Hanze University of Applied Sciences
Groningen

Determining the communication flaws between the HRSC and involved national stores of Makro Cash and Carry NL

A communication advice report regarding mutation forms, priorities and attitudes for the stores of Groningen, Leeuwarden, Vianen, Nieuwegein, Delft and Wateringen

by

Thijs Rietvoort

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Graduation supervisors: Peter Pratley & Roel Hoving

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NON CONFIDENTIAL

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Preface

As an upcoming International Communication professional, it is important to believe that your work is valued by the client. The old saying 'every little bit helps', originated from a famous slogan of supermarket company Tesco, is something that continues to exist, especially in this graduation assignment.

After the initial report, a second research effort was done in order to bring more detail to the report and take the conclusions and recommendations to a more national level. The first report lacked detail and clarity, which has been corrected with this renewed view and additional information. Initially, the recommendations covered only two stores. After the additional research, this report now has a more broad spectrum and foundation. This graduation assignment was born from the need to graduate as a student attending the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen. However, it has also come into existence by the needs of the HR Service Center (from here on referred to as HRSC), part of Makro Cash and Carry NL, located in Groningen, the Netherlands. The research objective of this research paper is to determine the main factors that affect the communication between the HRSC and the department managers, from both the point of view of both parties, in order to provide recommendations to improve communication flows.

As a junior communication professional, this is an excellent opportunity and challenge to apply what I have learned, both theoretically and practically. This report is not internally sensitive or confidential, meaning that the information will, in no situation, harm the organization and its departments.

As a 4th year International Communication student, I have been fortunate enough to do this research project and been given the chance to research the current knowledge level of the managers and provide communication recommendations for the HR Service Center. I would like to express my gratitude once again for this opportunity. My experience on both my academic- and work level will be the foundation of my knowledge, which will be complemented with the necessary literature, research and interviews. The use of language and words concerning the entirety of this report is my responsibility and no plagiarism in any form is applicable.

Yours sincerely,

Thijs Rietvoort

Executive summary

Within every organization, certain departments must work together in order to strive for optimal effectiveness, efficiency and synergy. This report aims to give you, the reader, an in-depth view of the presumed and later, researched, communication obstacles that the HR Service Center (from here on referred to as the HRSC) faces on a daily basis. The HRSC processes and facilitates all mutations with regards to the employees of the 17 stores of Makro Cash and Carry NL (further detailed company details in the chapter: Organizational Context).

This report was written and presented to the client and problem owner, the manager of the HRSC. In close collaboration with her assistant-manager, she manages the HRSC and is responsible for outgoing information towards the stores with regards to their respective employees. For a considerable amount of time, the client has presumed that the communication between the HRSC and the involved stores has been less than optimal and efficient. In an effort to reestablish the communication as effective and efficient as possible between the HRSC and the involved stores of Makro Cash and Carry NL, the client has issued the researcher with uncovering the obstacles that hinder these processes.

The practical statement that has been determined by both the client and researcher is that the HRSC (thus the manager) does not know what works best in order to improve the inflow of HRM information, in specific the correct transfer of mutation forms needed for employee mutations, sent by various parties within the national stores. In order to determine the correct methods to improve the inflow of information, communication advice is needed on how to approach this problem. Additionally, a knowledge problem amongst the client and researcher about the reasons why, currently, department stores managers do not meet the criteria of the HRSC to fill in these mutations forms correctly on the first try. Also, no (past) research was done to uncover why department managers persist in this behavior, despite HRSC effort to communicate with the target audience. Besides the necessary insight in the causes of the current problem, the client wishes to know opinions about possible solutions from all involved parties.

After establishing the actual problem, the research objective was to provide communication recommendations on how to improve effective HRM information flows between the HRSC and the involved stores of Makro Cash and Carry NL by uncovering the internal/external factor(s) that affect the information flows concerning attitude, information needs, skills, priorities and other data concerning internal communications.

In order to provide answers to this research objective, research questions were determined with several focal themes. These were determined to be employee engagement, non-compliance, internal communications and personality psychology. By using and answering these focal areas, the researcher is able to determine what theory and practical data says about the best approach in this context.

During this project, multiple in-depth interviews with department managers of the involved stores in combination with employees of the HRSC have been conducted, yielding valuable information that provided the base towards providing recommendations. After the initial interviews with employees of the HRSC, the assumption why department managers do not meet the criteria of the HRSC, is due to the fact that they have different daily priorities and do not realize the affects the additional work has to the HRSC. In combination with the theoretical scope on the problem statement, is quickly became apparent during the research period (and the data analysis) that a lack of knowledge with the target audience, in combination with a shortage of realization concerning consequences of the action done by the department managers cause the (unneeded) delays and hinder of HRM information flows between the involved parties.

Discussing with the experienced employees on both the HRSC revealed that, over the course of several years, the numerous ideas and suggestions made towards the management of the HRSC and subsequently the board of Makro Cash and Carry NL were picked up and looked into, but never really implemented. In order for the communication flows to change in a way that benefits all involved parties, the thesis aims to be an eye-opener and wishes to shed a bright light on the opportunities that can be obtained. After analyzing the results, the following recommendations have been made towards the management of the HRSC:

- To give mandatory workshops to existing (and future) department managers and their subordinate staff of the Makro regarding HRSC processes.
- To create a broad support base with the Board of the Makro to ensure implementation of the workshops and guarantee quality during future processes between the HRSC and department stores.
- To establish a project within the HRSC that monitors, registries, and reports failing department managers and their staff towards the Board with the end goal of motivating them to perform in all areas of their function profile.

Initially, these recommendations were only applicable for the stores in Groningen and Leeuwarden. However, due to the fact that the first report was judged insufficiently, the researcher has successfully included four additional stores. By presenting the outcomes of the interviews and the recommendations to several department store managers and their staff in Vianen, Nieuwegein, Delft and Wateringen, a broader basis was established. The department stores managers indicated that the information provided by their other colleagues, in addition with the conclusions and recommendations that were made by the researcher, also showed their view on the problem. It can therefore be concluded that the recommendations can also be applied to these stores and their respectful managers.

Finally, this research therefore suggests that additional follow-up research needs to be conducted to verify that the answers, and in turn, the recommendations have a support basis on a complete national level.

Taking into account that the recommendations, which are further elaborated in the final sections of this report, future management of HRM information and communication flows between the HRSC and the regional stores of Groningen, Leeuwarden, Vianen, Nieuwegein, Delft and Wateringen can be geared towards a more effective dealing with uncertainties, threats and opportunities. In turn, even more satisfying project results can be achieved which in turn can contribute towards the development of communication lines within the entire Makro Cash and Carry Group of the Netherlands.

Project context

Makro Cash and Carry NL, part of the Metro Group, is the one of the leading international players in wholesale trade and is the largest sales line of METRO Group. Originally German, it aims to be customer-focused, international and innovative. The distinctive business concept is orientated towards helping professional customers to successfully run their own business. It has over 650 wholesale stores in 25 countries and it strives to be championing the passion, ambition, creativity and flexibility of independent business. Makro sells everything from household appliances to fresh foods. In general, the customers are the people who own businesses themselves, and buy their products from Makro. However, non-business owners can also shop at the Makro. In order to do so, a company or person must enlist with the Makro to receive an entrance card, which must be shown in order to purchase goods and items. Financially, the company has made a steady positive revenue, which decreased slightly the past years. With 17 stores spread across the Netherlands, the department handling the

information processing with regards to the employees is the Human Resource Service Center or HRSC. This department, located in Groningen, was founded to be an aid towards all stores in the Netherlands by processing information into a digital system with regards to employee mutations. These mutation vary from financial, personal, and legal-

related processes. Currently, the department processes most of the information mutations for the almost 4300 employees spread across the nation.

Communication between stores in the Netherlands is generally done via telephone, e-mail and on occasions personal face-to-face communication. Departments managers and their assistants are in close contact with the HRSC, due to the fact that the HRSC officially processes mutations. For example, managers submit official mutation forms at the HRSC, which in turns checks the credibility of the form before processing it. The employees at the HRSC follow specific steps at each individual process; like contract renewals, hiring, organizational mutations etc. Currently, this is not done effectively, accurately and efficiently and causes both problems for the HRSC and the stores (and managers) themselves. It slows down mutations to a halt and requires additional correspondence, which take up time and hinders other work-related tasks. In addition to these effects, it creates frustration amongst the HRSC employees. Assumingly, due to the delay in processing, it would also be beneficial for the

stores and their managers to minimize these factors as much as possible. All in all, the HRSC (and in subsequently other stores) do not have a clear insight to what works and what not. The current guidelines and information that are dispersed from the HRSC towards the stores has no follow-up protocol. It is assumed that all involved parties read the information and act accordingly, but this can't be confirmed. This presents a problem for the HRSC, which intends to aid the managers and their respective stores. The stores itself and the managers may think that this does not present a problem to them, as they can continue to do their work. However, more frequently than not it occurs that managers are losing financial, staff and managerial means due to incorrect paperwork. It can therefore be stated that a knowledge problem is existent. More specific, a knowledge problem in which both the HRSC and involved department managers are not on the same wavelengths with regards to what obstacles have priorities and are crucial towards a more productive, accurate and effective collaboration. The difference between these points of views have to be researched from both a theoretical and empirical side of view.

The objective of this graduation assignment is to uncover the factor(s) that might cause the communication problems between the HRSC and the involved stores. When the different factors that affect the communication are uncovered, the aim of this thesis will be to provide communication recommendations towards the manager of the HRSC to remove these obstacles to ensure that any future mutations will be processed according to a standard that is reachable and agreed upon by both parties.

The choice to uncover the factors that affect communication flows of only the department managers and their assistants is that they make up the vast majority of the target group that are in contact with the HRSC. In addition to this, this target group is easily accessible to the researcher, as he is also an former employee of the HRSC. Also, the stores located in the northern provinces are within travelling distance, so primary data can be gathered more easily. In order to implement the international aspects, research material in the form of documents, communication strategies and other applicable data will be requested at the store in Dusseldorf. If applicable, these will be taken into consideration when providing recommendations. Finally, as mentioned in the preface, this report is not internally sensitive.

