processtructuur.html

²⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Process>

Literature research is done by books, articles and internet pages about internal communication and corporate storytelling. Lots of different sources are used, but 'Basisboek Interne Communicatie' of Erik Reijnders and 'Corporate Stories' of Astrid Schutte & Theo Hendriks give most direction to this thesis.

4.4.4 Field research

In order to have a better understanding of the organization and Internal Communication, several interviews are done with employees of corporate and local Internal Communication.

In line with the interviews, I talked to several employees based all over the world, attended a team meeting, a télépresence meeting with the Internal Communication network, a three day internal communication seminar in Barcelona and a plant(factory) visit in Grenoble.

4.4.5 Next steps:

- **Interview Global Internal Communication employees related to their function**

What is their exact work? What is their vision on internal communication? What is their satisfaction rate on the current status of Internal Communication? What are the things they are proud of in their function as internal communication employee? What do they want to change and/or improve in their function as internal communication employee? How is their function related to local Internal Communication employees? How do they support these local Internal Communication employees? Are they satisfied about this supporting process for local Internal Communication employees?

- **Interview local Internal Communication employees related to their function**

What is their exact work? What is their vision on internal communication? What is their satisfaction rate on the current status of Internal Communication? What are the things they are proud of in their function as internal communication employee? What do they want to change and/or improve in their function as internal communication employee? How are they currently supported by the Global Internal Communication department? How do they want to be supported by the Global Internal Communication department?

- **My vision on internal communication**

Explain my vision on internal communication related to corporate storytelling. Based on existing theories and my own knowledge.

- **Conclusion phase 1**

What is the general vision on internal communication, based on the individual interviews? Or is there a gap between the visions of the individual employees? And is there a gap between their vision and mine? Is there a good basis for corporate storytelling within the department? Or is a refocus of the Internal Communication department needed first related to an effective corporate storytelling process?

- **Storytelling theories**

What is a corporate story? What is the power of a corporate story? What are existing theories about corporate storytelling? What is needed to create a main corporate story for a company?

- **Interview Global Internal Communication employees related to storytelling**

What is their vision on corporate storytelling? Within this frame, what is their contribution on storytelling that already exists? What are the existing stories about? What is their vision on the current status of the performance of Internal Communication? And what is their vision on the current status of corporate storytelling in the whole company? What elements are satisfying to them already and what improvements are still needed?

- **Interview local Internal Communication employees related to storytelling**

What is their vision on corporate storytelling? Within in this frame, what is their contribution on storytelling that already exists? What are the existing stories about? What is their vision on the current status of the performance of Internal Communication? And what is their vision on the current status of corporate storytelling in the whole company? What elements are satisfying to them already and what improvements are still needed?

- **Conclusion phase 2**

What are the different types of storytelling that are already used, as told by the Internal Communication employees in the interviews? Is there a main corporate story in these stories? Or what are common messages in the different types of storytelling? Can they be used as a frame for the main corporate story by the Storytelling project team?

- **What is the content of a corporate storytelling process?**

After the function of Internal Communication and corporate storytelling is known, the content of the process has to be defined. I have to give an answer to the 'what', 'why', 'who' and 'where'.

- **What other steps are needed to reach the corporate storytelling objective?**

After the content of the corporate storytelling process is known, the 'when' and 'how' are important. It is about the timeline, tasks and responsibilities, logistics, etc.

- **Advice**

When all these steps are done, a thorough advice can be formalized.

4.5 ...with extra conclusions and notes in advance

Before starting the new approach, there are some extra conclusions and notes in advance that have to be taken into account.

“Sometimes a situation only seems to be a problem because you look at it from one point of view. From another point of view is the problem with a simple action so easy to solve, that the problem no longer exists

(Edward de Bono)

4.5.1 Extra conclusions:

- **My sub questions about b-to-b are not that relevant anymore.**

What I noticed in the theory is that there is not a real difference between b-to-b and b-to-c organizations. This element is not relevant anymore for the new assignment.

- **Storytelling is about collaboration.**

It means co-creation. For my thesis as well. So I want to collaborate with the Internal Communication employees to come to the advice. I ask the team how they would approach the storytelling process, use information from the interviews to support my statements and involve the team actively in a workshop.

- **It is possible to create a signalling chapter in my thesis.**

Here I explain why I made my choices and why I do not do certain things. Besides that I can use this chapter to make note of everything that I noticed in the company but is not useful for my thesis. This is not necessary but can be useful.

4.5.2 Extra note

For a proper and clear understanding of this thesis, the structure and content of the next chapters need one extra note on top of the notes that are mentioned in chapter 2:

- The thesis is written in English because of the internship abroad and the international aspect of Schneider Electric. But because I noticed that I have a strong opinion on Internal Communication that is different from my supervisor, I use mostly Dutch theory. This is the basis I learned at school and has shaped my vision on communication. It supports my vision and final advice.

5. ...so, meet the hero...

- 5.1 ...named the Internal Communication team..
- 5.2 ...with a vision on internal communication...
- 5.3 ...that provides critical insights...
- 5.4 ...and question marks

5. ...so, meet the hero...

The new target audience of this thesis is Internal Communication. Before answering the new main question, a better understanding of Internal Communication, its functions and vision is necessary. This chapter gives answer to the sub question 'Who is Internal Communication?'

5.1 ...named the Internal Communication team...

The target audience of this thesis is the Internal Communication team. Kim Beddard-Fontaine is manager of Managerial and Internal Communication. In my thesis called Internal Communication. In the analyse phase I noticed that the vision on Internal Communication is not in accordance with the mission statement and Future for Internal Communication. To have a better understanding of the department, its employees, functions and visions, I interviewed a part of the team that is based in Rueil Malmaison and some local Internal Communication employees. They are close to my work field and representative for my personal frame of reference. The semi structured questionnaire and parts of the interviews are placed in attachment 4.

5.1.1 Corporate Internal Communication team

As Kim Beddard-Fontaine in her interview said: "We have a creative, smart and productive team." So, meet the protagonists of this thesis.

- **Aurore Bochet** – Internal communication business partner for IPO. (Information, process and organization)

"I am an advisor in communication for the management team of IPO. I am participating in the management topics. That's where I help to understand and simplify. Because if I do not understand I think no one will." (Aurore Bochet, Interview 28-04-2011)

- **Karine Gamez-Verlohr** – In charge of internal communication for the company program One.

"Schneider Electric proposed me in 2008 to be in charge of the company program One. I have a good knowledge of the company because before I worked in the Foundation that gave me a lot of contacts in the sites and a global view of the company." (Karine Gamez-Verlohr, interview 29-04-2011)

- **Marie Le-Men** – In charge of managerial communication.

"Now, I am working on managerial communication. We mainly provide managers with tools and information. But I need to work on more advices for them on how to do it. I want to be more like a facilitator." (Marie Le Men, Interview 05-05-2011)

- **Sylvie Guillemot** – Collaborator on managerial communication. (Supervised by Marie Le-Men)

"I work on a tool for top managers, the Managers Area. The aim of this tool is to provide information that they can cascade down. I put information on this. It is more a webmaster function." (Sylvie Guillemot, Interview 28-04-2011)

- **Simona Radu** – In charge of communication that is visible for all employees in the organization. For example Intranet Global Portal and the corporate magazine Open.

"I am All employee communication manager. I have a team that is dedicated to this topic and is reporting to me. It is about having a coordinated approach to everything that is communicated to all employees through different means." (Simona Radu, Interview 04-05-2011)

- **Smahane Sayoud** – collaborator on All employee communication. (Supervised by Simona Radu)

"I am in the All employee department and I am in charge of the publications on Swebi (Intranet Global Portal) on top stories, news and videos." (Smahane Sayoud, Interview 21-04-2011)

5.1.2 Local internal Communication team

Schneider Electric is divided in three power regions. These three regions exist of a number of countries. Almost each country has a local Internal Communication employee. The corporate Internal Communication team provides guidelines to the local Internal Communication employees. As Simona said in her interview: "It is our job to provide global support for the countries and businesses. In order for them to communicate in a timely manner and in a professional way."

In order to have a better global view on the whole Internal Communication team, I interviewed three local Internal Communication employees by phone. In

deliberation with Simona, we choose one local Internal Communication employee per each Power region:

- **Paige Roberts** - USA, Internal Communication for Power region North America.

"I have a network and I am a point person who drives internal communication at a regional level. The people in my network state high to me in order to understand what the corporate message is. That we are all aligned around a common communication plan and platform. I am looking out that we have consistent messages on our strategy, our business priorities, our people initiatives around the world and how our brand is represented. How employees should be represent it facing our customers." (Paige Roberts, Interview 09-05-2011)

- **Amanda Lim** – China, Internal Communication for Power region Asia Pacific.

"My job is to focus on the employee engagement and employee branding activities. I advice top management and make use of their power to engage employees. I engage my leaders to speak with the leaders in the regions. I prepare the messages for them to speak directly to the other managers." (Amanda Lim, Interview 02-05-2011)

- **Alejandra Berendonk** – Holland, local Internal Communication employee, part of Power region EMEAS.

"I am Internal Communication and facility managers for the seven buildings in the Netherlands. I have a central role in the organization. I convert the information that I receive to useful information for a certain group." (Paraphrase Alejandra Berendonk, Interview 05-05-2011)

2.2 ...with a vision on internal communication...

During the Interviews, I asked all the respondents their vision on internal communication. Their visions are literally described in attachment 2. The main elements said by the Internal Communication employees are:

- Translators to make abstract information relevant so that employees are engaged, connected and know how to contribute.
- Make strategy relevant for every employee.
- Make messages simple and understandable.
- Provide certain groups with the right information.
- Provide information to make employees involved.

- Bring up engagement by providing information.
- Change agents: explain the change so that they understand.
- Connecting people is a consequence.
- If people understand they feel connected/engaged.

