

**Internal Communication: Does It Help To Create
Employee Engagement And Trust In A Single Irish Retail
Company?**

By

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Abstract

This dissertation is attempting to delve into the area of Internal Communication and investigate if it plays a role in the creation of employee engagement and trust within a single retail store. This research builds on research carried out in the area of Internal Communication by Mishra, Boynton and Mishra (2014), which investigates a large segment of the PR industry. This research aims to investigate a smaller segment of the retail industry in order to gain a greater insight into the role that Internal Communication plays in a business. This is a qualitative study and interviews with six employees from a chosen Irish retail company were carried out in order to answer the main research question. An extensive literature review was conducted, and existing academic theories were tested. The findings of the research proved to be very interesting and contribute greatly to the topic area. This is the first research conducted in this area in terms of the Irish Retail Industry. Future areas of research on the topic of Internal Communication have also been suggested due to the light shed on the area resulting from the completion of this research project.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Motivation for this study

This dissertation investigates the theories put forth by Mishra, Boynton and Mishra (2014), which have completed a research study which investigated the expanded role of communication in the PR industry. This study determined that Internal Communication can play a vital role in trust and behaviour shown by PR professionals in the industry. The study however only dealt with five PR managers from five different PR firms, this produced varied findings which led to sparse conclusions. One of the main future recommendations that were included in this study was for research to be carried out between a small numbers of employees in the same work environment. This thesis aims to address this recommendation. The author has chosen to investigate employees in the Irish retail sector and has specifically chosen one of Irelands' most famous retail companies as his sample. A study like this has never been done in Ireland and the author hopes to shed some much needed light on the role of Internal Communication in Irish retail, and particularly in relation to building trusting relationships between employees and management, and also, how it can encourage employee engagement.

The author has spent most of his adult life working in retail and this was one of the main motivations for undertaking this research. The lack of research in this topic area also fuelled the author to conduct this study. Similarly to Mishra, Boynton and Mishra (2014), all other academic research has been done using a large segment of the industry and results have been fragmented due to the anonymity among respondents in the study, This study on the other hand aims to investigate employees from the exact same work environment which will hopefully help to gain a more in depth insight into the role of Internal Communication. Internal Communication of course takes place within a company, so in order to best understand how it works; the author feels that conducting this

study in a single retail company would be most beneficial to the research area as a whole.

The implications and findings of this research will potentially bring new perspectives to the topic area of Internal Communications as it is one of the first of its kind to be undertaken here in Ireland.

1.2. Broad Outline of the study

In this study the author builds on theories that have been suggested by many academic authors in the area of Internal Communication. The main research question that is being asked is “Internal Communication: Does It Help to Create Employee Engagement and Trust in a Single Irish Retail Company? This question is then broken down into five sub-objectives that investigate areas such as Internal Communication, Employee Engagement, Trust, Employee Voice, and Methods of Communication. All of these areas will be investigated in order to collectively produce an answer to main research question.

The structure of the thesis is outlined as follows; Chapter 2: Literature Review, the author investigates all of the previous academics writings on the topic area, Chapter 3: Company Background, the author gives a full background of the chosen company and the reasons behind the choice, Chapter 4: Research Methodology , the way in which the author plans to conduct the research will be outlined in this chapter, Chapter 5: Data Analysis & Findings, the findings of the fieldwork will be analysed and presented in this chapter, Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusions, the results will be discussed and linked back to the literature review and final conclusions will be made. The last few sections will include the References and Appendices.

The author feels that the topic area is vastly under – researched and is confident that this study will contribute heavily to the topic area in question.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The author has extensively reviewed all of the most popular and relevant academic literature surrounding the chosen topic in order to gain an appropriate insight into the topic area. Literature around the topic area will also be tested against data collected in the research carried out by the author.

2.1. Communication Behaviour

Fisher (1980) suggests that communication behaviours are composed of acts, interacts, and double interacts, or sets of all of the mentioned. Bisel (2010) suggests that in order for the organising of any organisation, communication is necessary, it is also suggested that more communication is the recipe for better communication. Communication in the workplace is seen by scholars as a sense making process which is bound by formal or informal context related situation, relationships and cultures (Weick, 1979). Communication behaviours between employees and managers are not just a communication that happens at work; it is in fact the work itself, or at least part of the process through which work gets done successfully. “Talk in organisations drives action within organisations” (King, 2003, p.1206). This quote shows how academics agree with the above point.