Organizational context

The HRSC is a department within the store of Groningen which processes administrative orientated tasks for the stores across the Netherlands. These administrative tasks range from filling in employee information in the digital system called SAP to arranging the administrative tasks which makes sure employee can collect their annual Christmas Box. Unique in its kind in the Netherlands, it is a part of Makro Cash and Carry NL. With a relatively small group of 17 employees, it aims to receive the information concerning administrative mutations as complete as possible. In the past, certain actions, plans and guidebooks have been written for the managers to ensure they are aware of the regulations. However, both through experience of the researcher and his colleagues at the HRSC, it is presumed that the processes at the HRSC and department stores are not sufficiently aligned anymore. Often, responsible managers do not respond timely to important communication concerning these mutations, or do not supply the required autographs, which allows the process to continue. These facts have arisen from a recently conducted test sample, where employees of the HRSC checked the response times on e-mails and the amount of correct and completely filled-in mutations forms. According to HRSC criteria, these were below par. From this fact, the demand to determine the internal and external factors that affect the HRM communication flow between the involved parties has arisen.

The processes at the HRSC are in a constant state of change, which is communicated towards the different stores. In an attempt to provide additional assistance, the HRSC frequently addresses the most common mistakes made concerning the mutation forms and other obstacles that hinder an effective, accurate and efficient outcome. However, it might be the case that both the current department managers and their staff are not properly instructed and trained. Hence, this research paper aims to uncover the factor(s) that might affect the HRM communication flows between the HRSC and the department stores. Additionally, it will attempt to explain what causes the lack in accuracy and delays of handing in mutation forms in time.

The main communication methods currently between the HRSC and the stores is via e-mail, telephone and SAP HR. The HRSC has a general central inbox, accessible for all of its employees. Simple questions are received here, in combination with more specific ones concerning each store. They are checked, reviewed and processed on a daily basis by the employees. Questions that cannot be answered are transferred to specific departments within

the Makro, with the HRSC as the intermediate. The HRSC is open for telephone during working days and working hours (08.30 hours and 17.00 hours), for urgent question concerning mutations. The employees at the HRSC take shifts in answering the phone, whilst remaining available to back eachother up in case of need. Last but not least, SAP HR is the software system where all mutations are processed. Accessible to all employees of the HRSC, this software stands at the core of the mutation processing. It can be addressed to reveal information of all the 4,300 employees of Makro Netherlands, for example personal information, function at the store and salary specifications.

In short, the HRSC wishes to uncover the factor(s) that might affect the communication flows between the HRSC and the department stores. For example, to reveal the attitude, information needs, skills, priorities and other factors that might influence the information process. When these are actually present and uncovered by this thesis part, it would be in both the HRSC and the department stores interests to act accordingly. The actions will be determined in close collaboration with the HRSC and the stores, but also the senior board of the Makro, to ensure that these recommendations can be applied, carried out and anchored.

Theoretical framework

Segmentation was done by the researcher and determined by the value the different topics have towards achieving the needed recommendations. After now having identified and formulated the problem statement, it is now key to chose the key theories and ideas that are relevant in relation to the subject. By determining this information, we can more adequately 'frame' the research itself and give a more clear understanding of the concepts, theories and models that we can apply to the topic. The goal of the definitions will be make the research direction more clear as the research will be build on these choices.

First off, in order to explain the non-compliance segment it is useful to apply the behavioral decision theory. This theory is mainly concerned with identifying the values, uncertainties and other issues that are relevant in a given decision, its rationality and the resulting optimal decision. (Takemura, 2014) Holding this theory towards the real life obligations in the department stores, the aim to to identify all the factors that are present and weigh-in towards making decision in the eyes of the target audience.

In addition to this, the psychological point of view will be taken into consideration. In specific, the forming and alterations of attitudes towards a specific person, or in this case an institution within the company, the HRSC. An attitude is an evaluation of an object, person, item or an idea (Petty. et al., 2005). This kind of evaluation consists of three components, which combined form our attitude:

The affective compontent, consisting of emotional reactions concerning the object or idea. This is an attitude which is based more on emotions, combined with norms and values, rather than a factual look on the case. The affective component dominates in these cases (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). This may be on implication towards the research goal, since the target audience may or may not have a certain emotional reaction towards filling in the forms, due to past experiences. Secondly, the cognitive component, consist of the thoughts and assumptions concerning the object. Cognitive based attitudes are based mainly of facts, like in this case the benefits and downsides of filling in the forms (on time) and sending them towards the HRSC. When an evaluation of primarily based on an individuals assumptions about the characteristics of an attitude object, this can be classified as a coginitive based attitude. Thirdly, the behavioral component, consists of our actions or the observable behavioral towards the object. This compontent nests itselfs into an individuals observation

of how he or she behaves towards an idea. In this case, when someone already has a pre-defined idea towards the HRSC and the protocols it works by, there is no need to observe their behavior towards this. This approach of attitudes, givent hat they are formed by these three components is indicated by the term 'the tripartite model of attitudes' (Bohner & Wanke, 2002; Olson & Kendrick, 2008). The relation between these components are different with each attitiude (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). Research has shown that social experiences play a significant role in the forming of attitudes.

After analyzing these attitudes, it is key that we determine what theory states concerning how to change the attitudes of individuals. The answer to this will be given in the section research questions.

The internal communication aspect can be divided into three segments: communication channels, communication frequency and the communication code. Communication channels can be defined as 'a medium through which a message is transmitted to its intended audience' (Saunders. et al. 2009). This is chosen as this research thesis is trying to discover whether or not the currently used communication channels are still effective and efficient. Furthermore, the 'communication frequency is the amount of time the intended audience is exposed to the designed message' (Saunders. et al. 2009). Is the target audience adequately exposed to the information of the HRSC concerning the processes, or is the frequency inadequate? Finally, the communication code 'is the way in which the intended audience is exposed to the message, formal or informal' (Saunders. et al. 2009). Does the target audience experience a barrier when communicating with the HRSC or vice versa? In this is the case, it is crucial to remove these barriers. The three above mentioned segments are key to investigate as they will help to formulate effective and adequate recommendations. "Relationship quality requires cooperative intentions, transparency and follow-up contact" (Lemke. et al. 2010).

The third research area that has been selected is employee engagement. This research area has been divided in two segments; the so-called Engagement Drivers and the Enablement Drivers. For the visual lay out: (see Appendix C). The engagement drivers consist of factors like: pay and benefits, development opportunities, confidence in leaders and a clear and promising direction. These are factors that encourage employee engagement (Smidts. et al. 2001). In addition to this primary segment concerning employee engagement, the researcher has chosen to add the so-called enablement drivers. These consist of external factors like: resources, training, collaboration and performance management.

The value of these mentioned theories will be to give a valuable insight towards similar past studies and to what established authors have determined. In combination with the chosen literature, the research questions (which can be found on the next pages) are more easily related to the literature. A collaboration between both literature and desk/field research will yield the data that to lead to the guidelines/requirements needed to make recommendations.

The sources for the research perspective are the literature acquired during the preliminary research and research throughout the project. The first key literature piece is 'Effective Internal Communication' by Lyn Smith (2008). The book describes the history and current status of internal communication and where it sits within the organization. In addition, it gives insight what it takes to work in internal communication and the range of publics withina typical organization. Furthermore, it yield information on how international communication should be managed and structured, including international communication programmes within a company and its departments.

In addition, the second key literature piece chosen for this research paper is 'International Human Resource Management' by Chris Brewster et al (2011). The book aims to provide a balanced approach to comparative and international HRM. It offers particular focus on cross-culturalm comparative and strategic HRM issues, with superior coverage of culture and the impact on organisational behavior between employees and management. This book will be at the center of the literature data towards understanding nowadays HRM processes and how they should be ideally implemented.

Finally, to address the psychological aspect of this research, a third key piece literature was chosen. This book is 'Personality Psychology' by Larsen & Buss (2010). This book aims to give a broad view of the human personality, on a both individual level aswell as within an organization. The book will give the researcher the understanding why individuals act the way they do in certain situations, in combination with the underlying organization psychology. The content of this book will allow a thorough theoretical analysis of the research questions.

The actual answers to the theoretical questions can be found on page 13. In this section, the theoretical sub-questions are answered individually with the help of the mentioned books.

Research objective

This research is conducted, as mentioned earlier, for the benefit of the HRSC, a department led by the manager with her assistant which has assumed a more leading role in the last few years. As an HRM department, it specializes itself in processing administrative data and the communication of this towards the stores. In total, the department has around 17 employees, all based in Groningen.

The problem analysis in the project/organizational context revealed that the problem stated in this thesis is to determine which communication obstacles exist between the HRSC and the deaprtment managers, which prevent a more effective, accurate and efficient collaboration. As communication is key towards processing all the tasks correctly, insight regarding the current and absent communication flows should be of relevenace to the client and contribute to the department goals.

According to Verschuren & Doorewaard (2010), a practice-orientated project has the ability to rely and focus on "recommendations for improving an existing situation" .After reviewing all segments and areas, this is the path that is chosen for this thesis.

The problem intervention cycle by Verschuren and Doorewaard defines five phases; problem analysis, problem diagnosis, design, intervention/change and evaluation (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007). Considering the focus group and the description of the challenge; uncovering the internal/external factor(s) that affect the communication between the involved parties, this research can be categorized as a diagnostic project. Herewith the following research goal is formulated:

> To provide recommendations on how to improve effective HRM information flows between the HRSC and the involved stores of Makro Cash and Carry Netherlands
>
> by
>
> uncovering the internal/external factor(s) that affect the communication flows concerning attitude, information needs, skills, priorities and other data concerning the internal communications.

The anticipated contribution provided by this research project towards the company is that it will allow the HRSC to have a detailed insight what all the relevant factors are that influence the communication flows between the involved parties.

Research framework

According to Verschuren & Doorewaard, a research framework is 'a schematic and highly visualised representation of the steps that need to be taken in order to achieve one's research objective.'. This visualisation can be found in Appendix A: Research Framework. As mentioned, the aim of the research project is to provide recommendations on how to improve communications between the HRSC and the department stores of Makro Cash and Carry Netherlands by uncovering the internal/external factor(s) that affect the current communication flows.

The two research objects in this framework are:

- *Object I: HRSC.* The current management and employees of the HRSC will yield insight how the processes are currently conducted and how they should ideally be conducted. A closer look will be taken at each step of each process with the goal to access if they are still relevant and applicable. The employees will be submitted to a personal interview by the research team to identity the main obstacles according to them.
- *Object II: Departments store managers and staff.* As the main target group, the goal will be to identify their current knowledge level and see how they conduct the applications of the mutations. Also, it will be insightful to see if their core work responsibilities on the floor have any effect on the way they supply the necessary data.