Together these visions become: *'Providing information to make abstract information relevant and understandable for employees. When people understand, they can contribute, are engaged and feel connected.'*

In the interviews is mostly spoken about informing and persuading people by announcement and influencing tools. Two-way communication is hardly mentioned in the descriptions. There are some intentions:

- The direct two ways to communicate between our organization and our employees.
- In terms of bottom up approach, having feedback from people.
- Linking everybody in the organization and helping them feel connected to who we are and what we do.
- Internal Communication needs to be a business partner.

5.3 ...that provides critical insights...

Now, the vision of the team on internal communication is visible, I obtained some new critical insights:

Critical insight 1 – The vision of the team is in accordance with the previous mentioned vision related to the machine bureaucracy.

Internal Communications vision on internal communication is in accordance to the organization structure, a machine bureaucracy. The communication style is mainly one-way and top-down. Providing information is key in order to make the organization understandable for employees.

Critical insight 2 – According to corporate Internal Communication employees, informed people are connected people.

Internal communication is seen as giving information on what people are doing in the company. In this way all employees can see what people are doing. If they are interested they can contact each other by a link in the article. As Smahane Sayoud said in her interview: "All the news that we publish, all the videos that we are putting in about different experiences, events, what's happening. I really can see that, we always put a contact on the news. So

someone from India can be connected to someone from America. They did not know each other and now they found out by an article that someone is maybe doing the same thing and we bring them together.”

Critical insight 3 – Vision is indeed not in line with mission statement and Future for Internal Communication

Concluding from critical insight 1 and 2, vision is indeed not in line with mission statement and Future for Internal Communication. The critical insight of chapter 4 was correct.

5.4 ...and question marks

The visible visions on internal communication and the mentioned critical insights occurred also question marks for me:

Question mark 1 – Is ‘to who we are and what we do’ not top-down?

In the sentences about two-way communication is spoken about ‘Linking everybody in the organization and helping them feel connected to who we are and what we do.’ But who is the ‘we’ in this sentence? It comes to me as who the organization is and what Schneider Electric does. In a two-way communication, the question is also about ‘who our employees are, what they do and what they want’ in relation to the company.

Question mark 2 – What and for who is a business partner intended?

Also mentioned in the two-way communication is ‘Internal Communication needs to be a business partner.’ Simona told in her interview about an article where Kim was quoted. She was saying that: ‘In order for Internal Communication to be regarded as a business partner. To be reviewed. We have to earn that place’. When you bring your added value when you are asked. The next time they come back to you.” But what is meant by the added value of a business partner? And is this really two-way communication? Or is it more of a business tool? (This is also described in chapter 3, critical insight 5)

Question mark 3 – What is the objective of Internal Communication?

The corporate Internal Communication employees say constantly that they are in a change process and are going in the right direction. I see some things changing. Like I know that there is a new intranet coming up. But it still takes a while before it is there. In the mean time I see only controlled one-way information. There are some business partners already, but as I said, only for

managers. So what is the right direction exactly? Is it about being a business partner? A business partner for whom? For management? Of for management and employees? Is it about delivering more two-way communication as well? Or is it about informing people in the hope that they will feel connected? And connected to whom? To the strategy of the company? Or to their colleagues as well?

During my thesis period I cannot find and I did not hear anything about an Internal Communication process. There is no starting point formulized, nor objectives or steps in between that can be measured. As Marie Le-Men said in her interview: “I have the feeling that I am doing something that is useful. We are going in the right direction. We are becoming more and more business partners. But I am not able to say that we have specific objectives and in three year this is our target.”

Question mark 4 – Are they really going in the right direction?

According to corporate employees, Internal Communication becomes more professional. They say they are heading in the right direction. As Kim Beddard-Fontaine said: “The organization is changing a lot. And the department is changing all the time as well. We are heading in another direction. Because we know where Internal Communication is in a few years and we are trying to be there earlier. We are an early adaptor.” (Kim Beddard Fontaine, Interview 27-04-2011)

*“They say that time changes things but you actually
have to change them yourself”*

(Andy Warhol)

Although Internal Communication keeps on mentioning that they are changing a lot, I still doubt if they are really going in the right direction. The only direction that is mentioned is the mission statement of Internal Communication. If this is the aim, what are the steps to reach this objective? And how are these steps measured to know if they are going in the right direction?

Question mark 5 – How can you deliver One communication experience without an objective?

Related to question mark 2, the objective of Internal Communication is missing; I am concerned about the practical implementations of being able to go in the

right direction. Is it possible to implement One communication experience without a clear direction and objective? During the interviews I noticed that some local Internal Communication employees have the same worry:

“I am proud of our desire to work together. To get ourselves aligned around one way of communicating in tools, templates and processes. We have a responsibility to make communication simple for our employees.

But I am a bit concerned about the practical implementations of being able to do that.” (Paige Roberts, Interview 09-05-2011)

“We do not have the same interpretation on Internal Communication. I do internal communication on my way, but it is different in other countries.”

(Paraphrase Alejandra Berendonk, Interview 05-05-2011)

Question mark 6 – Are the right tools used?

If the objective is not known, how do you know which tools you have to use? As Reijnders said “Managers and communication specialists have the expectation that employees will feel connected or even committed, but use tools that will never reach that effect. There is a mismatch between the objective and the tools that are chosen.”³⁰

Internal Communication needs to define what they want to reach with internal communication. Does this objective fit the currently used tools? It is useful to use the ‘Trap van Quirke’ to determine this choice. The scheme is added in attachment 3.

At this moment Internal Communication uses tools like email, intranet, newsletters, posters, pep talks, presentations, seminar, trainings and e-learning’s that fit, in chronological order, ‘know about it’, ‘understanding’ and ‘support’. The tools that should be used in order for employees to ‘feel involved’ and ‘feel connected’ like meetings, feedback sessions and tackle problems together are hardly used in Schneider Electrics internal communication.

³⁰ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 149

6. ...and the vision on internal communication of others...

6.1 ...in theory...

6.2 ...and my vision on internal communication

6. ...and the vision on internal communication of others...

At this moment Internal Communication is examined. Because this analyze provided also critical insights and question marks, theory about internal communication has to be studied. This chapter gives answer to the sub question 'What is internal communication?'

6.1 ...in theory...

As said in the previous paragraph, I have critical insights about the alignment of vision, mission and Future for Internal Communication. Besides that, my vision on internal communication is different from Internal Communication in Schneider Electric. That is why I started to read more theory about internal communication. Nicole Toebast, my supervisor from Fontys Hogescholen, suggested me to read the book 'Basisboek Interne Communicatie' of Erik Reijnders.

Reijnders says that there are two distinct visions on internal communication. Internal communication is becoming more professional in organizations. Within this professionalisation are two distinct visions on internal communication. A more traditional vision which focuses on internal communication as a (management) tool. It is about transferring the key messages. This is the action vision on internal communication. The other, more recent view focuses on internal communication as two-way communication and is about the interpretation of the meaning of a message. This is called the interaction vision on communication."³¹

"Almost every wise saying has an opposite one, no less wise, to balance it"

(George Santayana)

It is the explanation and solution for the critical insights and question marks of the previous chapters. An eye-opener to me.

6.1.1 Action vision on internal communication

According to Erik Reijnders (2010³²), the action vision is about an information transfer. It is about an efficient and effective transfer of information to the passive target audience. The central question is: how can we formulate and convey messages so that a pre-selected audience in the organization finds out what is going on and forms an opinion on the topic. Most attention is paid to formulating and sending the message and the choice of (informational) tools. Orchestration (coordination) of the tools increases the possibility to uniformity of the message. This preferably takes place in a uniform lay-out, tone of voice and timing. Its strength lies in repetition. The transmission of messages stops at the receiver.

Advantage

The action vision is a condition for other visions. Informing is necessary. It is a targeted translation of complex messages. Internal Communication has the capability to make messages more clear, compelling and suitable to the quality of the organization.

Disadvantage

Theoretical studies and practical research of Mieke van Putte in eight Dutch organizations shows that the action vision ignores the active role of the employees. People do not want to be treated like a collection of passive receivers who are there to absorb messages of management and to act conform these messages.³³ They have good ideas their selves and they want to become more and more empowered.

Action vision in Schneider Electric

Although communication becomes more visual, the action vision mostly uses text to explain the messages. Common terms that fit the action vision are: transfer the message, inform, influence, know and understand, motivate, persuade and encourage. (Reijnders 2010) This vision is related to the written top-down communication of a machine bureaucracy (Mintzberg) and the controlled one way communication of the Communication Square (Betteke van Ruler).

³² Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 123

³³ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 150

³¹ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 123

How Simona Radu describes internal communication within Schneider Electric: “For me it is a translator. It takes concepts, and it takes projects and it takes strategy. So everything that is more of a conceptual nature. And translate it to make sense for each and every employee within Schneider Electric. Internal Communication is a highlighter. It can say yes and no to what we should communicate and how we should communicate that it makes sense.

6.1.2 Interaction vision on internal communication

According to Reijnders (2010³⁴) is interaction always and everywhere people work together. People discuss how they approach their tasks, they speak about changes in their function, about their results, how they divide work and how they collaborate. Informal communication is as important as formal communication in most organizations. By talking to each other, people create an image about what the job entails. A collective picture is created of what is wanted and what is common. As Michels and Michels said: “De essence of communication is interaction”³⁵

“Tell me and I will forget.

Show me and I will remember.

Involve me and I will understand”

(Confucius)

Noëlle Aarts, professor at Wageningen University and the University of Amsterdam says “in communication science, it is mostly about a medium, with a sender, a message and a receiver. The interaction is almost never central.”³⁶ Erik Reijnders adds to this that interaction is always and everywhere people work together. They talk about what is going on in the organization in a formal and an informal way. That is why Van Ruler speaks of “a vision that shifts the focus of information transfer, sender, message and medium to receiver and interpretation. Communication is not focussed on people, but it takes place between people.”³⁷ Ideas about the organization, their function and the past, current and future situation.

The interaction vision works with collaboration tools instead of information media. These tools support personal and digital communication. For example: blogs, discussion forums, wiki, social media, Google docs, surf groups; SharePoint, instant messaging, sms, yammer, e-learning, etc.

Three roles

According to Erik Reijnders an internal communication specialist who works from the interaction vision has three roles³⁸:

1. On individual level: a communication coach

In our daily life people count a lot on the communicative ability and communication skills of managers and employees. Not everybody is good at this.

