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COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY!

PROJECT "FRICTIONLESS COMMUNICATION" (FRICO)

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WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Oxford dictionaries (www.oxforddictionaries.com):

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



Sounds easy - but is it? >> Human factor

"FRICO" BACKGROUNDS

- Demand arising from the working life for promoting the communication skills of young engineers (for example the studies of Finnish labour organization TEK, www.tek.fi)
- engineers often work in leadership positions already at the very beginning of their careers
- creates the demand for leadership and communication skills, which are not however developed much during university education



INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT "FRICO"

- Implementation 2013-2014
- Research team
 - University of Oulu
 - Research Unit of Industrial Engineering and Management
 - Research Unit of Psychology
- 6 companies
 - 3 mechanical engineering workshops
 - 1 manufacturing site
 - 1 energy company
 - 1 communication technology company
- Funding
 - The Finnish Work Environment Fund,
 - participating companies and University of Oulu
- Cooperation
 - Labour market organizations (employer, employee)



Työsuojelurahasto
Arbetskyddsfonden
The Finnish Work Environment Fund

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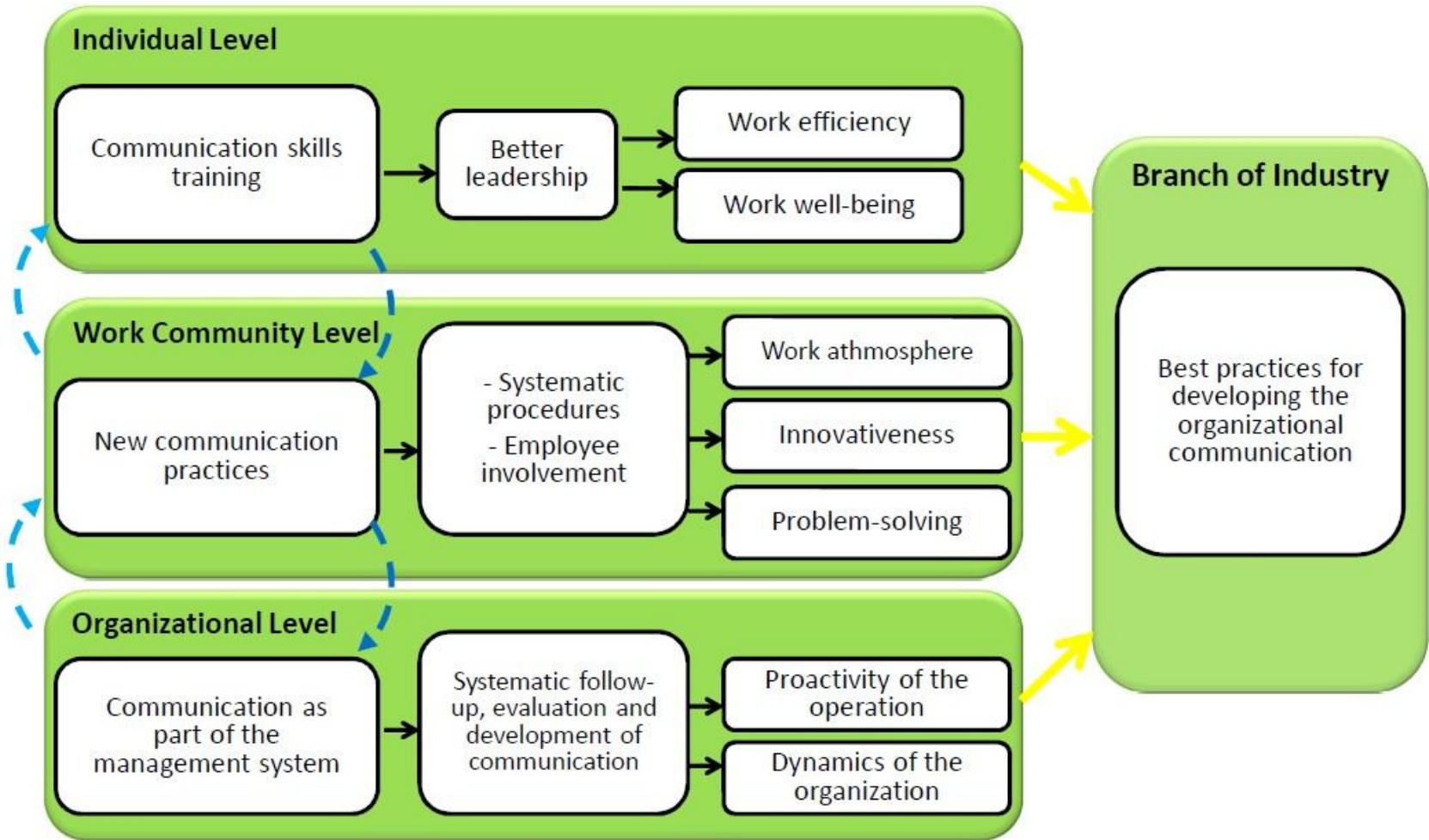


PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- 1) Evaluate and promote manager-employee communication on the individual level
 - 2) Analyze and improve the communication cultures in the case companies
 - 3) Develop new communication practices and innovations and integrate those to the organization's managerial system
 - 4) Sharing knowhow for the branch of industry for developing communication in the work organizations
- Improvements in the company's communication system have a direct impact on the organizational performance resulting to improved **efficiency, innovativeness and well-being at work**



DIFFERENT LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION



METHODOLOGY

Analyzing the experienced work conditions

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

More information from

Väyrynen, S., Kisko, K., Filppa, H., Väänänen, M. (2014), Review, Framework and Likert-scale Survey for Improving Intra-Organisational Communication of Finnish Case Companies. Proceedings of The Fourth International Conference on Advanced Collaborative Networks, Systems and Applications COLLA 2014, June 22 - 26, 2014 - Seville, Spain.



METHODOLOGY

Communication skills training (Peer Group Counselling Method, PGC)

- Communication skills training (PGC) for selected managers of the case companies, n = 11
- Measuring: Counselor Response Observation System (CROS) which includes Counselor Response Coding System (CRCS) and Skilled Verbal Response Scale (SVRS) based on the video recordings of the training sessions
- Qualitative feedback after training sessions and after the training period
- Work survey:
 - 1) UWES7 (Utrecht Work Engagement Survey)
 - 2) MBI (Maslach Burnout Inventory)



METHODOLOGY

Observation of the communication culture / ethnography

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



METHODOLOGY

Developing good communication practices / participative planning

- 1-3 workshops in each company, apprx. 15 employees participating in each workshop
- Identifying the communication challenges of the companies and developing solutions and new operating models based on the previous phases in the project
- Creating concrete everyday communication practices to be implemented into the company's managerial system by using participative planning method



RESULTS: COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING

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

More information:

Kiema, H., Mäenpää, M., Leinonen, T. and Soini, H. (2014). "Peer group counseling as a tool for promoting managers' communication skills in industrial and planning organizations", Proceedings of The Fourth International Conference on Advanced Collaborative Networks, Systems and Applications COLLA 2014, June 22 - 26, 2014 - Seville, Spain.



RESULTS: OBSERVATION

- In 5 of 6 companies the main challenge in communication was the interaction between the different organizational functions, units or teams
- In all companies the employees considered the team members or colleagues as well as the contents of the work to be the main asset and motivating factor at work
- In all companies a spontaneous face-to-face communication was in a significant role: technological problems were found easier to solve physically close to the problematic topics and new solutions were brainstormed or matters were arranged by visiting the colleagues' desks

More information:

Filppa, H. (2014), Possibilities and Challenges of Communication in Six Finnish Industrial and Planning Organizations. Proceedings of The 5th International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics, July 19-23, Krakov, Poland.



RESULTS: GOOD COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

Promoting Frictionless Communication examples

Interaction & information flow and management

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

Training & HR&D

- *Trainings clearly included into the HR plan*
- *Systematic handling of the employee feedback*

Work environment & equipment

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

Ideas & initiatives

- *Systematic and documented processing of the employee ideas and initiatives*



DISCUSSION

- Results indicate that it is possible systematically
 - 1) to promote the communication skills on individual, work community and organizational levels
 - 2) to develop concrete communication practices to be implemented into the daily operation and into the company's management system
- The connection between the communication skills and the well-being at work should be studied more closely in the future with a larger data
- The cooperation with the participating companies and the communication research will continue