Experts within the field of communications, and in this case, the Communication Department of Makro will be asked for their 'ideal' communication lines. The Makro has certain 'statutes and rules', which are formed and altered by these experts on a regular basis. The opinions of these professionals are of value to the project due to the fact that they are experienced in the field of communcation, plus the interviewees have worked at the company for a credible amount of time. It will also be beneficial for the project to see uncover what the ideal communication is according to these experts and to compare it to what the communication actually is on a day to day basis. By uniting the data retrieved from the previous mentioned theoretical sources and the empirical sources, it will be possible to solve the analytical question of this research project.

The outcome of phase A with regards to the conceptual model (see page 12) will aid the researcher to form the research framework. The HRSC, being a department that relies solely

on internal communication with the target audience, wishes to be informed about the causes that prevent the internal HRM communication flows to be optimal. In the beginning of the project, quick accusations and assumptions were made from the point of view from the HRSC employees and client. This has been taken into account as an early hypothesis, but needs further research. The causes of the actual problems remained unclear at best in the early stages of the research. Therefore, to determine the actual causes that cause lack of accuracy and efficiency need to be answered by in-depth interviews and reviewing of the gathered data. When this is realized, the importance and relevance of supplying correct information for mutations can be conveyed more easily.

In addition, by analyzing the current situation of the target audience, which can be seen as part A (and partially B) of the research objective, an insight to what the internal communication capacities of the target audience can be determined. Also, by comparing the HRSC to its counterpart in Germany, the researcher will be able to identify key differences in contact between both parties and how this reflects to the HRSC. Furthermore, by carefully analyzing the primary data that will be retrieved from the in-depth interviews and making the comparison with the secondary data retrieved from theory, the HRSC can determine the communication flows within the company.

By making an analysis of the current situation of object I, namely the HRSC, in the means of a SWOT-analysis which can be found at page 23. The researcher will be able to clearly identify potential hazards. This can be identified as phase C in the Research Framework Visualization, found on page 12. For example, by identifying the strengths of the HRSC it will help the project to determine the best communication lines in order to obtain the correct information as quickly and effectively as possible. It might be possible that the current communication methods are not fully utilizing its best assets to day. Additionally, by researching the favored communication methods of the target audience, it will present the HRSC with useful information on how to approach them the most effectively.

The research framework, which can be found later in this chapter, will be the main tool to attain the research objective. The research questions in turn, will help to support the creation of the research objective and research framework. The framework will be the main tool to provide a schematic and highly visualized representation of the necessary steps in attaining the research objective (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010).
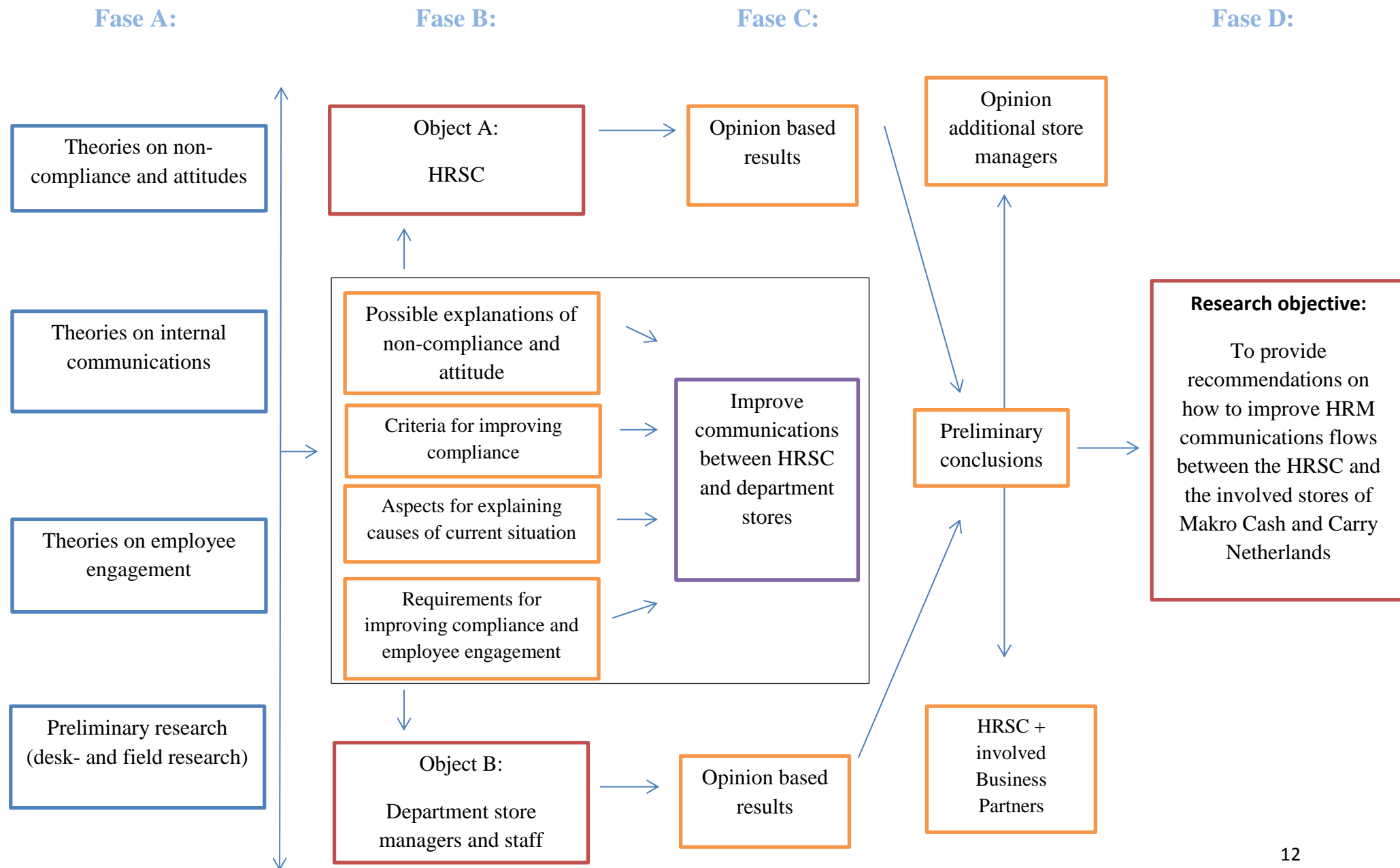
Intervention cycle

In order to describe the research project more thoroughly in this report, the problem intervention cycle of Verschuren and Doorewaard will be used. This cycle defines five phases: problem analysis, diagnosis, design, intervention/change and evaluation (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2007). Considering the focus group and the description of the challenge; uncovering the internal/external factor(s) that affect the communication between the involved parties, this research can be categorized as a diagnostic project. The phases of this cycle that are applicable will be discussed in detail in the following paragraph:

The entirety of this research is a practice-orientated project as defined by Verschuren & Doorewaard (2010) and will focus on "recommendations for improving an existing situation". After the problem definition and a diagnosis of the situation is made, it will contribute towards the solution for the HRSC. Before this thesis, the causes according to the HRSC were no more than assumptions. Moreover, this will also be an opinion based research since it will take into account the views of communication experts within the Makro and the employees of the HRSC.

The visualization of the research framework, as shown on the next page, gives a representation of how the research has developed itself from the initial desk research towards the end recommendations. In-depth interviews will be conducted in order to determine the choices of the target audience and why they make them. Through in-depth interviews the goal is to uncover to what extent the parties are sincerely involved towards creating the possible communication at the Makro.

Theories on non-compliance and attitudes

Theories on internal communications

Theories on employee engagement

Preliminary research (desk- and field research)

Object A:

HRSC

Opinion based results

Opinion additional store managers

Possible explanations of non-compliance and attitude

Criteria for improving compliance

Aspects for explaining causes of current situation

Requirements for improving compliance and employee engagement

Improve communications between HRSC and department stores

Preliminary conclusions

Research objective:

To provide recommendations on how to improve HRM communications flows between the HRSC and the involved stores of Makro Cash and Carry Netherlands

Object B:

Department store managers and staff

Opinion based results

HRSC + involved Business Partners

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Answering the theoretical questions

On the following section, the theoretical sub-questions will be answered in more detail in order to have a more detailed understanding on what previous case studies and theory states.

According to theory and as mentioned in the section: Theoretical framework, a person reaction or attitude towards a certain idea or objects is often a reaction based on several different influences. First of all, social influence can affect a person attitude towards an idea or task (Larsen & Buss, 2010). All attitudes concerning different topics, can be influenced by what other people say or do. Firstly, when looking at the cognitive attitude of the target audience, it can be stated that a knowledge problem may be in place. If this is the case, employees cannot comply with the demands, simply because they are not aware of the criteria (Larsen & Buss, 2010). Secondly, it can be stated that the wrong individuals are currently dispersing the information that is needed to trigger a change in compliance and the change in attitude. Currently, the HRSC has no power or influence in daily routines of a department manager. At best, the HRSC can make recommendations on what works better from their point of view, but this is widely ignored. According to theory, compliance can only change when an individual is informed by a person with more authority or when certain consequences are tied towards not functioning.

According to theory, the following two theories are most applicable to this problem statement: the cognitive dissonance theory and the elaboration likelihood-model. Firstly, the cognitive dissonance theory states that when people behave in a way that is not in compliance with their attitudes and have no external justification for their behavior (Larsen & Buss, 2010). This is called cognitive dissonance. In order to change the behavior of the target audience, a certain persuasive communication has to be implemented (Aronson et al., 2014). Extensive research towards has also been done by Carl Hovland and his colleagues. They researched the ideal circumstances in which people would be most willing accept persuasive communication. In their research, they continuously came back to the question 'Who says what to who?'. Looking at the source of the message (for example the expertise and attractiveness of the messenger), the message itself (the quality of the arguments, does the messenger take into account all sides) and the nature of the public (which approach works the best for a friendly/hostile audience). Due to the fact Hovland and his colleagues worked at Yale University, this approach is known as the Yale Attitude Change Approach. This approach will be further elaborated and used in this thesis. Secondly, the elaboration likelihood-model

discusses two ways in which persuasive communication can lead towards a change in attitude towards a certain idea or object. In this case, meeting the criteria for filling in the forms and upholding the protocols of the HRSC. The first way is the central route, which is the process where individuals thoroughly process, listen and think about the persuasive information and arguments. This takes place when they have both the motivation and possibility to listen to a message. The second way is the peripheral route , which is the process where individuals do not process the arguments in the persuasive communication, but are influenced instead by the certain aspects of the message. (Aronson et al., 2014). The choice of the central or peripheral route lies with an individual's motivation and possibility to pay attention to the facts and importance of a situation. If they are truly interested in the situation, and thus motivated to carefully pay attention to the facts, they are inclined to take the central route. This is the preferred route to change in attitude, due to the fact it is focused on the long-term attitude change.