- This person supports individual people with their communication processes.
- Coaches people how they can communicate better and more their selves.
- Plans, organises and provides communication moments, advises about forms for dialogue and interaction.
- As Reijnders said: “Essential element of the interaction vision is that the internal communication specialist does not adopt the communication issue of the other person, but is engaged with organising interaction processes.
- Creates a more communicative organization.

2. On organizational or policy level: a process designer

- This person takes a look at the phasing of organizational and policy process from a communication point of view.
- Within these processes, sufficient interactive communication moments are created, like conferences, workshops, meetings, etc.
- These moments are important for actors to bring input and give meaning to the process.
- The process designer listens to the involved actors of the process
- and advises about this to the project leader or management.

³⁴ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 156

³⁵ Michels W. & Michels Y., Focus op Fans, Thema, 2011, page 11

³⁶ Michels W. & Michels Y., Focus op Fans, Thema, 2011, page 11

³⁷ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 156

³⁸ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 182

3. On group level: a facilitator

- Working with groups of people is key for this role.
- Facilitates the logistic preparation of the group meeting.
- Does expectations management with the actors.
- Motivates people to collaborate, listen to each other and share knowledge.
- Encourages people to participate interactively, listen to ask questions to each other and solve the problem together.
- As Reijnders said: "For an objective based on attitude and behaviour, interaction is required."³⁹

Advantage

The interaction vision on internal communication supports the active role of the employees. It suits the tactics of Schneider Electric, empowerment and collaboration, very well. Mieke van Putte explains the advantage of the interaction vision on internal communication: "An organization exists of people and communication is inherent to these people. By communication between people you make the organization possible."⁴⁰

Disadvantage

A disadvantage of the interaction vision is that it sometimes leads to talking without a goal. If you do not summarize and structure it, people can be disoriented. Especially when the organization or topic is complex, you have to make sure you can overview the interaction. (Reijnders, 2010⁴¹) I want to add that the interaction vision on internal communication, in my opinion, only works when the organization does something with the input of others, otherwise people will have the feeling that nobody listens to them and they will lose confidence.

Interaction vision in Schneider Electric

Internal Communication becomes more and more of a communication coach. A business partner for management to support them in their communication processes. It is more of a management tool. The process designer and facilitator are not included in the current internal communication of the

company. To reach the mission statement and Future for Internal Communication, more interaction in internal communication is required.

6.1.3 Two visions in other theory

The action and interaction vision are described by Erik Reijnders. But he is not the only one who writes about different visions on communication. Another similar approach is the difference between reputation management and relation management.⁴²

Reputation management

Cees van Riel and Ron van der Jagt are promoters of reputation management. Starting point of this approach is that the reputation of the organisation is most important to survive. With a strong reputation, an organization can distinguish itself from other organizations. This approach assumes that the organization itself is able to actively influence the target audience in its environment. The organisation formulates its positioning and the desired image in its stakeholders mind. It controls all communication and behaviour of the organization. Commitment of employees to the positioning, desired image and a consistent policy are key for success. It is controlled one-way communication.

Relation management

Grunig and Cees van Woerkum are promoters of relation management. They say that the receiver is not a passive person. Organizations should therefore have a dialogue with and really listen to the meaning people give to a subject. Signals of the target audience should become clear from outside into the organization. The organization must talk to and debate with people, organise, coach and facilitate. It is a circular process of giving meaning. This is two-way communication.

6.2 ...and my vision on internal communication

In previous chapters I write that I have a different vision on internal communication. In this paragraph I describe what this vision funds.

6.2.1 My vision on internal communication

In my idealistic vision, Internal Communication is communication between two parties: 1. Top management and 2. Employees. Internal communication is the

³⁹ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 149

⁴⁰ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 104

⁴¹ Reijnders, E., Basisboek Interne Communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010, page 185

⁴² Morssinkhof, G., & Smits, M., Article : Reputatie of relatie?, 2006

link between those two parties by bringing them together in a safe setting and facilitating dialogue. Top management sets the lines for policy and strategy of the company, but employees work in the different layers of this same organization. They work in their own field and specialty. They know what is necessary and is going on in their own environment within the company. In this context they need to realize the policy and strategy of the company. So, top management and employees need each other to be one organization.

According to me, attention for the exchange of knowledge and experience between both parties is necessary. Internal Communication facilitates this. Not only by informing and persuading employees with information coming from managers, but by facilitating the communication between both parties. So, by giving both recipients the possibility to react in any way to show that they actually received the message.

6.2.3 Example

In May we went with the whole corporate team to Grenoble for a team meeting and to visit a plant (factory) of Schneider Electric. A really interesting experience, that gave me a bit of an insight in other layers of the organization as well.

The manager who did the tour in the plant with us told us that employees are not interested in what happens in the rest of Schneider Electric. If they want, they can check the intranet. But they do not because it is not useful for them. They only want to know what happens in their environment. So local events and decisions that have influence on their job. They are not interested in people they do not know or have nothing to do with them. They see it like this: 'This manager on the video is too far away and not interested in me. So why should I be interested in him?!'

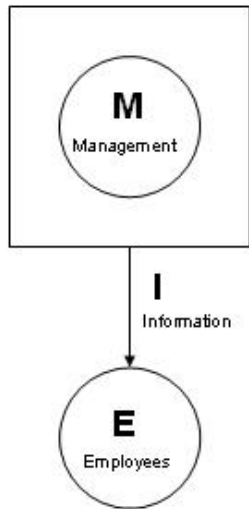
According to my vision on internal communication it is the job of Internal Communication to show that the managers in the video's and articles are interested in these employees, so that these employees will become interested in the managers as well. Internal Communication can react on it by facilitating a setting where both parties can speak and listen to each other. So not only by being a business partner for top management and sending their information down. But by involving employees and facilitating a communication flow. By being a link between both important parties.

As corporate Internal Communication employee Marie Le-Men said so well in her interview: "Internal Communication is invisible when it works, but visible when it does not work. We are the glue. When you stick things together you do not see the glue."

6.3 Internal communication models

To clarify my vision on internal communication, I made two models. One model for the action vision on internal communication and one model for the interaction vision on internal communication. These are described on the next page.

6.3.1 Model in the action vision



Management is operating in its own environment. The environment exists of its social situation, position, standpoint and frame of reference. Internal Communication is a business partner for management by facilitating a safe setting. Internal Communication uses a tool to send information to the environment of the employees. This exists of their social situation, position in the company, point of view and frame of reference. It is top-down communication that stops at the receiver.

The Internal Communication square is a visible function for all parties. They create attractive tools for management to inform and persuade employees.



= Internal Communication

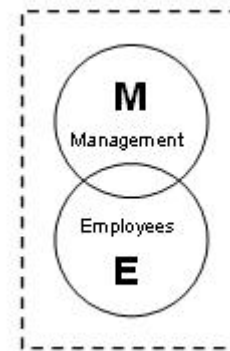


= the environment



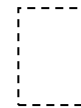
= a tool

6.3.2 Model in my interaction vision



Internal Communication is a business partner for management and employees by facilitating a safe setting where both parties and their environments come together. In this setting, Internal Communication involves management and employees in a communication flow. Both parties have the possibility to respond in any way to show that they received the message.

The Internal Communication rectangle is striped and not visible for all parties, because it is not only about creating tools anymore. It is about facilitating a setting for communication.



= Internal Communication



= the environment

Role of Internal Communication

- Internal Communication sends efficient and effective information to the passive target audience.
- Formulating the message as clear as possible
- Choose the most effective tool
- Ensures uniformity in all messages
- Repetition of the message is important for clear understanding
- The transmission of the messages stops at the receiver.

Role of Internal Communication

- Internal Communication is a communication coach,
- a process designer,
- and a facilitator of communication between people.
- They use collaboration tools that support personal and digital communication

7. ...but also listen to what the wise men say...

7.1 ...about storytelling...

7.2 ...and its function and objective

7. ...but also listen to what the wise men say...

Now the two visions on internal communication are clear, it is time to focus on the next sub question 'What is corporate storytelling, its function and its objective?' This chapter describes corporate storytelling in theory, how it can connect to the vision on internal communication, what its function and objective is.

7.1 ...about storytelling...

People tell stories to give meaning to the things that are happening around them. Storytelling is a survival strategy that played a major role in human evolution. Who has the most information about where the food and where the enemy is and how power is divided, has the best chance to survive (Schutte & Hendriks, 2009 ⁴³).

Pine & Gilmore speak about the experience economy. They explain it as 'a term for the current economy in which not the product or service is central, but the experience that is associated with the product or service. People do not want to receive the message in a passive way anymore; they want to experience the communication in an interactive way.' (1998 ⁴⁴)

If you take a look at the development of communication, you see that information becomes more and more entertainment. Increasingly more companies work in line with the experience economy of Pine & Gilmore. A corporate story fits this theory perfectly, because it adds emotion to the vision, mission, core values and strategy of an organization.

A corporate story

Since a few years there has been an increasing growth of organizations that use corporate stories. By stories, companies attempt to explain who they are and what they do. The idea that organizations need to communicate from narrative principles, is based on scientific information. Psychologists and organization experts have discovered that the human species have the language gene, "*the eponymous specie*", or the narrative type, "*the homo*

narraticus"⁴⁵. To explain this further I paraphrased Astrid Schutte and Theo Hendriks on the right side.