Behavioural perspective defines communication as “a symbolic process in which individuals act to exchange perceptions and ultimately to build a knowledge bank for themselves and for others, for the purpose of shaping future actions” (Bratton, Callinan, Forshaw and Sawchuk, 2007). The exchange of information is imperative for any work to take place in any organisation. In contrast, communication in the workplace is a much more complex process than just the passing of information from one individual to another (Bratton, et al. 2007). Communication has been described as one of those human activities that everyone recognises but nobody can define in an appropriate manner (Fiske, 2011).

2.2. Internal Communication

The role of internal communications has changed significantly over time and is still seen to be changing today (Baines, Egan and Jefkins, 2004; Keenan and Hazelton, 2006; Therkelsen and Fiebich, 2003; Yeomans, 2006). It has various terms or “eras”, which have changed over time, each period trying to satisfy a different element of life in the workplace (Theaker, 2004). These iterations include, entertaining employees (1940’s), informing employees (1950’s), persuading employees (1960’s) and finally to open communication between employees and management (1980’s to date) (Theaker, 2004). Internal communication in the modern day world of business is focused on challenging and stimulating employees, managing the ever – changing work environment and gaining employee engagement and commitment (Tourish and Hargie, 1998; Smith, 2005; Tench and Yeomans, 2006). A shift has occurred over time that has seen the objective of internal communication change in an organisation. The mind set has moved from controlling and directing employees, through the provision of information, making of announcements and supporting industrial relations, to supporting the development of malleable work environment which adapts to change, seeks to improve, shares information, and involves employees in generating ideas and making decisions (Keenan and Hazelton, 2006; Smith, 2005; Tourish and Hargie, 1998). Managers need to understand their employees, and need to know how to influence their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours (Strauss and Hoffman, 2000). L’Etang (2008) suggests that management must be able to measure an organisation’s communication climate appropriately, while Conrad (1994) stresses that the cultural, political and relational dimensions of the organisation must also be analysed effectively in order to tailor internal communication.

Internal Communication has been described by academics as the communication between the organisation’s leaders and one of its main stakeholders; the employees, (Dolphin, 2005). It has been described as “social interaction through messages”, (Kalla, 2005, p.303). (Welch and Jackson, 2007), suggest that it reflects manager’s abilities to build relationships between internal stakeholders

and at every level within the organisation. In past theory and practice it has been suggested that Internal Communication has been and remains critical to building relationships between management and employees. “Communication is the undoubted lubricant to prevent the corporate machinery from self-destructing from the fringe of change”, (D’Aprix, 2009, p. 23). It has also been suggested that the role of internal communication is to “illuminate the connections between different pieces of information”, (Quirke, 2008, p.15), and its job is to “provide employees with the information they need to do their job”, (Quirke, 2008, p.15). This study is all about exploring the role that internal communication can play in building relationships between employees and management.

In recent years, academics have failed to conduct enough research on employees as a key stakeholder in the business and have been overlooked in favour of external stakeholders such as customers, (Chong, 2007; Wright, 1995). This lack of research may have caused a decline in employee power in an ever increasing competitive global economy. “Amid the rush toward heightened efficiency and competitiveness is a sense that most organisations don’t care a great deal about their employees”. (Cheney, 1999, p.10). Management’s failure to pay enough attention to internal communication could also be a result of the emphasis that organisations put on targeting external stakeholders about their products and services through marketing communication methods such as advertising. Business practice has led us to believe that the customer and other external stakeholders in a business are of more importance to the organisation than the employees are. Academic research however has shown that “when employees perceive that they are getting information from their supervisors and co-workers that is timely, accurate, and relevant, they are more likely to feel less vulnerable and more able to rely on their co-workers and supervisors”. (Thomas, Zolin, and Hartman, 2009, p.302). The literature shows that if internal communication is carried out efficiently and effectively that employees become more comfortable in their working environment and are therefore more likely to build a sense of trust with their co-workers and also show signs of enhanced employee engagement with the company. Throughout the years many scholars have highlighted the positive

influence that the internal communication has had on employee engagement (Chong, 2007; Saks, 2006; Welch and Jackson, 2007).