The main standard according to theory for an employee to be compliant with a company's vision is that both parties have similar or overlapping norms and values (Takemura, 2014). This makes it easier for the employee to accept work methods and ethics. In addition, the ability for a company to listen to the wishes and demands of their employees greatly increases an employees' compliance. Understanding and giving a feeling of value towards an employee positively increases compliance on both short- and long term. In order for the Makro to ensure that its employees are continuously informed and up-to-date on all relevant information, it needs to use the available communication tools that have the greatest reach. Currently, information is mostly dispersed by word-of-mouth and frequent e-mails. In order to achieve the maximum reach, the Makro has to ensure that all personal information is kept up-to-date. "Effective communication can only be accomplished when the company has fully completed its personal database and has adapted to make sure all individuals are within communication reach." (de Ridder, 2004).

In order for departments to communicate on an acceptable level with each other, an analysis has to be conducted on current communication channels, communication frequency and communication code in order to align themselves. (de Ridder, A., 2004). If these differ on a certain level, it is advisory to make sure that these are aligned as well as possible. In this way, departments can work more closely together and work more effectively and efficiently. In addition, the organizational structure needs be the same, preferably throughout the entire

organization. This ensures that all individuals are aware of the communication standards. (de Ridder, 2004).

According to theory, employees are more likely to develop within the company when they have the feeling and are persuaded that their own norms, values and goals are aligned with the companies' (Argenti, 1998). Currently, the Makro works with a certain set of rules and standards, which is wishes to implement on all employees. New employees are subjugated to an introduction in where in short time a representative wishes to convey what the Makro has done in the past and what it wishes to accomplish. However, theory states that companies should invest in researching and determining what drives employees to perform to their maximum potential. This can be done by frequent meetings between manager and employee, exchanging information and needs and the possibility of employees to make suggestions and ideas (Argenti, 1998).

Employees are more like to stay engaged when the company (in this case Makro NL) is aware of the wishes of the employees. These wishes can be classified into four different segments. Firstly, it is imperative that an employee feels valued with the company. More specific, the feeling that his work contributes towards a positive development of the company. If employees feel that they are just 'one of many', they may inadvertently pass that feeling along to customers and other colleagues (Argenti, P.A., 1998). Secondly, it is important that the organization understand the expectations of the employees. The company needs to know if employees have the knowledge and information to do their job effectively. Also, managing the expectations of what is asked of them is crucial, since unclear expectations or a lack of basic training place an employee at risk for disengagement. In such case, the employee focuses on just getting through the day rather than thinking about how he or she is contributing to the greater good of the organization (Argenti, P.A., 1998). Thirdly, a supportive relationship with the supervisor is imperative. Supervisors who listen and regularly provide feedback and seek out ideas and concerns are more likely to generate employee engagement. Employees respond well to rewards and gestures of appreciation from their supervisors; such gestures often mean more than the financial compensation because they reinforce that the supervisor recognizes and rewards what is important (Argenti, P.A., 1998). Fourth and final, transparent communication is crucial. Employees need to know what is going on throughout the organization and how it affects their job. Communication is essential in bolstering employee involvement and commitment.

Research questions

The research objective was to provide communication recommendations on how to improve effective HRM information flows between the HRSC and the involved stores of Makro Cash and Carry NL by uncovering the internal/external factor(s) that affect the information flows concerning attitude, information needs, skills, priorities and other data concerning internal communications.

The theoretical questions, as stated below, have already been elaborated on and answered in the last section of the previous chapter. The summarized questions below will provide the combined point of view from the literature reviews, orientated pre-interviews and theory.

Theoretical central question

> What are the most effective and efficient ways to improve the communication between the HRSC and the department managers according literature reviews and theory?

Section A: Theoretical sub-questions

Research area: Non-compliance and attitude

- Sub-question A 1.1. What are the main factors that cause non-compliance of a certain attitude amongst the target audience concerning HRSC forms and protocols?
- Sub-question A 1.2. In what categories can non-compliance be divided according to relevant theories?
- Sub-question A 1.3 What are the standards according to theory in order for employees to be compliant with a company's vision?

Research area: Internal Communication

- Sub-question A 2.1. What are the most efficient and effective communication strategies for a company as the Makro to apply and uphold?
- Sub-question A 2.2. What are the requirements for two or multiple departments to communicate effectively?

Research area: Employee Engagement

- Sub-question A 3.1. What are the criteria for companies to meet in order to encourage employees to fully develop themselves for the benefit of the enterprise?
- Sub-question A 3.2. In what way can a company make sure that employees stay engaged?

Secondly, the empirical questions will give the insights how the HRSC and the departments managers view these perspectives and will reveal if the theoretical questions are still up-to-date or need revising. The specific answers to these empirical questions will be answered in the findings section, and additionally in the conclusions chapter. which can be found on page 25 and 26.

Empirical central question

> What are the internal/external factors experienced by both the department store managers and the HRSC that affect the communication flows?

Section B: Empirical sub-questions

Research area: Non-compliance

- Sub-question B 1.1. To what extent do the department managers and their staff feel responsible for the processes?
- Sub-question B 1.2. What would be a decisive eye-opener for the target audience to comply and compute with the HRSC standards?
- Sub-question B 1.3. What are the key factors that are currently hindering the target audience in order to sufficiently deliver their responsibilities?

Research area: Internal Communications

- Sub-question B. 2.1. To what extent does the target audience they have the adequate communications tools to life up to the HRSC process standards?
- Sub-question B 2.2. To what extent is the target audience sufficiently trained and informed concerning the processes at the HRSC?
- Sub-question B. 2.3. To what extent are the current internal communication methods still effective?

Research area: Employee engagement

- Sub-question C. 3.1. To what extent does the target audience feel aligned with the companies interests in order to fully commit to its tasks?
- Sub-question C. 3.2. To what extent does the target audience feel connected with the Makro and therefore willing to fully commit to its vision?
- Sub-question C. 3.3. What are the main factors that will lead to employee engagement according to the target audience?

Finally, the analytical question will assist both earlier mentioned segments in this report with the end goal of providing accurate recommendations towards the HRSC.

Analytical central question

What are the main factors that influence communications between the HRSC and the department stores with the accent on employee engagement, international communication and non-compliance?

Research strategy and methodology

Throughout the process of writing this proposal, the research team has had several meetings with the client. During this process, the research objective has changed multiple times, and thus the research strategy. However, the final chosen research strategy was to do an in-depth deductive approach. This method allows the researcher to conduct specific, concrete and in-depth research and come to complex research outcomes and results (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). In order to guarantee the consistency of the data, triangulation will be applied. This means that multiple methods of data collection will be used. Preliminary research has already yielded a good basis, both desk and field research. Research can be conducted in many ways and it is important to determine the best suitable strategy. Based on the research objective, a form of field study, desktop research, interviews and several literature reviews were the main strategies.

Field study

Next to collecting the necessary primary and secondary data, the field research will play a central role in the project. The data from this will mainly be

collected by conducting in-depth interviews amongst the department managers and their staff. Also, the employees of the HRSC will be a source of information. In combination with the desk research, which implies collecting already existing data, materials and official statistic material (Verschuren en Doorewaard, 2010).

Desktop research

Due to the fact that the Makro has an open database concerning all financial, communication and human resource report, the solid foundation for the theoretical comparison will depend on the available literature, project documentation and the present experts. The research strategy used for the gathering of information were a mix of literature review and interviews.
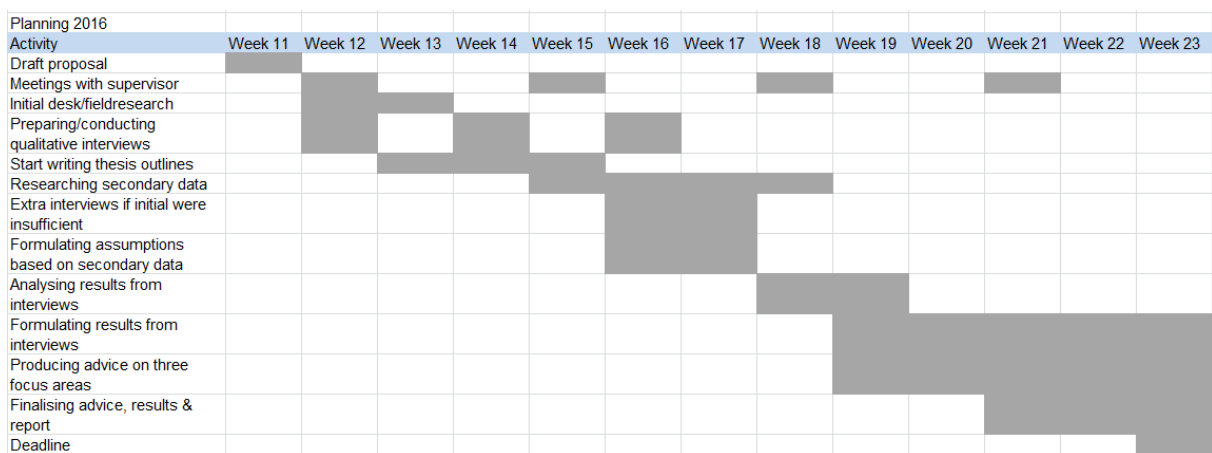
Interviews

The aim of the initial report was to to retrieve the primary data from at least five department managers of the stores in Groningen/Leeuwarden by conducting interviews. This number is determined to be the minimum to have a valid basis of information, any additional numbers will only add to that credibility. However, due to the lack of depth and detail in the first submitted report, the researcher has expanded his scope has included a total of six stores and twice that amount of department managers. This has ensured an even broader basis of support for the final conclusions and recommendations. All three focus areas will be discussed in order to have an in-depth insight towards the working methods and opinions of the target audiences. The timeline for collecting this data can be found in the next chapter. Furthermore, interviews will be conducted at different stores throughout the country. The aim is to in-depth interviews at both stores and cross reference their answers in order to have a solid foundation. Any additional interviews will be conducted if possible. As stated by Saunders et al (2009); 'You would use these to explore in depth a general area in which you are interested. There is no predetermined list of questions to work through in this situation, although you need to have a clear idea about the aspect or aspects you want to explore'.

Planning & Feasibility

Planning

In general, the research planning is views as the standard for monitoring if the planned activities are going according to plan within the time set (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). The Gantt Chart, which is visible below, shows a visual representation of the total time which will be spend on the project. However, due to the fact that final product has been postponed two times, the initial planning was quickly no longer applicable.