The term corporate story dates from approximately 1980. But around the year 2000, the understanding of the homo narraticus inspired professor in Corporate Communications, Cees van Riel (Netherlands), to describe the concept of a sustainable corporate story for communication use:

- "Companies and organizations need a cohesive story as a starting point for internal and external communications. Each company should describe its story in a narrative form in which the past, present and future of the organization are described. A sustainable corporate story is a description of the essence of a company in the form of a narrative story from about 400 to 600 words. Such a story is established (1) to increase the identification of its employees with the organization and (2) to successfully position compared to their competitors. A corporate story is especially useful as a source of inspiration and is not primarily a communication tool. It is more like a steering mechanism for the organization." (paraphrase Cees van Riel ⁴⁶)

A lot of inspiring people followed him and formulized their own vision on corporate storytelling. I paraphrased some of them

- "A story which makes clear who you are, how you've become like that and where you are heading to. Good corporate stories are tales of flesh and blood. But a corporate story about the organization is above all the story of the organization. Good stories will be passed on. Mostly because the reader or listener will recognize the truth of the story and that's why he or she feels committed to the story." (paraphrase Astrid Schutte & Theo Hendriks ⁴⁷)
- "Stories in communication are aimed to collect a universal insight into the organization. Typical is a creative process in which the complex information is simplified to a logical step of approach of a person.

⁴⁵ <http://sites.google.com/site/psychosofie/psy-wet-rel>

⁴⁶ Van Riel, C., Identiteit en imago, Academic Service, 2003

⁴⁷ Schutte, A. & Hendriks, T., Corporate stories, Kluwer, 2010

⁴³ Schutte, A. & Hendriks, T., Corporate stories, Kluwer, 2010

⁴⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Experience_Economy

People can identify themselves with the person and the story and pass it on.” (paraphrase Guido Rijnja ⁴⁸)

- "The story is a tool that you can use to provide a frame on the reality. Because a corporate story is a possible selection of the many facts that a company can tell". (paraphrase Betteke van Ruler ⁴⁹)

“Quand j'avais quatorze ou quinze ans, je m'amusais à reproduire les schémas de ces conteurs. Je croyais qu'ils les inventaient, j'ai découvert ensuite qu'il s'agissait d'une tradition. Tout cela est resté en moi comme un noyau positif, structurel”

(Dario Fo)

7.2 ...and its function and objective...

The desired objective of Schneider Electrics Internal Communication is that *“Employees should become ambassadors of Schneider Electric. They should be able to explain everything to other people. And express themselves. Like people who love fashion. They can talk about it for hours. They read about it, know about it, and think about it. It should be the same for Schneider Electric in employees' minds.”* (Simona Radu, meeting about my thesis, 22-04-2011)

Based on the books and articles that I read about storytelling, I can say that corporate stories have five functions that all lead to optimizing the satisfaction and understanding of all people in the organization. That they become proud on the organization and their work. That they become an ambassador of the company. These five functions are related to the desired functions that Internal Communication mentioned.

1. Persuade people

Stories are a persuasive, effective way to communicate information. They convince more than abstract facts and statistics. So they provide a better rooted understanding of the company.

Organizational sociologists Joanne Martin and Melanie Powers set up an experiment to compare the persuasiveness of four different presentation methods meant to convince people. In the first method, they told only a story. In the second, the researchers presented statistical data that showed that the company had significantly less turnover than its competitors. The third presentation used statistics and a story. In the fourth, the researchers used a straightforward policy statement made by a company executive. The researchers found that those presented with the story alone were believed more than any of the other three groups ⁵⁰.

“That they know and understand what happens in the company and that they know it first. And not hear it from other people outside the company.” (Simona Radu, meeting about my thesis, 22-04-2011)

2. Increase the identification

One of the powers of a corporate story is that it gives general terms a context, such as mission, vision, values and strategy. A corporate story gives a unique interpretation to these broad terms. It is an internal tool that provides more understanding for all people in the company. If people understand they are more willing to commit to the company.

“Create commitment to the goals of the organization. That people understand where the company is heading to and feel committed to these goals.” (Simona Radu, meeting about my thesis, 22-04-2011)

3. Emotional influence

Salary becomes less and less important for people. Employees want to know what value their organization adds to the society. And what value they can add for the organization and the society. People are purpose maximizers. We want to make a contribution, to put a ‘ding’ in the universe. It results in better

⁴⁸ Rijnja, G. & Van der Jagt, R., Storytelling. De kracht van verhalen in Communicatie.

⁴⁹ Van Ruler, B., Frame doctoring. Het strategisch gebruik van frames in storytelling. In: Rijnja, G. & Van der Jagt, R., Storytelling. De kracht van verhalen in Communicatie.

⁵⁰ <http://www.advisorone.com/article/stories-persuade>

performing people and loyal employees that do not exchange the company for a bit more salary at the competitor (RSA Animate ⁵¹).

“Quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten”

(Gucci)

Stories give an insight on a deeper level. They influence not only our ratio but our emotions as well. With emotion, an organization can earn the sympathy of their public and make them feel working at the right place because they fit in.

“Let employees feel belonged to the company. Like the way you belong to a family or a community because they understand you because they feel they same. That employees say: I belong in this company!” (Simona Radu, meeting about my thesis, 22-04-2011)

4. Hold a mirror

Stories have the power to evoke emotions and to be experienced as the truth, even though they are not literally true. Piet van den Boom (2010) says that ‘sometimes, facts are not positive and the perspectives not hopeful. The temptation is high to make your story more beautiful than it is. But you always need to describe the truth in a corporate story. Do not make false promises. You will not be held accountable for your mistakes but for the way you handle the truth’ ⁵² When you are honest, people will understand. Stories make abstract information more concrete because they are compelling and reflecting. They hold us a mirror on a subject. What would we do ourselves in this situation? It provides respect for colleagues and recognition from other colleagues to you.

“Give employees reasons to be proud of what they are doing. That they receive recognition and respect for their work by other people. But also that they respect the work of others in the company.” (Simona Radu, meeting about my thesis, 22-04-2011)

5. Support the change

In addition, corporate stories function as the fundament of the organization. It is their DNA. This makes them very well appropriate to support a change. Although the organization is changing, the essence of the company remains the same. Employees can rely on the existing stories full of knowledge and information and adapt them to the new direction. By a corporate story, the new strategic choices are connected to the history and identity of the company.

“The corporate story is related to the long term strategy of the company. It is not only related to our company program One. It must be a solid basis to rely on during the change to our new company program next year.” (Kim Beddard-Fontaine, meeting with the storytelling project team, 15-03-2011)

7.3 ...that influences my vision on storytelling

The main question of my thesis is ‘How can I support Internal Communication to implement a structured and formalized process to improve Corporate Storytelling in Schneider Electric?’ In the previous chapters I described the ‘who are we’ and ‘where are we’. At this point I can move on to the corporate storytelling process. This starts with my vision on corporate storytelling.

7.3.1 Two different stories

One of my critical insights before the refocus (chapter 3, critical insight 8) was that corporate storytelling is not possible in a machine bureaucracy. With the insight that there are two visions on internal communication, now I understand that there are two visions on corporate storytelling as well. Storytelling based on the action vision and storytelling based on the interaction vision. This insight makes corporate storytelling possible in a machine bureaucracy like Schneider Electric.

The insight that there are two different visions on corporate storytelling is also assumed by Tesselaar & Scheringa in their book ‘Storytelling handboek’. They make a distinction between 1. storytelling and 2. story catching and forming.

Storytelling

Purposeful storytelling in order to:

- make abstract information concrete,
- to provide insight into the need for organizational change

⁵¹ RSA Animate, YouTube 2010,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6XAPnuFjJc&feature=player_embedded

⁵² Powerpoint presentatie ‘Storytelling’ Piet van den Boom, 2010

- and connecting people to a team.

In advance is decided what the objective is of telling the story, why it fits the situation and how it going to be told.⁵³

Story catching and forming

Listening to stories that are told in the organization and the emotion that comes with it, gives insight in:

- the organization
- and the way people feel connected to the organization.

By co-creation you can form the stories together based on authentic experiences.⁵⁴

*“by speaking, we distinguish ourselves. By listening,
we connect”*

(Mas Evert Halbesma)

7.3.2 My two visions on storytelling

I combined the statements of professionals that I paraphrased in chapter 7.1, with my view and formulized my two visions on storytelling.

1. Your story

A corporate story is the central, emotional story of the organization that is created from the essence of the organization. The corporate story tells:

- who the organization is,
- what the organization does,
- how it does that,
- where it comes from
- and where it goes to.

In order to see a connection between the position of employees and the organization's objectives, a corporate story provides information for employees in how they:

- should believe in the organization,
- must work for the organization
- and should cooperate within the organization.

Employees can choose a frame of the corporate story that is related to their own position and tell this part of the story to other people in their direct environment.

The power of a corporate story based on your story

Your corporate stories are based on the story of management that is told by Internal Communication to employees. The power of your story is that:

- It has an explaining role
- and provides a better understanding of the company.
- That people understand where the company is heading to
- that gives guidance and support during a period of change

2. Our story

A corporate story is the emotional story of the organization that is created between people in the organization. The corporate story tells:

- how people think about their function,
- how they give meaning to their function,
- how they give value to their function,
- how people think about the organization,
- how they give meaning to the organization,
- and how they give value to the organization.

It is a story of flesh and blood in which employees can identify themselves with. The corporate story provides support for employees in how they:

- believe in the organization,
- work for the organization
- and cooperate within the organization.

By telling their story, all people in the organization can give feedback, their ideas, feelings and meaning to the organization. It shows how he or she sees the connection between its function and the organization's objectives.

⁵³ Tesselaar, S. & Scheringa, A., Storytelling handboek, Boom, 2008, page 25

⁵⁴ Tesselaar, S. & Scheringa, A., Storytelling handboek, Boom, 2008, page 28

People feel recognized and valued by the organization. It motivates, makes them proud of and helps them feel connected and committed to the organization.

The power of a corporate story based on our story

In our corporate stories is Internal Communication a link between management and employees. The power our story is that:

- all people in the organization feel valued,
- because they are part of the organizations story.
- It makes them feel committed to,
- and increases the identification with the organization,
- that is sincere and authentic,
- and earns the sympathy of their public.
- It holds a mirror for all people in the organization,
- and makes them feel working at the right place because they fit in.
- The story gives guidance and support during a period of change.

8. ...about raw materials for the story setting...

- 8.1 ...that consists of content...
- 8.2 ...covers all conditions...
- 8.3 ...and is based on a great inspiration...
- 8.4 ...that provides the concept that covers all...
- 8.5 ...can be executed in both visions...
- 8.6 ...and provides two different roles for Internal Communication

8. ...about raw materials for the story setting...