It would be in the best interests of organisations to focus on internal communication within the business, which may bestow the organisation with many benefits. According to Kitchen and Daly (2002), internal communication is vital for both the success of the organisation and for its day-to-day existence. Kennan and Hazelton (2007), mention the need for organisations to consider employees as a distinct stakeholder who deserve individual attention through the means of internal communications systems. Internal communication has the power to engage employees within the business and allows the business to work in a more successful fashion. The question remains, however, how management is responsible for ensuring that communication occurs internally and that its effectiveness is evaluated appropriately.

Argenti (1996), suggested that internal communication is an essential role of the corporate the organisations communication, i.e. Public Relations (PR), which is used to inform employees about changes in the business during times of change or crisis. In another instance it has been suggested by Cheney (1999) that values in the workplace can be evaluated by the role that internal communication plays. The more transparent an organisation is, the more widely its internal information is shared. Internal communication is a vital aspect of how relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders are evaluated, which means that open communication indicates a stronger relationship (Broom, Casey, and Ritchey, 2000). It is clear to see from the literature that the study of internal communication has lacked research in terms of looking at it from the employee's stand point. This is what this study is aiming to achieve. The academic theories outlined above will be tested in the later chapters of this study

2.3. Interpersonal Internal Communication

“It would appear that the literature on communication has investigated general aspects of interpersonal communication rather than communication skills” and that “Few articles have considered specific interpersonal communication

variables” (Bambacas and Patrickson, 2008, p.53). Larkin and Larkin (2004, p.11) suggests that there are three ways to communicate with employees: communicate directly to supervisors, use face-face communication, and communicate relative performance of the local work area. It is clear for us to see that communication is what management spends most of its day doing. “Supervisors spend between one third and two thirds of their time interacting with what is still sometimes termed “subordinates” (Tourish & Hargie, 2009, p.15). The two academics also state that “Communication training is the best communication practice in leading firms, especially for senior leaders”. It has also been observed that “communication is at top three skill of leadership that is sadly neglected” (Murray, 2012, p.179). Research has shown that “the skill of maintaining clarity and consistency of messages was rated as having the utmost importance” (Bambacas & Patrickson, 2008, p.65-6). This piece of research also indicated that there are “problems in trying to link organisational expectations, the organisational vision to those of the individual.... this coincided with the two-way communication problem that was continuously voiced by respondents”. The author feels that the theories above will be tested in the later chapters of this study.

2.4. Technological Internal Communication

Springston (2001) believes that public relations have changed massively by the growth of new technology. This theory also applies to internal communications where the potential of implementing organisational intranets is a huge possibility (Denton, 2005). Intranet systems can improve speed of information delivery and facilitate global communication (Holtz, S. 2003). In order to establish effective internal communications, managers will need the appropriate skills and knowledge to make educated decisions about the technology available to them (Ryan, 1999). Technology offers organisations and managers the chance to find different methods of communicating with their employees. Intranet systems can be very useful to an organisation. Cheney et al (2003) described intranets as channels for ongoing dialogue allowing employee – employee information sharing and collaborative working online.

Although technology can make life easier in terms of internal communication within an organisation, it is important, however, to remember the traditional methods, and to implement any technological changes alongside the traditional methods such as face – face and print communication (Holtz, S. 2003). Management must not immediately implement an intranet system or any new technological communication. An analysis of the readiness and education of the employees must first be carried out. Employees must be informed that communication problems exist and that new systems will be put in place to solve them. Only when this analysis has been carried out can managers decide on the appropriate new communication channels to implement. It is important to balance “technological concerns and the humanity of employees” (Keenan and Hazelton, 2006, p.314). Once concerns have been appropriately dealt with, the organisation can consider the need to implement an intranet or not. Lehmuskallio (2008) insists that education and training of this technology is hugely important in order for management to implement it effectively.

What we can see from the literature above is that there is a growing need for managers within the retail industry to understand even without implementation, the benefits that technology can provide to internal communications, this coupled with understanding the employees and analysing the cultural and behavioural mindsets of employees will pave the way for a successful implementation an intranet, which will aid the internal communication of the organisation. Technological Communication theory plays a huge part in this study and is tested in later chapters.

2.5. Face – Face Communication

The way an organisation carries out its communication has a huge influence on the degree to which employees trust their managers, and the top level hierarchy of the business as a whole. It is also hugely influential on the level of commitment an employee has for the company. Bland (2005) highlights that “people management is about interaction and conversation; technology should not de-humanise that interaction or you will drift away” (p.63).