Initial planning for graduation assignment:

Planning 2016													
Activity	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14	Week 15	Week 16	Week 17	Week 18	Week 19	Week 20	Week 21	Week 22	Week 23
Draft proposal													
Meetings with supervisor													
Initial desk/fieldresearch													
Preparing/conducting qualitative interviews													
Start writing thesis outlines													
Researching secondary data													
Extra interviews if initial were insufficient													
Formulating assumptions based on secondary data													
Analysing results from interviews													
Formulating results from interviews													
Producing advice on three focus areas													
Finalising advice, results & report													
Deadline													

In total, the entirety of the project has taken around 11 to 12 months. Due to certain personal circumstances concerning the researcher, the total timespan is longer than initially forecasted. However, the research objective has not changed. The planning for the proposal has not changed since the beginning and the final product was delivered within the determined time. During this total timespan, there have been more meetings with the client, which has helped the researcher throughout the project.

Feasibility

The research will be conducted by a single Hanze University student in order to pass his thesis project for his final year of the bachelor International Communication. Every research project has limitations and this has an direct impact of the feasibility of the project. With more than 12 months available to retrieve the necessary information, both the client and host institution should expect a full and complete report. Afterwards, the student is free to conduct further research concerning this topic in order oversee the process of implementing the recommendations that may flow from this research thesis.

Research Results

Data collection method

The sole and primary data collection for this research project have been in-depth interviews. The choice between a structured interview and the in-depth interview was carefully weighed. To encourage free and open responses, rather than narrowing down the possibilities to answer by stating carefully phrased question, the in-depth interview was chosen. The prospect of a tradeoff between comprehensive coverage of topics and in-depth exploration was crucial for this choice. Also, the in-depth interviews also encourage capturing respondents' perceptions in their own words, a desirable strategy and point-of-view for the researcher considering the qualitative data collection. This would allow the evaluator to present the meaningfulness of the experience from the respondent's perspective.

The choice to make use of interviews began with the assumption that the participants' perspectives will be meaningful, knowable, and can be made explicit, and that their perspectives affect the success of the project. An in-person or telephone interview, rather than a paper-and-pencil survey, was selected due to the fact that interpersonal contact was deemed important and the researcher wished to have the opportunity to do a follow-up or reach out to the interviewee about certain interesting comments. (Patton, 1990)

Throughout the timespan of this project, a total 12 department managers and several store managers from the six stores, Groningen, Leeuwarden, Vianen, Nieuwegein, Delft and Wateringen have cooperated with this research, which yielded the necessary information and provided the basis of the data.

"In interviews information is obtained through inquiry and recorded by enumerators. Structured interviews are performed by using survey forms, whereas open interviews are notes taken while talking with respondents. The notes are subsequently structured (interpreted) for further analysis. Open-ended interviews, which need to be interpreted and analyzed even during the interview, have to be carried out by well-trained observers and/or enumerators." (Diboye et al. 2012). Therefore, to oversee the initial interview skills of the researcher, the client was present at the first interview. Afterwards, valuable feedback was given to the interviewer to improve his skills, with the end goal to obtain as much information from the target audience.

"As in preparing a questionnaire, it is important to pilot test forms designed for the interviews. The best attempt to clarify and focus by the designer cannot anticipate all possible respondent interpretations. A small-scale test prior to actual use for data collection will assure better data and avoid wasting time and money." (Diboye et al. 2012)

Although structured interviews can be used to obtain almost any information, as with questionnaires, the information gathered is based on personal opinion. Data on variables such as available staff are potentially subject to large errors, due to poor estimates or intentional errors of sensitive information. To prevent intentional errors, the data that was collected from the interviews has been compared to each other and the researcher made sure that perspective was implemented on each of them. This ensures that, for example, that the opinion of a department manager with considerably less staff than the other, did not dominate the data outcome due to internal problems.

Next to the interviews with the department managers, the researcher has also conducted interviews with the HRSC employees itself. The reason behind these interviews is due to the fact that any biased opinions have to be ruled out. Since the researcher works at the HRSC itself, it was vital that any assumptions had to be confirmed or ruled out by sharing information with his colleagues. In total, 5 interviews were conducted with HRSC employees. The topics of this interview covered the assumptions, actual data of frequently made errors and expectations for the future. With both the primary data retrieved from interviews with the target audience and HRSC employees, the goal was to formulate more realistic and obtainable recommendations towards the client.

Limitations

As mentioned before, the initial plan and set-up was to conduct questionnaires through the internal webpage of the Makro, called United, in order to reach the maximum amount of employees. However, in an early stage of the project, is quickly became apparent that the board of the Makro did not concur this method. Due to the fact that the board had planned several other questionnaires in the near future, they were afraid that the questionnaire for this thesis would be 'one too many'.

In agreement with the client, the focus from a national scope quickly shifted to a regional level. The two stores in Groningen and Leeuwarden, easily accessible to the researcher, became the initial focus group for further research. In the second research effort, an additional

four stores were added. With this alteration, the data collection method changed from an quantitative method to a qualitative method. In hindsight, this proved to be a more valuable data collection method for the purpose of this project, due to the fact that the gathered information was more in-depth and structured. In addition, a mental limitation was produced by the researcher itself. The possibility to finish this thesis sooner was there, but this possibility was not utilized.

SWOT

The SWOT-analysis below was made with the focus on the HRSC. It shows the most applicable answer concerning the analysis below. A SWOT-analysis involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective. The identification of a SWOT is important due to that fact that they can inform later steps in planning to achieve the objective, which is providing communication recommendations towards the HRSC.

Strengths:

- The target audience in Groningen/Leeuwarden can be fairly easily contacted to convey or retrieve information valuable to the HRSC (and the managers)
- The HRSC has several communication channels available that allows direct contact with the target audience.
- The HRSC has motivated and highly knowledgeable staff that always strives to provide the best service available at that specific moment in time.
- The HRSC is highly adaptable and aims to position itself as effectively as possible within the organization.

Weaknesses:

- The HRSC is seen as a help station/service to the target audience, rather than a 'respected organ' within the organization.
- The feasibility of the HRSC is insufficient, which means the target audience has no emotional/person link to the employees.
- The HRSC makes exceptions on rules previously stated and conveyed as 'non-negotiable'. This takes away from its credibility and respectability.
- The frequency on which employees of the HRSC leave the organization makes it hard for the target audience to maintain a personal bond.

Opportunities:

➕ The HRSC has the ability to communicate via new channels on the intranet of the Makro. Currently, these opportunities are not fully utilized.

➕ The HRSC employees are willing to communicate and educate on a more personal level with the target audience, in person as well as from a distance.

➕ The HRSC has the ability to suggest new organizational structures to the board, which could lead to a more beneficial collaboration between the HRSC and the target audience.

Threats:

➕ Due to frequent switches in staff at the stores of the target audience and HRSC, the willingness and motivation decreases to be continuously up-to-date on new information processes.

➕ Due to changes in rules and regulations concerning employment on a national level and the insecurity this brings, individuals are less committed to achieving the best outcome.

➕ When changes occur in staff concerning the target audience, the handover of work and duties are not done thoroughly, which leaves a gap in knowledge with new employees.

Strenghts

- Communication options between target audience and HRSC
- Current communiation channels
- Highly capable/knowledge staff at HRSC
- Highly adaptable staff at HRSC

Weaknesses

- HRSC is not respected enough within organization (and target audience)
- Insufficient feasibility of the HRSC
- HRSC makes exceptions on own rules and regulations
- - Switches in staff concerning target audiences and HRSC

SWOT HRSC

Opportunities

- Ability to communicate via new channels
- Willingness at HRSC to educate on a personal level
- Ability to suggest changes in organizational structures to the board

Threats

- Frequent switches in staff at both parties lead to decreased motivation and willingess to be up-to-date
- Changes in rules and regulations brings uncertainty
- When changes occur in staff at both parties, a knowledge gap is created due to lack in training

Findings

After looking at the answers gathered from a theoretical point of view, in combination with the data gathered from the in-depth interviews with the department managers, staff and the employees of the HRSC, a more clear view on the actual causes that hinder the HRM communication flows is beginning to unravel.

When first starting the field research, the researcher was hesitant towards the department managers and their willingness to cooperate. Due to the fact that the department managers could be facing cuts in personnel, available man hours and a high work load, the willingness to share their views on the research was doubtful. However, they quickly indicated upon contact with the researcher, that they would gladly cooperate and wanted to share their opinions. During the initial research, department managers from Groningen and Leeuwarden made time available within a week after the invitation. During the secondary research, after the initial failure of the first report, the additional department managers from the stores in Vianen, Nieuwegein, Delft and Wateringen also indicated they would be more than willing to participate in order to shed a light on any potential obstacles. This quickly assures that the findings were founded on a broader basis, which only added to the validity of this report.

Critical points

When confronting the department managers (Object II) with the initial opinions from the employees of the HRSC (Object I), in combination with theoretical findings, it quickly became apparent that both parties were not on the same page. Although both parties could understand the points of view from another, they both gave different answers to the questions. The major differences came from the fact that department managers gave different (lower) priorities towards certain tasks. In comparison, employees of the HRSC quickly indicated in preliminary research and the actual interview that they gave these same obstacles a higher priority, as it directly affected their work. Further detailed information can be found in Appendix C: Interview Matrix. Here, the full interview transcripts with both HRSC employees and department managers have been written out.

In the next chapter, the results from both the theoretical point of view, in combination with the empirical answers from the primary data will be combined in order to create a clear set of conclusions, which in turn will results in the recommendations towards the client.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we will clearly link all the answers from both the department managers, the employees of the HRSC and the findings from the theoretical points of view in order to come to a clear set of conclusions. Before making the conclusion, a quick summary on what the actual problem statement was. The client did not know what works best in order to improve the inflow of HRM information. Specifically; the correct transfer of mutation forms needed for employee mutations, sent by various parties within the national stores.

Additionally, a knowledge problem existed amongst the client and researcher about the reasons why, currently, department stores managers do not meet the criteria of the HRSC to fill in these mutations forms correctly on the first try. Even though some speculations and assumptions were made throughout the research period, no specific and founded conclusion could be made.

International aspect

As mentioned in the Project Context, to ensure the international aspect in this report, documents would be retrieved from the headquarters of Metro Group in Dusseldorf. After a thorough analysis of these documents, the researcher came to the conclusion that these documents have no significant value to this research report. The set-up and research objective have not been previously researched by the Metro Group.