Now the objective of corporate storytelling for Schneider Electric is known, the steps to reach it can be filled in. Step by step, this chapter gives answer to the sub question 'What is the concept to improve the corporate storytelling process in Schneider Electric?'

8.1 ...consists of content...

InPoint is a resource for educators, youth, and others who are interested in filmmaking. They provide a narrative structure for filmmaking that is also very useful for a corporate storytelling process. According to InPoint, a narrative structure is about two things: the content of a story and the form used to tell the story. Two common ways to describe these two parts of narrative structure are story and plot. Story refers to the raw materials of dramatic action as they might be described in chronological order. Plot refers to how the story is told — the form of storytelling, or the structure, that the story follows. If we want to analyze narrative structure, we can use “who,” “what,” and “where” questions to look at the story or content of a movie. “How” and “when” questions are used to examine plot structure.”⁵⁵

So for analyzing the narrative structure of the corporate storytelling process of Schneider Electric, I describe the ‘what’, ‘who’, and ‘where’ questions to look at the content and to give input for the concept. The ‘how’ and ‘when’ questions I use to examine the plot structure, described in the following chapter. The ‘why’ question refers to the objectives of the storytelling process as I described in the previous chapter.

8.1.2 What – the conflict

In the book ‘Corporate Stories’ of Astrid Schutte and Theo Hendriks I have read that the Greek philosopher Aristotle was one of the first that formulized a universal story structure. On Wikipedia I found that in his poems he put forth the idea that a story is what has a beginning, middle and end. Technically: the

protasis, catastrophe and epitasis⁵⁶. We call this three-part view of a plot a ‘triadic structure’. Beginning and end are always separated by the middle, ‘the reversal’. Without a reversal, he says, there is no reason to tell the story.

Joseph Campbell, an American mythologist, writer and lecturer, speaks about the story as a monomyth. Stories are a reflection of the mind, but also a deliberate tool that we use to grow as a person. Learn from conflicts and become a better person.⁵⁷

According to Astrid Schutte and Theo Hendriks, a corporate story had a triadic structure as well. But it does not mean that the sequence of the story, beginning, middle, end, is fixed. Some stories begin at the end and then look back to share the start and the reversal. Although the sequence of the story is not fixed, beginning and end are always separated by a reversal. Without a reversal, there is no reason to tell the story. Often this is a problem or major operation that took place in the organization. Daring to mention problems and conflicts creates commitment and comprehension. It is the engine of the story⁵⁸.

The conflict of Schneider Electric

During the interviews with the Internal Communication employees I asked what kind of improvement is needed in order to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric. Almost all of them mentioned that the general story of the company is missing. This is also described in critical insight 1 - A clear description of vision, mission statement and strategy is missing. The conflict of the Schneider Electric storytelling process consists of the struggle to find a good and simple general explanation of the company.

8.1.3 Who – the hero

“The Hero is found in the ordinary world ... The Hero needs to change, even if they are unaware of that need ... The call to adventure is about transformation and that’s terrifying. The Hero has to confront fear ... During the first half, the Hero is tested ... Along the way, the Hero meets “threshold guardians,” people who guard the entrances ... The final test ... To demonstrate whether the Hero has learned his lesson or not ... The Hero returns home with some booty, an elixir, the source of power from the Other World ... In the end, the Hero is a

⁵⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatic_structure

⁵⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monomyth>

⁵⁸ Schutte, A. & Hendriks, T., Corporate Stories, Kluwer, 2010, page 59

⁵⁵ <http://www.inpoint.org/pdf/LanguageofFilm01.pdf>

transformed individual." (Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 1949⁵⁹)

Joseph Campbell referred in his work to a hero's journey.⁶⁰ He says a story has always a hero that is facing something bigger than oneself. More professionals mention the main character(s) as a hero.

According to Astrid Schutte and Theo Hendriks, the hero is someone who employees can identify with. It has strong and weak moments as everybody does. They say that there is a struggle but there is no demise. Instead, there is a personal growth.

Personally I agree with the description of Astrid Schutte and Theo Hendriks. In addition to that, the struggle of the hero, the lesson learned from it and the personal growth afterwards, is the essence of an effective corporate story, according to me. The hero triumphs because he or she asked for help at the right moment. Finally he or she acquires the knowledge that is necessary to have a better future and reach higher and further in and with the organization.

Campbell, Schutte and Hendriks explain that the hero is not always an individual person. In fact, the hero does not need to have lived in reality. It can be a fictional person, existing of more individuals together or just a symbol that represents the organization. The only condition is that it is always trying to leave its own limitations behind and to become a better person within the organization.⁶¹

The hero of Schneider Electric

The hero of Schneider Electric is the organization itself. Schneider Electric is such a big company with an old history that has experienced a lot by the years. Schneider Electric has a strong identity that all people in the company can identify with.

Interesting is what Michel Jansen describes in his book 'Brand prototyping' (2006) about the added value of archetypes based on the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. 'Jung described archetypes to find the identity of an organization. Fundamental to his thinking is the idea that human behaviour is driven by

unconscious ambitions and aspirations harboured by each individual. Characteristic of these timeless archetypes is that they are activated as soon as they are recognised by people in situations and other persons because they are meaningful for them.'⁶²

In other words, archetypes underlie unconscious human behaviour and offer a very valuable foundation upon which to determine the hero.

Schneider Electric is a combination of two archetypes, the explorer and the ruler.

The explorer is founded in the fact that "Schneider Electric has always been driven by an international, innovative and responsible mindset to shape the transformation of the industry it was evolving in. This was steel in the 19th century, electrical distribution in the 20th and energy management in the 21st". Also all the acquisitions that Schneider Electric did, make the company an explorer. The great challenge for the company lies in ensuring that the hunger for new ideas and insights is continually fed.

The ruler is based on the fact that Schneider Electric manifests itself through a strong need for structure and order. As a result of this, the Ruler archetype makes himself the leader of the group. The mission statement of Schneider Electric is to become 'the global specialist in energy management'. The primary goal in this is to keep control of the situation.

8.1.4 Where – the environment

Although the target audience of my thesis is Internal Communication, the environment for the corporate storytelling process is the whole organization. All people in the organization must be reached to explain the general story. That means: people in all layers, functions, entities, countries and, if possible, even the employees in the plants. To reach this objective, the story must consider the whole organization as its environment. But because the organization is huge and complex, the corporate storytelling process can be started in smaller pilot versions.

⁵⁹ <http://www.gointothestory.com/2008/05/joseph-campbell-heros-journey.html>

⁶⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monomyth>

⁶¹ Schutte, A. & Hendriks, T., *Corporate Stories*, Kluwer, 2010, page 68

⁶² Jansen, M., *Brand prototyping*, Kluwer, 2006, page 9

8.2 ...covers all conditions...

The frame of a process exists of preconditions that will influence the process. For this concept a number of conditions are provided by Internal Communication.

It needs to be a concept that:

- Is related to the long term strategy of the company.
- Covers the other storytelling that is already going on in the company.
- Consists of educational topics to ensure the quality of the internal communication.
- Can be controlled by Internal Communication to ensure the quality of the internal communication.
- Takes into account the language barrier and time zone issue.
- Involves local Internal Communication employees.
- Gives employees a voice to tell their story.
- Ensures that employees can attend voluntarily.
- Ensures that employees are prepared before attending the storytelling.
- Stays interesting for a long time.
- Is cheap and easy to execute.
- Is based on my own vision on Storytelling.

In my interaction vision on storytelling I want to add some preconditions to that.

It needs to be a concept that:

- Is a link between management and employees.
- Is real and authentic.
- Is a journey through the company, as Kim suggested.
- Covers all layers of the organization.
- Gives all people the possibility to tell their story.
- Gives honour and recognition to the people in the organization.
- Is close to the perception of all people in the company.
- Is short, simple, clear and understandable.
- Holds a mirror for employees, management and Internal Communication.
- Covers all the objectives Internal Communication wants to reach with strategic storytelling.

8.3 ...and is based on a great inspiration

Starting point

The most important critical insights of my analyze and theoretical phase are:

- **Collaboration and empowerment** – precondition: related to the long term strategy.
- **General story is missing** – the conflict: the struggle to find a good and simple general explanation of the company.
- **Corporate storytelling is the story told by all people in the organization** – precondition: gives the voices of the employees.

These three elements I used to find the right concept to improve storytelling in the company.

The corporate story gives the voices of the employees. Why do you not let them make the story concrete by collaboration and empowerment?!

"Bad artist copy. Good artists steal"

(Pablo Picasso)

Inspiration

The inspiration for my concept comes from the 'Gielmobiel'. Giel is a Dutch radio DJ, who has his own show in the morning. One of his show elements is the 'Gielmobiel'. It is a mobile phone that circulates among famous or upcoming musicians and actors in Holland. Every day at the same time Giel calls the 'Gielmobiel'. And every day it is a surprise who picks up the phone. When the person picks up the phone, Giel interviews this person shortly about who he/she is, how he/she is connected to the previous person, what he/she is doing at the moment and what projects are coming up. It takes 5 minutes at the most. After they hung up, the person needs to pass the phone on to someone else.

The power of this concept is that everyday it is a surprise who picks up the phone. It is interesting to hear what the connection is between the people and what they are doing. Besides that, Giel always calls early in the morning. So the people are at home, just awake, taking care of their little children or in the car on their way to their work. This makes it personal and real. Not because their manager said it, but because they want to do it their self. In the end it is a chain of all kind of people that have a connection somehow.

8.4 ...that provides the concept that covers all...

The concept for a corporate storytelling process for Schneider Electric exists of a main idea. But first, the term concept needs to be defined.

8.4.1 Definition 'concept'

Businessdictionary.com gives the following definition of the term concept: "A concept is a briefly stated clear idea around which an ad or marketing campaign is organized".⁶³ I agree with this description, but replace 'an ad or marketing campaign' by 'a corporate storytelling process'. So: **"A concept is a briefly stated clear idea around which a corporate storytelling process is organized"**.