D'Aprix (2009) and Quirke (2008) define face – face communication as a mix of information and interaction, both also suggest that it is the most reliable and credible source of communication. This is the case due to the visual and verbal hints that are provided by face –to –face interaction that help us to gain a better understanding of the information that is being shared. In a practical sense it has been discovered that face –to- face communication is considered to be more reliable than written communication in a business situation due to the fact that it provides better a lot more information to the other party involved (Cheney, 1999). Face – face communication does not only provide verbal cues such as tone of voice but it also provides non – verbal or physical cues such as facial expressions and body language. This form of communication is also considered more reliable if the recipients of face – face communication can perceive a match between both the verbal and visual cues.

It has been found that two-way communication is the most effective form of communication, where both managers and employees listen to one another (Wright, 1995). Argenti (1998) argued that two – way communication provides employees and managers with the chance to interact informally and that it is because of this that it has to be considered the most effective form of internal communication. Integrated internal communications involve both formal and informal communication which takes place at every level throughout an organisation (Kalla, 2005).

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship and trust that is built between retail managers and employees through the use of effective internal communication. It is a fact that throughout an organisation, different people have different levels of communication training. Kelleher (2001) found that public relations (PR) practitioners rely much more on written communication, whereas managers and supervisors rely more on face- face communication. The level of training is not always adequate and floor managers and supervisors may not always be appropriately trained in effective communication. Literature conducted around the area of Face –Face Communication is central to this study and will be tested in later chapters of this study.

2.6. Trust

As early as the late 1950's and early 1960's, academics realised how important trust was as a prerequisite for managerial and organisational effectiveness (Argyris, 1962; Deutsch, 1958; Likert, 1967; McGregor, 1967; Mellinger, 1956). In the following years scholars found that trust had positive effects on various individual, group and organisational outcomes such as, individual performance (Rich, 1997), job satisfaction (Muchinsky, 1977), organisational citizenship (McAllister, 1995), problem solving (Zand, 1972), and cooperation (Axelrod, 1984). In today's workplace, trust has proven to be an important topic as organisations focus on building social capital, increasing employee engagement, and improving knowledge – sharing among employees (Abrams, Cross, Leser, & Levin, 2003); Bachmann & Zaheer, 2006; Kramer & Cook, 2004; Kramer & Tyler, 1996). Many research studies throughout the years have demonstrated that communication plays a core role in developing and maintaining trust. Employee participation and job performance have been shown to be enhanced by trust and communication (Dirks, 1999; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Ellis & Shockley – Zalabak, 2001; Kramer, 1996).

Gavin and Mayer (2005), show that internal communication has been shown to improve trust between employees and managers. “Trust and commitment are by-products of processes and policies which are designed to make the relationship satisfactory for both parties, such as open, appropriate, clear and timely communication” (Chia, 2005, p.7). A level of trust or “concern” for the interests of fellow employees can also be built using open communication (Denison & Mishra, 1995; Mishra & Mishra, 1994). “The extent to which the trusted person engages in undistorted communicationreinforces the trust (in terms of openness) placed in him or her” (Mishra, 1996, p.276). Clearer communication has also been shown to improve trust and business unit performance (Spreitzer and Mishra, 1999). In more general terms it has been said that “sound relationships can only be developed on the basis of trust and reliable information” (Dolphin, 2005, p.185).

Botan & Taylor (2004) considers trust to be a vital aspect of the organisation's internal relationship. Wilson (1994) found that both employees' and public perceptions of commitment, trust, and mutual respect are important for understanding organisation – public relationships. "Trust is one of the main constructs used to measure a successful relationship between parties" (Ki & Hon, 2007, p.422). As we can see academics have been of the frame of mind the Communication is a hugely vital factor influencing both trust and relationships. However, according to (Quirke, 2008, p.15), "management credibility and trust are under attack from confused and poorly integrated communications". Basically, this is telling us that internal communications can only be as effective as the integrated systems used to deliver it.

It has been suggested by Paine (2003), that several questions should be asked by an organisation before measuring trust within the organisation in order to understand the most effective way to communicate. "Which channels of communication were used and/or deemed most important to use in disseminating the messages? (E.g. the media, word of mouth, direct mail and special events?)" (Paine, 2003, p.11). It has been considered by academics that face-face communication is considered the best form of communication for employees because of the potential it has to resolve any uncertainty or ambiguity that may arise (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). Trust is a central topic to this research project and the theories outlined above will be tested in later chapters.