Moving on to conclusion drawn from the primary data. A quick summary of the initial views on potential causes and solutions from the point of view of the HRSC employees:

Views on potential causes

As mentioned earlier in this report, assumptions were made by the employees of the HRSC on what the potential causes for the disrupted flow of HRM information between the involved parties are. They quickly stated that they believed a lack of training for new (and current) employees had a huge impact on the correct deliverance of the mutation forms towards the HRSC. Also, they suspected that the department managers did not share their concern and priorities towards completing the administrative work on time. This, in combination with no consequences for the department managers for handing in crucial information and data on time, would continue to result in a less than optimal collaboration between the HRSC and the involved stores. As an ex-employee of the HRSC, the researcher shared these thoughts

initially. However, as a researcher an certain amount of neutrality has to be implemented. Therefore, a critical point of view was also made towards the HRSC and the information they dispersed concerning the HRM information flows. Are the criteria from the HRSC reasonable and feasible? What is the HRSC currently doing to inform the department managers correctly on HRM information flows and mutation forms? This would yield a more neutral point of view and would ensure data from all points of view.

Views on potential solutions

As with any obstacle, quick and unfounded potential solutions are swiftly given by affected parties. As they experience the obstacles on a daily basis, they presumingly know the answers and potential solutions all too well.

Moving on towards the answers given by the department managers. They have to deal with unique problems, issues, uncertainties and risks towards achieving their daily tasks (and long-term goals for the department and the company itself). Therefore, the objective of this thesis was to develop a set of recommendations that can contribute towards improving the HRM communication flows concerning attitude, information needs, skills and priorities between the department managers from the involved stores and the HRSC.

After analyzing the data gathered from the interviews, a set of interesting points of view came forward from the department store managers. Firstly, to what extent do the department managers and their staff feel responsible for completing the HRM mutations correctly on the first try?

From the in-depth interviews conducted with the department managers, it can be concluded that the focus on completing the HRM processes is priority based. The majority of the focus lies on keeping the daily processes and tasks on the work floor going, rather than keeping up to date with the administrative tasks (set by the HRSC). The daily processes consist of making sure there are enough employees on the floor, who can do their tasks individually. However, this requires training in the initial weeks, and thus, takes away from the managers time to complete his administrative tasks towards the HRSC. Also, managers have more tasks that need to be done on a daily basis like time-management, tasks towards improving the department itself to the customer and other profit orientated tasks. All in all, 80% of the questioned individuals indicated that they take priority, regardless of consequences with paperwork. When asking if they understand the delay in processes this can cause in the long

run, the majority of interviewees state to understand this, but chooses to ignore this nonetheless. The priority goes towards keeping everything going on the floor itself.

To continue, when asked what would be a decisive eye-opener for the department managers to make them comply with the criteria set by the HRSC towards HRM information flows, two distinctive answers came forth. First of all, the target audience states that it would be a good thing to see how things operate at the HRSC. This allows them to see and understand how processes work and what consequences it has when the involved processes are delayed. The awareness this creates could result in a change of attitude and work methods. Secondly, the employees at the HRSC state that certain work/financial consequences for the target audience could be the push needed to create a certain discipline. If the target audience are evaluated and to a certain extent punished if they fall short of their responsibilities, on what is stated in their job description more strictly, they would shift their priorities to a more balanced level. This deterrence could function as a powerful tool to make the target audience more aware of administrative tasks.

Adding to this, when asked what are the key factors that are currently hindering the department managers in order to sufficiently deliver their responsibilities, the following was answered. The department managers answered almost unanimously that this is due to three factors: fluctuating availability of staff, decreasing number of hours to spend on the floor and a lack of knowledge concerning the processes. Due to sickness, holiday and other staff influenced factors, department managers have to plan on a weekly basis how to manage their department. This prevents a certain structure to form and thus shifting in priorities. Also, due to economic/financial factors and decisions from the board, the target audience have fewer so-called FTE's (amount of hours that employees can be work on a weekly basis) to distribute. This often results in more tasks that have to be done by the department managers themselves, causing a delay in other processes that relate to HRM information flows. Finally, the lack of knowledge of the target audience leads to the fact that the processes experience delay. When new managers begin working at the Makro, they are insufficiently educated/informed about the steps in administrative tasks related to the HRSC. This often leads to a knowledge gap, and in the long run, a less effective and efficient process.

To analyze the communication possibilities, when asked to what extent the department managers have the adequate communications tools to meet HRSC process standards, the following answer came forth. Personal preference dominated the answers concerning this

question. All target audience members have the availability of a phone, e-mail and access to the Intranet (online communication platform of the Makro). All department managers state that they are satisfied with the current communication tools to reach the HRSC, but always use a personal preferred tool. From the point-of-view of HRSC employees that is also satisfactory, besides the fact that the shifts in phone numbers that frequently occur at the stores hinder the effectiveness to reach managers from time to time. The department managers are aware of the new online communication tools (United etc.), but lack the knowledge to adequate use this. Workshops and more attention to how this works is requested by both HRSC employees and the department managers.

When looking at the extent on how the department managers are sufficiently trained and informed concerning the processes at the HRSC, the following can be concluded. When making the sub-questions for this thesis, this question was one that had the most biased answers and assumptions. HRSC employees assumed this was far below par. When asking the department managers what their experience was concerning the processes and changes in this, they indicated that they wished to be more informed and trained. In detail, a department manager from Groningen indicated that when she replaced the old department manager, a minimal information exchange concerning the responsibilities towards the HRSC was given. After a while, she realized that the information that was available to her was outdated, insufficient and incomplete. This led to many (unnecessary) delays. In addition, even though the HRSC frequently disperses updates about the HRM information processes and what is required from the department managers, they in turn indicated that they feel swamped with information via current communication channels. The majority of the interviewees indicate a face-to-face information exchange is more beneficial. If this was not possible, a more structured dosage of information on certain points in a month is more beneficiary.

When following this question up with the perspective of the department managers on to what extent are the current internal communication methods still effective, they indicated that the current available internal communication methods are still effective. However, due to many unforeseen changes in information details, it can be difficult for HRSC employees to reach the department managers and their staff. The new communication methods like United is live and running, but both the HRSC and department managers lack the sufficient knowledge and education to properly apply this tool. To both parties, no workshop or sufficient information exchange was provided. Therefore, it become a tool that is usually avoided and thus currently far from used effectively.

When asked to what extent both parties feel aligned with the companies interests in order to fully commit to its tasks, different answers came forth. All interviewees have worked at the Makro for several years, have permanent contracts and are familiar with the old and new business goals of the Makro on a national level. In addition, all are eligible for beneficial financial upgrades. However, in order for the Makro to grow and remain profitable on a financial basis, certain cuts were made in the last years. Many employees were cut loose, and this in turn, has provided the HRSC employees and department managers with another problem. Their job security is not as assured as it was before and this creates a certain level of doubt. This, in combination with less manpower on the floor, has led to more insecurity and stress on the work floor, according to two department managers. The gap between being valued as an employee and person, rather than an tool for the company, has increased. The majority of the interviewees understand the new course of the company, but worry about the potential implications to themselves (and their departments). This has been indicated by both the HRSC employees and the target audience. The alignment between the company and its employees is shifting and according to the questioned people, not always in their best interests.

When looking at to what extent the target audience feels connected with the Makro and therefore willing to fully commit to its vision, some worrying answer were given. Due to the fact that the interviewees have worked at the Makro for several years, they have experienced the internal and external changes of the Makro. Throughout their period of employment, they have shifted with the company. However, the shifts in law, regulations and the (new) mission/vision of the company worries several department managers. The fact that temporary colleagues can only work a maximum of 2 years at the Makro, before needing a permanent contract, leads to less bonding with their subordinates and other colleagues. The common note is that the interviewees understand why this is, but feel that it does more harm to employee engagement. Furthermore, the majority indicates that the connection with the Makro depends on what benefits are in it for them. 40% indicates that career options and salary are the most important factors towards bonding. However, an increasing number of employees at the HRSC feel less and less connected to their department due to coming and going of their colleagues.

Finally, when asked what the main factors are that will lead to employee engagement according to the target audience, they stated the following. Almost every interviewee unanimously indicated that job security and the potential to be promoted at the company is the most important factor that makes employees commit the Makro and its mission/vision. At the moment, both are not guaranteed within the company. Furthermore, the new vision/road that Makro has taken, which is to create an environment for other companies to meet and network at the Makro, requires more clarity. Especially for the employees at the HRSC, the new path has been briefly explained, but clear instructions and consequences for themselves the upcoming years is not apparent. It is key that clarity concerning the following topics: job security, company goals and employee expectations are made clear as soon as possible. This relieves unnecessary tension and insecurity. Both HRSC employees and department managers indicated this.

Problem acknowledgement throughout the stores

The interviews were initially done with employees from the HRSC and several department managers from the stores in Groningen and Leeuwarden. However, during the second research effort to broaden the support for the preliminary conclusions, they were submitted towards department store managers from the additional stores of Vianen, Nieuwegein, Delft and Wateringen. Without actually interviewing these managers, they quickly indicated that they almost completely agreed with the answer given by their colleagues and that they recognized similar problems. In the end, all the involved parties acknowledged the problem statement, and even more important, the gap between parties concerning awareness and priorities. In addition, the conclusions and recommendations from the initial report were also aligned with their ideas about the problem. We can therefore conclude that the recommendations made in the next chapter are widely supported. Assumingly, these will also be representable for the remaining eleven stores in the Netherlands.

Even though some are hesitant and reluctant towards the initial recommendations, they do indicate that it would create the effect that the HRSC wishes and in the long run, create the change needed to reach a more effective, accurate and efficient working method between the involved parties.

Recommendations

In the previous section, the conclusions from the interviews with the employees of HRSC and the department managers were given. They have been analyzed from both the theoretical point of view and the empirical point of view.

After careful analysis of the answers given by both the target audience and employees of the HRSC itself, the following recommendations are made towards the management of the HRSC:

> **To give mandatory workshops to existing (and future) department managers and their subordinate staff of the Makro regarding HRM information flows and processes.**

Throughout the entire project, assumptions were made about the knowledge level of the target audience with regards to the processes at the HRSC and how to bring these to completion. These assumptions were made clear towards the target audience. In turn, they were given the full opportunity to respond to these and give other insight concerning the validity of these assumptions. Surprisingly, several interviewees acknowledged and agreed to the assumption that (new) department store managers and their subordinates are insufficiently schooled and updated on new rules, regulations and changes with regards to administrative tasks involving the HRSC. When asking what they feel is needed to change this, 90% would positively accept schooling concerning the processes between the HRSC and the requirements made towards the function profile of an department manager. When asked about the frequency of this schooling, 70% would happily attend these workshops as long as this would not influence their time on the working floor. In short, additional hours would have to be assigned to the managers so they can attend these workshops without losing valuable time on the floor itself.