8.4.2 The concept

For Schneider Electric I want to use the same concept as the 'Gielmobiel', but with some adjustments:

- Instead of a mobile phone, we use an iPad 2, because it is better recognizable and has a good video function. (Furthermore, if you want, you can customize the cover of the iPad to Schneider Electric design.)
- It does not circulate between famous people, but between Schneider Electric employees.
- It is not a radio element, but a video on the intranet or Schneider Electric TV, or maybe better: on Chatter. This is a new interesting, internal collaboration tool of Schneider Electric which is a combination of Twitter and Facebook.
- Not every day, but 1 or 2 times per week. For example, Tuesday and Thursday. But always at the same time and day of the week. To keep consistency.

A journey through our Schneider Electric people

The concept to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric consists of an iPad that is passed on by Schneider Electric employees every few days. A GPS is added in the iPad so that it can be traced in case someone does not pass it on or steals it. There is one person that always is the interviewer. One or two times a week there is an interview with a person in the company.

Because a GPS is added, the exact location of the iPad can be traced. Local internal communication employees will be mobilized to motivate the current 'owner' of the iPad. The local Internal Communication employee is closer to the respondent, so it is more personal and effective to use them. The local Internal Communication employee makes sure the device is passed on after the interview.

The interviewer is one person who facilitates the corporate storytelling process. It is always the same Internal Communication employee who facilitates a safe setting for the stories. The interviewer asks the respondent, who he/she is, what the connection is with the person that gave the device to him or her, how his /her workplace looks like. The interviewer asks for a short visual tour and an explanation of his/her function.

Besides that there is a special topic for every broadcast. The topic is related to the other storytelling that is going on in the company that week. For example, related to an important news article, a top story or a new video. The respondent gives a short explanation of his/her daily job related to this topic. An example of something he/she did and something that is coming up.

After the interview, the employee needs to give the device to someone else he/she knows in the company. In this way the authentic, general story of Schneider Electric comes alive. In the end it is a chain of people in Schneider Electric that are all connected to each other, because they collaborate and are empowered to take own initiative.

Advantages of the concept

1. Only one person is needed as an interviewer and facilitator. This can be an Internal Communication employee.
2. Just one device is necessary. The iPad 2 with simple camera to record the interview.
3. There is no external organization necessary for facilitating, filming, etc. And the tool is a onetime investment for the company and not that expensive compared to the video's Dominique suggested.

Precondition: it is cheap and easy to execute.

4. No high fashion video's, but simple, real, authentic handmade video's that give a peek in someone life.

Precondition: It is real and authentic.

⁶³ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/concept.html>

5. The interview stays interesting because of the educational level of the topics.
Precondition: Consists of educational topics to ensure the quality of the internal communication.
Precondition: Stays interesting for a long time.
6. The interviews are current, because they are related to other storytelling which is going on in the company that week.
Precondition: covers the other storytelling that is already going on in the company.
7. The device goes through all layers of the organization.
The environment: the whole organization.
Precondition: covers all layers of the organization.
8. From management to people in the plants and back up to management and all people in between.
Precondition: it is a link between management and employees.
Precondition: Gives all people the possibility to tell their story.
9. All respondents earn some honour and their '15 minutes of fame'. So all employees become the Schneider Electric hero, where other employees can identify him/her self with.
The who: The heroes of Schneider Electric are all people in the company.
10. The story comes alive if it comes closer to people. So not a story told by management only, because they are too far away. If it is the story of someone who has a comparable function or hierarchy, it is more understandable.
Precondition: Is close to the perception of all people in the company.
11. A pilot can be performed in the Hive. To test if it works and to promote it first in a smaller group.
Precondition: Can be controlled by Internal Communication to ensure the quality of the internal communication.
12. During the interviews a lot of respondents mentioned that local Internal Communication employees have to be more involved in the corporate storytelling process. In this concept they can be involved easily. Explanation of the Internal Communication role is explained more extended in an upcoming paragraph.
Precondition: Involves local Internal Communication employees.
13. Employees can decide by themselves if they want to accept the interview and who they give the device to after they have had it.
Precondition: Ensures that employees can attend voluntarily.
14. Internal Communication employees can prepare the respondent before the interview. He/she is based in the same country, speaks the same language, is recognizable and close. This provides trust. Nerves are human, but preparation and trust are always desirable.
Precondition: Ensures that employees are prepared before attending the storytelling.
15. Because the iPad circulates through all layers of the company, there will probably be a language difficulty. The local Internal Communication employee can play a mayor role in this. He/she attends the interview, so he/she can be a translator. This will make the interview a bit longer, but is more effective and time-consuming than subtitles. Besides that it gives an extra dimension to the movie because it is human, real and there are more things going on in the video.
Precondition: it is real and authentic.
16. You can look back the episodes on the web. So with all the interviews, a short, simple, clear and understandable description of all functions in the company is created.
The conflict: the struggle to find a good and simple general explanation of the company.
17. People get the possibility to tell their story. Not only management, but 'random' employees as well.
Precondition: Gives the voices of the employees.
18. It is a varied journey through the diversity of Schneider Electric and our strongly valued people.
Precondition: It is a journey through the company, as Kim suggested.
19. It is both online and offline which enhances each others impact.
Precondition: it ensures the quality of the current internal communication.
20. It is a chain of people in Schneider Electric that are all connected to each other, because they collaborate.
Precondition: related to the long term strategy.
21. It is real, authentic, modern, sympathetic and understandable.
Precondition: it is short, simple, clear and understandable.

22. It provides recognition, makes people proud and connected to the company and to each other. They will become an ambassador. All the objectives you want to reach with strategic storytelling.

Precondition: it covers all the objectives Internal Communication wants to reach with strategic storytelling.

The objective: That employees become an ambassador of the company.

8.5 ...can be executed in both visions

There are two ways to execute this concept. Option one is by 'your story' and option two is by 'our story'.

8.5.1 The concept for 'your story'

The interview with the respondent is done with the iPad before publishing. It is an interview with a lot of questions. Afterwards, the interviewer can cut unusable parts out of the video. The video is edited and placed on the web. (Global Intranet Portal, Schneider Electric TV or Chatter.) The local Internal Communication employee has the opportunity to guide the interview in collaboration with the interviewer.

Advantages

1. Because the video is cut, you can control the standards of Internal Communication.

Precondition: Can be controlled by Internal Communication to ensure the quality of the internal communication.

2. The interviewer and local Internal Communication employee can ensure together that the interview is proper and suitable.

Precondition: Can be controlled by Internal Communication to ensure the quality of the internal communication.

3. Because it is not a live broadcast, the problem of the different time zones is solved.

Precondition: Takes the time zone issue into account.

Disadvantages

1. It takes a lot of time to montage the videos.
2. The story is not authentic because it is probably taped in more shots, is guided by the local Internal Communication employee and is influenced and controlled because it is edited.

3. It not a real dialogue between employees and management.
4. It is not honest and authentic.

8.5.2 The concept for 'our story'

The interview with the respondent is a live stream broadcast. It is an interview with some concrete questions about the function of the respondent related to the topic of that week. Other people in the company can watch the interview live on Schneider Electric TV.

During and after the interview Chatter is used as much as possible. Chatter contains a group dedicated to this corporate storytelling. In the group, everybody can follow the GPS of the device all over the world. But they can also ask the respondent questions. The interviewer can ask some of these questions during the interview. The rest of the posed questions can be answered by the respondent afterwards. Interested people can react on these answers. They can chat with each other, or just use the like button.

The facilitator can refer in the discussion to other internal communication on the Global Intranet Portal about the discussion topic. News from the past, but also upcoming news and events. In this way, the storytelling covers everything that is already done and is going on in Schneider Electric.

After the live stream broadcast, the video of the interview is placed in the Chatter group. In addition, photo's can be placed in the group as well. The interviewer can facilitate this tool to make sure that the video is working, extra information and pictures can be placed and that the reactions are proper and suitable. He/she is supported by the local Internal Communication employee.

To have a better view on what subjects are interesting for people in the company and on what topics they want more information, Chatter can be used as well. For example by using polls, open questions and forum topics, feedback and input can be generated. This can be used as direction for the other storytelling, like articles and videos, as well.

Advantages

1. Because the interview is a live stream broadcast and not another video, people will probably be more interested. It is an actual thing that you can compare to the six o'clock news. Although everybody can look the

broadcast back on the internet, people take this into account in their planning. People in general want to be the first to know things.

2. The risk of a normal video is that people are earlier inclined to postpone the watching. This is avoided by a live stream broadcast.
3. All interviews are different because the interview is a real, authentic, uninfluenced dialogue. This fact, on top of the use of current topics, keeps the storytelling interesting for a long time.

Precondition: it is real and authentic.

Precondition: Stays interesting for a long time.

4. Because the interviews are authentic and nothing is edited, the whole story of the respondent is told. The people who watch the interview, will understand what he/she did and why. It generates respect and honour for the respondent. And the viewers will think about what they would do in the same situation.

Precondition: Gives honour and recognition to the people in the organization.

Precondition: it holds a mirror for employees, management and Internal Communication.

5. Because people can ask questions on Chatter that are used during and after the interview, it is not only information that the audience receives, but they start thinking about it as well. People are connected to each other and have the possibility to tell their story about the same topic. The storytelling becomes an interaction and takes the interview to a deeper level.

Precondition: Gives all people the possibility to tell their story.

6. The questions that are asked on Chatter can be used for further discussions on the topic. If someone facilitates this Chatter group, you receive a really good view on what employees and managers think about the topics. In this way, Internal Communication becomes a link between the two parties.

Precondition: It is a link between management and employees.

7. As said by Schutte and Hendriks: "The more employees are enabled in the production of a corporate story, the easier it will be to integrate the story into the thinking and actions of the company."⁶⁴

Disadvantages

1. It is harder to control and influence the corporate storytelling.
2. The time zone barrier is difficult to undermine.

8.6 ...and provides two different roles for Internal Communication

The execution of a corporate storytelling process in two different visions provides two diverse functions for Internal Communication.

8.6.1 The Internal Communication role in your story

The action vision is about controlled one-way communication. This is reflected in the role and function of the Internal Communication employee.

The Internal Communication employee that is the facilitator and interviewer:

- provides the topic of the interview.
- guides the interview in the right direction.
- decides which parts of the interview are used.
- ensures that one clear broadcast is made of the interview
- publishes the interview on the web.

The local Internal Communication employee:

- can bring a topic to the interviewer.
- provides information to the respondent to prepare him/her for the interview.
- helps the interviewer to guide the interview in the right direction.
- helps translating the broadcast.

8.6.2 The Internal Communication role in our story

The interaction vision is about facilitating an authentic setting for two-way communication. This is reflected in the role and function of the Internal Communication employee.

The Internal Communication employee that is the facilitator and interviewer:

- facilitates the executing of the live stream broadcast.
- provides in collaboration with the respondent the topic of the week.
- facilitates and monitors the Chatter group to create a safe setting where all people in the organization can tell their story.
- asks questions that come in on Chatter during the interview.

⁶⁴ Schutte, A. & Hendriks, T., Corporate Stories, Kluwer, 2010, page 35

- refers on Chatter to other storytelling that is going on already.
- uses the collected stories to put on the peoples global agenda.
- holds a mirror for all people in the organization in order for them to reflect.

The local Internal Communication employee:

- collaborated with the facilitator where possible.
- makes the respondent feel comfortable by having a dialogue about the setting that the respondent will be in.
- monitors the Chatter group as well.
- refers to local stories that are going on.
- uses the collected stories to put on the agenda of local people.
- holds a mirror for local people in the organization in order for them to reflect.

9. ...and how the story comes alive...

- 9.1 ...by a workshop with the team...
- 9.2 ...and suggestions for the next steps

9. ...and how the story comes alive...

In the previous chapter the 'what', 'who', 'where' and the concept are determined. The next step of the corporate storytelling process is the 'how' and 'when'. It gives answer to the sub question 'What other steps are needed to reach the objective of the corporate storytelling process.'

9.1 ...by a workshop with the team...

In my thesis I support Internal Communication to find a structured and formalized process to improve Corporate Storytelling in Schneider Electric. As said earlier, a narrative structure is about two things: content and plot structure. Earlier I described the content of the narrative structure consisting of the 'what', 'who', and 'where' questions. This chapter I describe the plot structure that consist of 'how' and 'when' the activities take place to reach the final objective.

9.1.1 Collaboration with the team

Corporate storytelling and the strategy of Schneider Electric are all about **collaboration and empowerment**. To be a role model for the whole organization, Internal Communication has to start with itself. A collaboration and co-creation with the whole team is needed to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric.

"The strength of the team is each individual member.

The strength of each member is the team"

(Phil Jackson, Chicago Bulls)

In my thesis I support the team with the answers to the content questions of the story. But to make the process complete, the 'how' and 'when' have to be filled in as well. To make a start with finding these answers, I facilitate a workshop with the corporate Internal Communication team to think about some elements of the plot structure. The workshop is scheduled after my final presentation for Internal Communication in Schneider Electric.

9.1.2 Aim of the workshop

After the workshop I would have achieved that Internal Communication:

- knows how to facilitate a workshop.

- knows how to reach and fill in the next steps.
- starts collaborating with the whole team to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric.

9.1.3 Questions

The workshop takes only an hour. It is too short to find an answer to all the 'how' and 'when' questions. So I made a selection of questions for this first collaboration meeting.

- How do the topics look like?
- How can we integrate these topics in the concept?
- How can we use the current storytelling for these topics?
- How can the concept cover the current internal communication even more?

9.2 ...and suggestions for the next steps

After the workshop that I facilitate there are more questions that have to be answered. I am sure that all the members of the team have great ideas on how to improve internal communication in Schneider Electric. Internal Communication is promoting collaboration and empowerment in the organization. To be a role model, workshops and brainstorm sessions are good example of how a team can improve its corporate storytelling by collaboration and empowerment. So I suggest that Internal Communication organizes similar workshops to find answers and ideas for the following questions:

- **Logistics**
 - What materials are necessary?
 - How many people are necessary?
 - How much money needs to be invested?
 - How big is our budget?
- **Who does what? / Roles and responsibilities**
 - How does the corporate storytelling project team look like?
 - How are the roles and responsibilities divided?
 - How can we all implement this storytelling in our daily job?
 - How can we involve the local Internal Communication employees in the right way?
 - How can we involve our managers?
 - How can we involve our employees?

- **Milestones**
 - How does the timeline of the execution activities look like?
 - When do we start? And when do we end the project?
 - When are the important milestones?
 - How do these milestones look like?
- **Measurement**
 - How often do we measure?
 - How can we measure if our objectives are reached?
 - When are the objectives reached?
- **Evaluation**
 - How does an evaluation look like?
 - How often do we evaluate?
 - When are important evaluation moments?

10. ...so that in the end, they lived happily ever after...

10.1 ...with my advice

10. ...so that in the end, they lived happily ever after...

In the previous chapters almost all elements of this thesis and the corporate storytelling process are described. The only ingredient left is the final advice that is related to the last sub question 'How can the corporate storytelling process be implemented in Schneider Electric?'

10.1 ...with my advice

In my thesis period, I ran a thorough analysis to the company Schneider Electric and its Internal Communication department. In books and on the internet I searched for a lot of information about corporate storytelling. Together with Internal Communication, I formulized the objectives of the corporate storytelling process. Through answering the questions of a narrative structure, I formulized the content and the concept for the story. And last, I facilitated a co-creation with the team to find some answers to the 'how' and 'when' questions already.

The missing question

With my thesis, I offer an almost complete support to implement a formulized and structured process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric. Almost, because there is one element missing, the step before the starting point and the question: **'where are we now?'** in terms of Internal Communication.

10.1.1 Action vs. Interaction vs. Objectives

What I saw during the four months that I worked in Schneider Electric is that Internal Communication is currently focussed on the action vision. It fits the characteristics of a machine bureaucracy. But if they want to reach the mission statement and Future for Internal Communication, they have to make more use of the possibilities and opportunities of the interaction vision.

What I noticed in the interviews is that this also applies for some of the local Internal Communication employees.

"An ideal communication is not just a top down message but also a bottom up message. So employees that give feedback and direction. One of the cues of Internal Communicator is to seek up this feedback eagerly and try to understand what employees want." (Amanda Lim)

"I think we are still very top down and centralized in the way we operate. I think we can learn a lot by decentralizing our communication and let our communication be much more employee generated." (Paige Roberts)

A switch from action to interaction is not easy. There are some comments to take into account:

- A machine bureaucracy as an organization structure means an old, huge and difficult to change organization.
- The use of the interaction version may lead to a lack of overview.
- From a practical point of view, Schneider Electric can make a balanced mix of both visions, but ask there self almost the same question as above: if there is not a coherent vision, is it possible to deliver One Communication Experience?

"The impossible is only temporary"

(Mohammed Ali)

- "Communication is a complex phenomenon. More complex than people think in the action vision." (Erik Reijnders ⁶⁵)
- People are fond of tools in which they think that they have influence. People are impatient and allergic for problems. They prefer to resolve this as quickly as possible through the path of least resistance. We hate complexity and that's why we prefer to deny that complexity. It should not be too complicated or threatening. ⁶⁶
- A mix of both visions is not always possible. In the interaction vision it is possible, because you sometimes need to send some controlled one-way communication, to inform people. But in the action vision it is not possible to use true two-way communication. A dialogue in combination with the controlled one-way communication of the action vision will be a framed and controlled dialogue.
- "Mixes of action and interaction vision are used more often, because of practical considerations. But with a mix, it is the question if there is still a coherent vision? Because both visions vary significantly." (Reijnders ⁶⁷) And is it possible to deliver One Communication Experience?

⁶⁵ Reijnders, E., Basisboek interne communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010 page 104

⁶⁶ Reijnders, E., Basisboek interne communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010 page 104

⁶⁷ Reijnders, E., Basisboek interne communicatie, Van Gorcum, 2010 page 159

Critical insight 1 – Internal Communication has to think again

It is important for Internal Communication to discuss their vision and mission and state their objectives. What objectives do they want to reach with their activities? Which vision do they need for that? And is this vision aligned with the current mission statement and activities?

10.1.2 My advice

If Internal Communication really wants to implement a complete, structured and formalized process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric, they have to make a decision for the last question, 'where are we now?' in terms of Internal Communication, themselves.

This gives Internal Communication two options:

1. Or Internal Communication strives to reach the mission statement and 'Future for Internal Communication'. This means a shift to the interaction vision and a change of the current vision. A tough option, because transformations are difficult within the organization structure. But not impossible and an interesting challenge.
2. Or Internal Communication keeps the current vision that fits the organization structure, the action vision. This means an adaptation of mission statement and a rejection of the 'Future for Internal Communication.'

*"If there is anything that we wish to change in the child,
we should first examine it and see whether it is not
something that could better be changed in ourselves."*

(Carl Gustav Jung)

The answer to this question can be found by answering the following questions:

Objective

46

1. Where does Internal Communication wants to go?
2. What is the objective of Internal Communication?
3. What is the strategy of Internal Communication to reach this objective?

Vision

4. What is the common vision on internal communication in relation to the objective?
5. Does Internal Communication need to change its vision or mission to let them complement each other?
6. Is Melcrums Future of Internal Communication relevant for Internal Communication in Schneider Electric?

Business partner

7. Is Internal Communication a business partner?
8. Is Internal Communication a business partner for management only or also for employees?

Target audience

9. Who is the target audience?
10. What does the target audience want?
11. Is the voice of the target audience important?
12. How do we want to communicate with our target audience?
13. Is a survey enough to hear the voice of the target audience?
14. Who are the people of in the target audience?
15. How does the target audience want to participate in internal communication?

Corporate storytelling

16. How does corporate storytelling fit in the objective of Internal Communication?
17. Is corporate storytelling for Schneider Electric related to the action vision or to the interaction vision?
18. Is the current storytelling based on 'your story' or on 'our story'?
19. Whose role is corporate storytelling?
20. What is the function of this person/these persons?
21. Does the current storytelling fit in the objective of Internal Communication and their objective of corporate storytelling?