Furthermore, after analyzing the results of the interviewees, it is the opinion of the researcher that these workshops should also be mandatory for the numerous Store Supports (StS) across the country. These Store Supports consist of various amount of employees, that process the information for that particular store and are in direct contact with both the HRSC and department managers. Due to this, they are closely related to the problems concerning delays in processes, as they are partially responsible for delivering the crucial information needed to complete several processes. To ensure quality on every level within the involved departments, the recommendation to involve this party is crucial, for both existing and new employees.

- **To create a broad support base with the Board of the Makro to ensure implementation of the workshops and guarantee quality during future processes between the HRSC and department stores.**

As mentioned before in the SWOT analysis, the management of the HRSC has the option to provide recommendations towards the Board of the Makro concerning positive developments and opportunities that could benefit the Makro on the short- and long term. In order to strengthen the demand that information, documents and other required data is provided in a correct and orderly (and preferably on time) fashion, the HRSC has to set strict deadlines and regulations towards the store. If supported by the Board, and this has been communicated clearly that it does, the HRSC can place itself in a key position within the organizational structure.

The goal of this recommendation is to convey the message that the HRSC is still there to provide support towards the stores (and managers) itself, but that it works via strict rules and regulations. If these are not met, the department managers and their subordinates will experience (if both the short- and long term) hinder, due to the fact that certain processes are

not finalized. This could have a negative impact on the department and employees.

In addition, the researcher would advise that the manner in which this support base is established, is by taking the management of the HRSC, accompanied by two experience employees of the HRSC that are involved on a daily basis with the processes, documents and data and visit the Board itself. By presenting, for example, a list of data of how frequently mistakes are made in each store and by whom. Also, conveying the importance of a correct data flow between the HRSC and the department stores has to be made clear.

- **To establish a project within the HRSC that monitors, registries, and reports failing department managers and their staff towards the Board.**

Fear is a powerful tool. This quote has been used on numerous occasions by numerous people. However, due to the fact that it can be a powerful deterrence, it is not the way this recommendation should be interpreted. The main thought behind this recommendation is to motivate the department managers and their staff by eliminating doubt. If the HRSC can

convey the message of how important the supply of correct information, data and documents is, it can create a steady support base with the target audience. The fact that failing department managers will be monitored and reported towards their superiors, is a method to ensure that they create awareness with themselves to proper each individual towards achieving the best within himself. This in combination with the support and willingness of the HRSC to educate the target audience, ensures more qualitative work in the future from all involved parties.

In order to achieve this awareness, the researcher advises to convey this message during the mandatory workshops. Caution is advised, since the line between creating fear concerning job security and creating awareness to achieving synergy between the HRSC and department stores is a thin line. The key to success is to create the necessary acceptance and awareness amongst all parties with the end goal of achieving optimal effectiveness and efficiency.

Reflection

This section describes the researcher's reflection on the validity of the research results and the research process.

Reflection on the research results

The conclusions and recommendations presented in this report are based on the analysis of two major projects. The question can be raised whether or not the amount of interviewees are sufficient, whether the interviewees are representative of both the stores of Groningen and Leeuwarden and the analysis was conducted properly. Therefore, the following remarks have to be made regarding this research:

The findings of the analyses and final recommendations were reviewed in advance by both the clients' assistant, Sanne Boerrigter and Business Partner of the Stores Groningen/Leeuwarden, Esther Struiksma. These reviews revealed that a lot of the identified problems, obstacles and issues were recognized. By conducted further research on a regional and both national level, additional insights can be gained. It can be expected that the main findings of such additional research comes up with similar main findings as presented in this report.

Looking back at the amount of interviewees, it can be concluded that this is sufficient amount to provide solid recommendations. However, more department managers could have been interviewed. In other to create an even further basis, additional interviews can be conducted to create an even broader support for this research project. Still, the fact that many answers concerning the core questions of this research project were similar, plus the recognition of these problems by the two persons above, indicates that the research has a solid support base.

Personal reflection on the research process

Back in May of 2016, when presenting the first research proposal for this research not really knowing what to expect from the upcoming months. This proposal was well founded and had been in the works for several months in order to be adequately prepared for the challenge ahead. Afterwards, it was a good thing that I prepared myself well, since the research approach and methods quickly changed in early stages of conducting research for the thesis. In May, I also kicked off full time into the thesis beginning with literature research in which I ploughed through numerous amount of papers, articles, books and other written documents in

order to have a better understanding of the specific context of internal/external communication flows and its facets. Some preliminary research consisted of similar research projects conducted for other organizations, which gave me a broader perspective on the subject matter.

At some point, reading page after page saturated my mind and I felt a tendency to write in order to generate tangible results. The writing of the theoretical context took more than a month and proved to be difficult. Finding the correct literature, complemented with the correct field research was more than challenging. Furthermore, the fact that I had to narrow my scope during the early stages of writing my thesis meant I had to rearrange my research approach. This caused another temporary setback, but I was glad that instead of questionnaires, I could take in-depth interviews and really communicate with my target audience.

Throughout my research process, the assistant manager of my department has been of great help, in both conducting the interviews and helping me create the outline for my report. She allowed me with the correct approach to come in contact with the department managers and spark the interest towards achieving the maximum out of each interview.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Conceptual Model
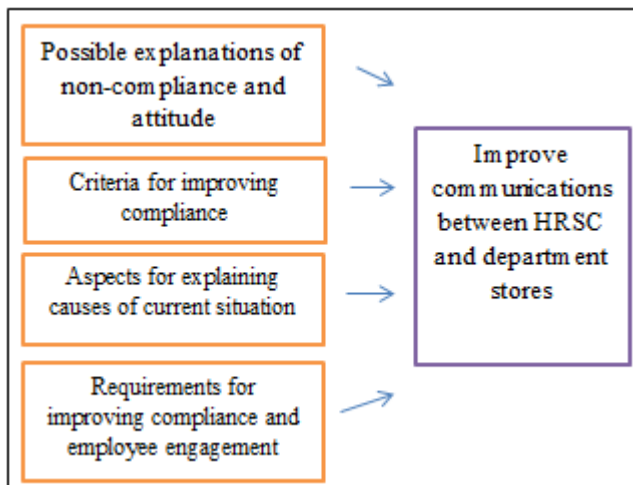
Interview with:

Name   : Jolanda Olinga

Position   : Department manager Groningen, Check-in/out and Customer Service

Date   : January 5th 2017

Sub-question B 1.1. To what extent do you feel responsible for the processes?

As a department managers with several years of experience, I know how the HRSC works and what the criteria are for the HRM processes. I am also aware of the fact that if I fail to hand everything in on time and with the correct data, additional time will be added towards the processing time. This in turn will result in negative implications for my department and staff. I aim to make sure that the mutations forms and all other required data will arrive at the HRSC in time.

Sub-question B 1.2. What would be a decisive eye-opener for you to comply with the HRSC criteria?

Currently, I feel sufficiently informed about the HRM processes and their criteria. At the moment, I don't feel I am in a position to actually be afraid of any consequences from the HRSC or others. However, to answer your questions, I think a decrease in payment of a more strict view from my superiors will ensure that I will take even more notice to my tasks. Also, a negative report would become a deterrence for me and a motivation to my work even harder.

Sub-question B 1.3. What are the key factors that are currently hindering you in order to sufficiently meet the criteria from the HRSC?

As with all department managers, I presume the decrease in personnel, available budget and man hours has something to do with this. Due to these factors, I am forced to take over tasks that would otherwise be done by my staff. But since we need to work in a flexible way, more than often, I am forced to take these tasks upon me to ensure that my department keeps running in a correct way. I am aware that this sometimes means that my responsibilities towards the HRSC are compromised, but this is a judgement call I make. The HRSC has shown in the past that it has been lenient. This ensures me a solution is always at hand.

Sub-question B. 2.1. To what extent do you feel you have the adequate communications tools meet the criteria concerning HRM processes set by the HRSC?

Currently, I have no recommendations towards this. I am pleased with the tools at hand. Plus, I have the luxury drop by the HRSC when something is unclear. I don't think that other colleagues in the nation have that luxury. I would not change anything from my point of view, only from time to time a bit more training and explanation about new communication platforms like United etc.

Sub-question B 2.2. To what extent do you feel sufficiently trained and informed concerning the processes at the HRSC?

I am only aware of the processes that are implacable for my department. Currently, I do not think department managers have the luxury to broaden that view due to the work load. But that does not mean I am not interested in them. However, I simply ensure I know my requirements to I can meet them as best as possible.

Sub-question C. 3.1. To what extent do you feel aligned with the companies interests in order to fully commit to the tasks it has set upon you?

I must admit that I have felt a better 'link' to the company in the past. Due to the financial crisis and the changes the company is currently going through, a lot of uncertainty has arisen. I am aware that the Makro needs to choose another path, but the company forgets that job security is the most important for the employees. I wished they showed more transparency.

Sub-question C. 3.2. To what extent do you feel connected with the Makro and therefore willing to fully commit to its vision?

As mentioned above, I have worked here for a considerable amount of years. A decade ago, things were much more simple. However, nowadays the Makro needs to compete with other similar companies and needs to implement changes. Although I must admit it doesn't affect me or my department that much currently. I would like more information about the upcoming years and what the plans are for the Makro, the store in Groningen, and specifically my department.

Sub-question C. 3.3. What are the main factors that could lead to employee engagement according to you?

The Makro needs to show that it cares about its employees. Rather than being one of many, employees need to have the feeling that their contribution on a daily basis matters. If I need to translate that towards my department, I would have to say that job security and future growth within the company make the most difference. The store in Groningen has been around for a while and people recognize each other. However, if people are replacement on a monthly (or by-monthly) basis, it is hard to stay connected to them. Thus, employee engagement decreases.

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Interview with:

Name   : Inge Dijkstra
Position   : Department manager Groningen, Home/Electronics
Date   : January 5th 2017

Sub-question B 1.1. To what extent do you feel responsible for the processes?

Due to the fact that I work flexible hours, I am also relying on my assistant-manager to complete everything. We always try to make sure that everything is filled in on time and communicated with the HRSC, but there are situations that it is simply not possible. Other tasks at the department take priority in my eyes.

Sub-question B 1.2. What would be a decisive eye-opener for you to comply with the HRSC criteria?