10.1.4 The choice is made?!

If Internal Communication knows where they are, what there vision is and where they want to go, they can finalize the concept and the practical, logistic activities to implement a structured and formalized process to improve corporate storytelling in Schneider Electric.

Sources – Inspirational stories are everywhere...

Sources – Inspirational stories are everywhere...

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Attachments – ...for the ones who want to read more

Attachments – ...for the ones who want to read more

1 Survey

1.1 Scope

1.2 Questionnaire

2. Visions on internal communication

3 Trap van Quirke

4 Interviews

4.1 Questionnaire

4.2 Written interviews

Attachment 1 – Survey



Attachment 2 – Visions on Internal Communication

“Internal Communication is all about making the overall strategy and business of a company relevant for each and every employee so that they know how they contribute, are engaged and are connected to each other so that they can work together on the same good. Tools are just means to an end. We use them work on the overall goal.”

(Kim Beddard Fontaine, Interview 27-04-2011)

“It’s a way to uniformise messages and make sure that they are really brought to all employees themselves. It’s adding value because it makes the messages simpler and understandable by the final targets. Besides that, in terms of bottom up approach, have the feedback from people, try to always improve.”

(Aurore Bochet, Interview 28-04-2011)

“It’s a function, department within the company which helps the company to make and organize a change in a company. We are the change agents. Every time something new is happening we need to explain. If you don’t understand this new thing you can’t be involved in this new thing and you can’t be an actor. If an employee is not an actor he is not motivated. If you don’t understand, you can’t do it. Bringing people together is a consequence of that.”

(Karine Gamez-Verlohr, interview 29-04-2011)

“For me, internal communication is the direct two ways to communications between our organization and our employees. It is important department within the company organisation. It helps improving employee engagement and vehicle the management messages.”

(Smahane Sayoud, Interview 21-04-2011)

“It’s informing the employees of the company of what their company does in terms of strategy, products, vision, mission, etc. It’s strategy and high level understanding but also real, concrete stuff. For me it’s informing employees which links to engaging employees. When people understand, they are engaged. Which makes people able to explain to other stakeholders and can

contribute to the right image of the company. Internally and externally.”

(Marie Le Men, Interview 05-05-2011)

“IC is to provide information to the people in the company and to give them a highlight on what happens in the company and make them more involved in the company. Because they are informed on what we are doing. We need to inform the people and make a highlight on what the people are doing next to you. They understand why they are working and for what.”

(Sylvie Guillemot, Interview 28-04-2011)

“For me it is a translator. It takes concepts, and it takes projects and it takes strategy. So everything that is more of a conceptual nature. And translate it to make sense for each and every employee within Schneider Electric. Internal Communication is a highlighter. It can say yes and no to what we should communicate and how we should communicate that it makes sense. And Internal Communication needs to be a business partner. I was reading an article where Kim was quoted. She was saying that: ‘In order for Internal Communication to be regarded as a business partner. To be reviewed. We have to earn that place’. When you bring your added value when you are asked. The next time they come back to you.”

(Simona Radu, Interview 04-05-2011)

“The role of Internal Communication is to bring up the engagement level of the employees by communicating, by making things informed by the employees. That is why Internal Communication is important for employee engagement.”

(Amanda Lim, Interview 02-05-2011)

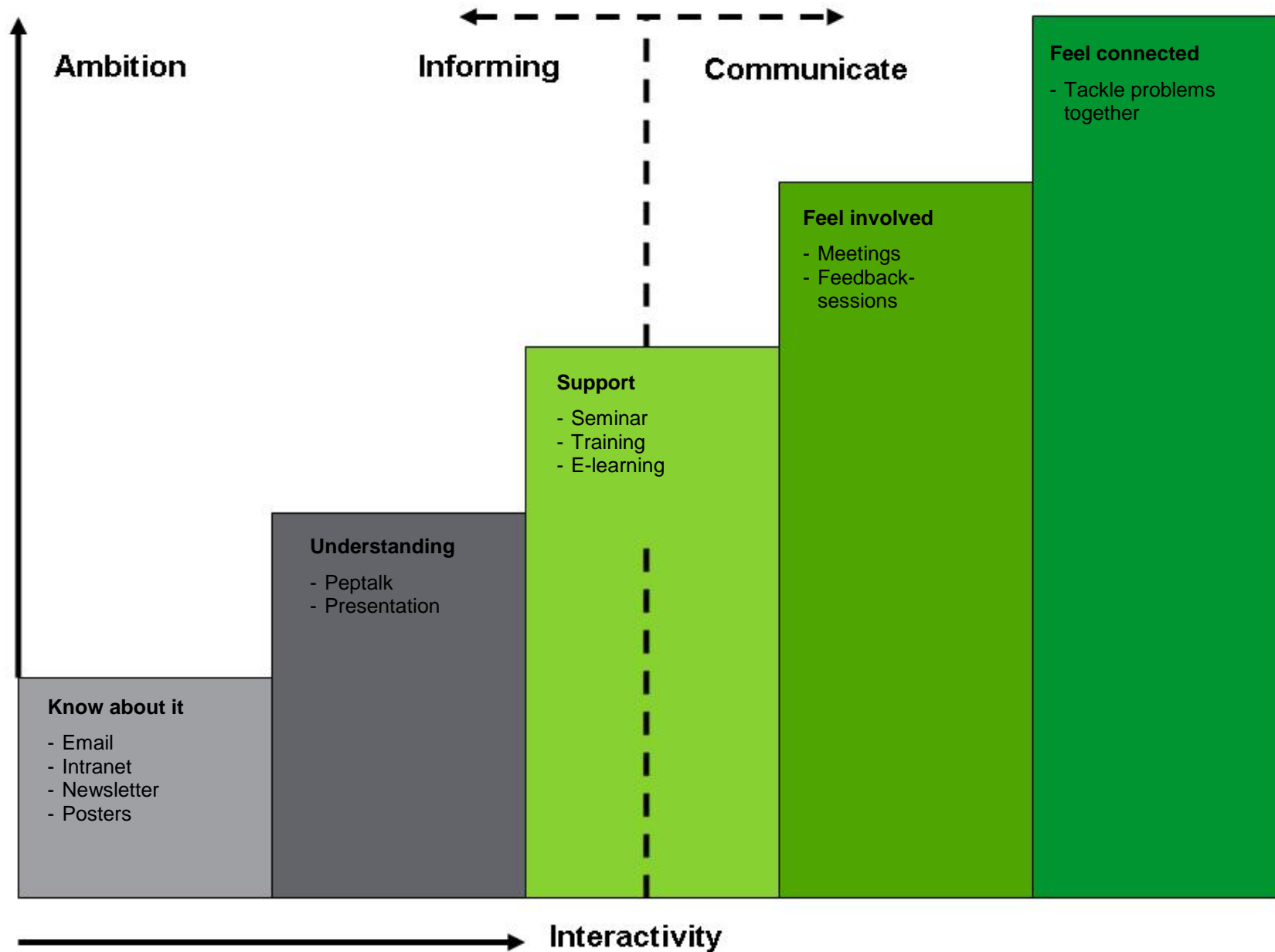
“It is about linking everybody in the organization and helping them feel connected to who we are and what we do.”

(Paige Roberts, Interview 09-05-2011)

“If you do it right, it means that you have informed a certain group of people, at a certain moment with certain information.”

(Paraphrase Alejandra Berendonk, Interview 05-05-2011)

Attachment 3 – Trap van Quirke



Attachment 4 – Interviews

4.1 Questionnaire

Profiling questions

1. What is your name?
2. In which entity are you operating?
3. In which city are you operating?
4. How long have you been working in the company?
5. Tell me something about yourself. What kind of person are you?
What are your hobbies? How does your family look like? Etc. Some personal things. Just to know the person behind the function.

Internal Communication

1. What is Internal Communication according to you?
2. Do you think that the internal communication that is provided through various internal media is complete?
3. What is your satisfaction rate on the current status of Internal Communication?
4. What do you think works well in the current internal communication?
5. In order to have a better Internal Communication department, what two improvements would you propose?

Function

1. What is the description of your function in the Internal Communication department?
2. How is your function related to local Internal Communication employees?

3. How do you support these local Internal Communication employees within your function?
4. Are you satisfied about this relation with local Internal Communication?
5. What are you proud of in your function as Internal Communication employee?
6. What two things would you like to do different or extra within your function?

Function related to employees

1. How do you communicate with employees (incl. managers)
2. Is there a difference between communication to/with managers and employees?
3. Are you more an advisor for employees or a provider of information? Or a combination of both?
- How do you support them in your daily work?
4. How should internal communication be connected with employees?
5. What is your satisfaction rate on the current status of your communication with employees and managers?
6. What do you think works well in your current communication with employees and managers?
7. What would you like to improve or do different in your communication with employees?

Storytelling

1. What is corporate storytelling according to you?
2. Is corporate storytelling one-way or two-way communication?
3. Who's responsibility is the storytelling?
4. What is the story of Schneider Electric according to you?

- What do you tell your friends on a Friday night in a café?

5. What is the charm of the organization?
6. Do you like to work for it?
7. What is your association with the organization Schneider Electric?
For example: what kind of car is it? Or is it a flower? Or some food?
Etc?
8. What kind of person is Schneider Electric?
9. Tell me an anecdote about you and Schneider Electric! Or more!

Storytelling in the company

1. Do you think Schneider Electric does some storytelling already?
Not only in your global department, but also in local functions?
2. Can you give some examples?
3. What are these stories about? Subject? How it looks like? Form?
Etc.
4. What is the title of these stories?
5. What is your contribution on storytelling in the company?
6. How do you want to contribute more/different to storytelling?
7. What is your satisfaction rate on the current status of corporate storytelling in SE?
8. What do you think works well in the current storytelling?
9. What two improvements would you propose for the corporate storytelling process?

What is your opinion on my main question?

“How can Internal Communication implement a structured and formalized process to improve Corporate Storytelling in Schneider Electric?”

4.2 Written interviews