To begin, it would not encourage any drastic measures from the HRSC or my superiors. If any changes would be implemented, I would advise them to be run by the department managers before applying them. To answer your questions, job security comes in at the top. If you touch that, in any way or form, I think people would pay more attention to their tasks.

Sub-question B 1.3. What are the key factors that are currently hindering you in order to sufficiently meet the criteria from the HRSC?

The main reasons that I can think off is the lack of time that arises from time to time. As the department manager, we have a lot of responsibilities towards our subordinates. We have to

use a significant amount of 'office time' for time registration and this varies from time to time. This takes priority and other HRSC processes get caught up. Additionally, I like to do this by myself to remove as much room for errors as possible, All in all, a lack of time.

Sub-question B. 2.1. To what extent do you feel you have the adequate communications tools meet the criteria concerning HRM processes set by the HRSC?

I feel that I have sufficient. All the department managers have the availability of phones provided by the Makro. We have the number of the HRSC under speed dial and I personally use this a lot. Also, every morning we use the computer to complete the time registration and other HRSC/employee related subjects. If anything is added towards tools, this is welcome. However, not completely necessary to me.

Sub-question B 2.2. To what extent do you feel sufficiently trained and informed concerning the processes at the HRSC?

This is one of the major concerns to me. I became the department manager after being the assistant for a considerable amount of time. This gave me the ability to observe on a daily basis what is needed to fulfill the criteria for the HRSC. However, I do feel that new managers that have been recruited from outside the Makro do not receive the sufficient training. This should be a mandatory course in the beginning, and if necessary, should even be repeated on monthly or by-monthly basis.

Sub-question C. 3.1. To what extent do you feel aligned with the companies interests in order to fully commit to the tasks it has set upon you?

Currently, I am pleased with my employment at the Makro and the opportunities that it gives me. However, I can only speak for myself and do not know if other involved parties have the same opportunities as I do. If not, I could understand that the companies' interest are not aligned with that of some department managers or employees of the HRSC.

Sub-question C. 3.2. To what extent do you feel connected with the Makro and therefore willing to fully commit to its vision?

I like the new mission and vision of the Makro, as it is needed to keep the company going for the upcoming years. However, I do feel that the employees are becoming less important in comparison to the past. I find this a sad thing, but from my position I can't do anything about it. For now, I can honestly say that I am committed to this company.

Sub-question C. 3.3. What are the main factors that could lead to employee engagement according to you?

Making the employees feel that they are the central keystone of the organization. Currently, because the economic position of the Makro is not the best, the company looks more at ways to expand the revenue, rather than doing that with the employees. If they would involve the employees more during this period of transition, it might give them the feeling that they still matter. If they don't, I fear the gap between the Makro and its employees, and specific the employee engagement, will become less and less.

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Interview with:

Name   : Menne Renia
Position   : Department manager Groningen, Dry Food Market
Date   : January 5th 2017

Sub-question B 1.1. To what extent do you feel responsible for the processes?

First of all, the processes are part of our job at the Makro. It is written in our function profile that they are our own responsibilities. To that extent, I do feel responsible since it will immediately harm my employees due to the fact that certain important mutations won't be done on time. This could results in less salary or other problems. However, I do feel that the HRSC should be more helpful and reach out to the department managers.

Sub-question B 1.2. What would be a decisive eye-opener for you to comply with the HRSC criteria?

I have seen a lot of changes in the last few years, especially with regards to the administrative responsibilities of the managers. Sometimes, they are located with us and another day they are the responsibility of the HRSC again. Besides that point, I think my job security is the most crucial item for me. If that would be compromised, I would, inevitably, pay more close attention to the administrative tasks.

Sub-question B 1.3. What are the key factors that are currently hindering you in order to sufficiently meet the criteria from the HRSC?

As a department manager, we have a lot of responsibilities on paper. However, if you look at the daily routines of a manager, it consists of so much more. All in all, the time that you would have on paper to complete all the administrative tasks is far from enough. In combination with the unforeseen tasks on the floor, the administrative get put on hold. Making sure that everything goes well on the floor takes priority. Furthermore, I feel that I lack the knowledge to understand all the processes. I often call you and ask for information. A knowledge gap is certainly in place, for both me and my fellow colleagues in my opinion.

Sub-question B. 2.1. To what extent do you feel you have the adequate communications tools meet the criteria concerning HRM processes set by the HRSC?

These are all in place. We all have the availability of a computer and a phone during work hours. We can complete the processes and other important tasks from here. However, we do receive a lot of emails from the HRSC concerning updates about HRM information flows. This becomes a bit overwhelming at times. I would advise to review these and make alterations where needed.

Sub-question B 2.2. To what extent do you feel sufficiently trained and informed concerning the processes at the HRSC?

I have never made it a secret that I would like more training and updates concerning these processes. I am aware that it affect myself and my employees directly, but have the feeling that I lack knowledge of certain processes and protocols. This often results in mutations forms that are sent back and thus a time-delay is in place. All in all, it takes more manpower and time that it should, simply because the rules and communication is insufficient. I would highly recommend workshops a few times a year, or individual coaching and guidance.

Sub-question C. 3.1. To what extent do you feel aligned with the companies interests in order to fully commit to the tasks it has set upon you?

As my colleagues would have undoubtfully mentioned, Makro is going through a transitional phase, which means a lot of uncertainty for the employees. More than often, the talk of the day is who might lose their job and what the consequences are for those who can stay. The Makro I know is quickly changing and I am still unsure if my interests align with that of my

employee. It does not interfere with my daily routines as department manager, but I would like as much transparency and clear communication from the management. I'm sorry I don't have a more specific answer.

Sub-question C. 3.2. To what extent do you feel connected with the Makro and therefore willing to fully commit to its vision?

I can honestly say that I enjoy working here. I have done so for many years and off the opinion that I will continue to do so for many years. Companies always change and they have to in order to survive. It is no different for the Makro. I am aware that many employees feel disconnected from the Makro due to the uncertainty the change brings, but the best cure is to stay focused. The only thing is that I would like earlier communication concerning its new mission and vision.

Sub-question C. 3.3. What are the main factors that could lead to employee engagement according to you?

To give the employees the feeling that they actually matter. Meaning, in this context, that more hours and time should be made free for the department managers to brush up on their administrative tasks, under the guidance of the HRSC. Currently, there are a lot of grey areas. This means that people feel uncertain if what they do on an administrative basis is correct and creates uncertainty. Engagement lies in the fact that the company should enable the department managers to keep learning. If we have the time and resources for this, we will in the end, feel more engagement and involved with the entire company.

Interview with:

Name : Employees of the HRSC (five)

Position : Allround HR employees at the HRSC

Date : January 6th 2017

The answers below are the summaries of the data given by five individuals.

Sub-question B 1.1. To what extent do you feel responsible for the processes and the facilitation of the HRM information flows towards the department managers?

As the employees of the HRSC, we are always looking for ways to improve the communication and the mutation forms. We aim to work with the department managers, not against them. However, we do notice that the priorities of the department managers are not aligned with ours. Often, when we don't finish the mutations we receive question about the cause of this. More than often, we spend a lot of time explaining what is incorrect and why we can't process it. All in all, we give short and brief explanation on a daily basis. It work much better if we actually get to educate the managers. This could give them the knowledge they need in order to fill in the mutations forms correctly in one go.

Sub-question B 1.2. What would be a decisive eye-opener according to you that would make the department managers comply and meet the criteria of the HRM information processes and flows?

There is a thing line between helping department managers and actually punishing them. However, we do feel that more often than not, the same mistakes are made by the same department managers. We notice that it's always the same ones that fail in their administrative duties. Even after explaining, multiple times in detail, we notice that it's simply something they keep doing wrong. In the end, mandatory workshops to existing and new managers would be a solution. If this doesn't work, a negative review and a threat of salary loss would be the last resort. But if needed, than we would encourage this in order to wake them up.

Sub-question B 1.3. What are the key factors that are currently hindering department managers according to you towards meeting the criteria concerning HRM information flows and mutation forms?

We realise that the tasks of a department managers consists of more than just mutations forms and administrative work. But we also see that their own employees get paid less due to the

fact that a mutation has not been processed. They contact us and we always need to explain its their own fault. Due to the fact that their attention lies solely making things work on the floor itself, other tasks are being 'put on the shelf. All in all, different priorities and not taking the consequences of the HRSC seriously undermines the responsibilities they have towards us and their own employees.

Sub-question B. 2.1. To what extent do you feel the department managers have adequate communications tools meet the criteria concerning HRM processes set by the HRSC? Do you feel the HRSC has the adequate tools to reach them?

We feel that this is always up to date. However, there is one critical negative point that often occurs. The most preferred way of communication is a phone call. When there is a shift in managers concerning with department, phone numbers don't shift with them. We spend more time calling and getting the wrong person on the other end of the line, than actually talking about potential problems and the solutions. We would advise and highly recommend to make someone responsible at every store that the phone numbers and being checked and updated on a weekly/monthly basis.

Sub-question B 2.2. To what extent do you feel the department managers are sufficiently trained and informed concerning the processes at the HRSC?

In short, they are not. Many department managers know what to do because they already completed the process a hundred times. But even now (old and new) department managers make many mistakes. This is, in our eyes, mainly due to the lack of training. They are not subjugated to training concerning HRM processes. They pick it up as they go. In order to prevent further mistakes, we are more than willing to welcome the managers and train them concerning their administrative tasks. This would also be beneficiary, due to the fact they could actually meet the HRSC and see who they are in contact with on almost a daily basis.

Sub-question C. 3.1. To what extent do you feel aligned with the companies interests in order to fully commit to the tasks it has set upon you?

Next to the department managers, the HRSC is also undergoing a change. In the summer of 2017, cuts will be made to the HR section of the Makro. Currently, there is a lot of uncertainty at the HRSC employees concerning their job security and future potential plans. This makes it hard to fully commit to the Makro and perform our duties with full motivation. If anything, we would like to see more clarity and effort from the board towards us.

Sub-question C. 3.2. To what extent do you feel connected with the Makro and therefore willing to fully commit to its vision?

As mentioned in the earlier question, the uncertainty concerning the HRSC and how it will look in one year time can only do negative things for the motivation to fully feel aligned with its vision. We do understand that the Makro needs to change, but we also feel that we are kept in the dark on what the potential plans are. Currently, the mission and vision are the least of our concerns.

Sub-question C. 3.3. What are the main factors that could lead to employee engagement according to you?

Transparency from the Makro towards their job security and what lies in store. Currently, we are being informed when the Board has any news. You can imagine that we need more frequent updates, also from our own department manager at the HRSC. The uncertainty is putting and strain on a lot of us.