2.7. Trust and Information Sharing

Trust has been defined by academics as "a willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party" (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995, p.712). It is essential to understand that trust is part of a relationship between two people and consists of the "trustor" voluntarily accepting the risk based on the actions of the other person involved. For example, if an employee trusts his/her supervisor to treat her equally and fairly and provides the necessary tools for the work to be carried out, the employee is more likely to focus and flourish in the workplace. On the other hand, if the opposite occurs and the employee does not feel that the supervisor is treating him/her fairly, then the employee will not fully participate in

work tasks assigned and may also actively look for a different job. Information is the basis on which trust is based. Providing good quality information can provide employees with the opportunity to develop trust, also a lack of quality communication can reduce the element of trust. The literature discusses two particular areas of information sharing that are of great importance, they are; the *quality of information and the quantity of information*.

Quality of information is judged on the usefulness, timeliness and accuracy of the information provided. Past research shows that trust and information go hand in hand, i.e. the greater quality of information, the higher level of trust (Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Sapienza & Korsgaard, 1996; Simons, 2002). All of the above academics found that employees are more likely to show higher levels of trust when they are confident that the information that they receive from the other person is useful, timely and accurate.

Quantity of information relates to whether or not an employee feels that enough information has been provided to them in order for them to feel appropriately informed as to their duties. Research suggests that information and trust share an important relationship (Becerra & Gupta, 2003; Muchinsky, 1977; O'Reilly, 1977; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1974, 1977). In a similar instance to the quality of information, getting enough information from management or co-workers will provide employees with more reason to display trust. It has been demonstrated that when management actively increase information in order to reduce uncertainty, that it results in increased communication satisfaction among employees (Hargie, Tourish & Wilson, 2002).

The majority of the research cited above deals with the quality and quantity of information separately but not together. Kramer (1996) found in his research that the impact of quality and quantity may differ.

2.8. Trust, Openness, and Involvement in the Organisation

An organisation that boasts having open communication implies that its employees are willing and enabled to exchange their thoughts and ideas, even if these thoughts and ideas go against the majority of others in the organisation.

Research has shown that open communication is another important factor related to interpersonal trust (Butler, 1991; Ferris, Senner & Butterfield, 1973; Gabarro, 1978; Hart, Capps, Cangemi & Caillouet, 1986). We also know that if open communication is nonexistent then employee will feel more reluctant to get involved in supporting organisational goals. Research has shown a positive relationship between communication and organisational commitment (DeCottis & Summers, 1987; Mathieu & Zadjac, 1990; Postmes, Tanis, & de Wit, 2001; Trombetta & Rodgers, 1988).

2.9. Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) conceptualised the term engagement which he defined as the ability to harness an employee's enthusiasm on their roles at work. He suggested that in engagement, people express themselves in a physical, cognitive and emotional way during the performance of their work roles. In relation to internal communications literature, there have been a number of definitions as to what an engaged employees actually means. "Feeling a strong emotional bond to their employer, recommending it to others and committing time and effort to help the organisation succeed" (Quirke, 2008, p.102). "The measure of an employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to their organisation and its success" (Hewitt Associates, 2009, p.1). If these definitions are taken into consideration, we can assume that, employees who are engaged are much more likely to contribute to a high performance organisation. Engaged employee are more likely to positively talk about the organisation outside of the workplace, stay loyal and remain in the organisation, and help the organisation to perform at its optimum potential on a daily basis. In a recent study it was found that engaged employees are "deeply committed to their employer, leading to key improvements in business outcomes, including reductions in absenteeism, turnover, shrinkage, safety incidents, and product deficiencies" (Robson, 2012, p.1).

It is important to try and engage an employee with the organisation from as early as possible. If an organisation can engage an employee from the beginning of their

employment it will be of massive benefit. Naturally, an employee will have a high level of engagement when they start a new job; however without appropriate internal communication between them and the organisation, engagement will drop as early as the first year and up to five years after entry (Trahan, 2009). This is where store managers and supervisors play a huge role in communication; it is the duty of these managers/supervisors to get involved immediately with employees. Orientation, development of professional skills, asking for feedback, and inquiring for any initial concerns are all crucial activities that managers must carry out with employees immediately to ensure high levels of engagement.

Academics in the past have carried out research that shows that there are numerous communication practices that organisations can use to enhance employee communication and engagement. It has been suggested that front-line supervisors play a huge part in an employees' organisational engagement (Therkelsen & Fiebich, 2003). Saks (2006), has suggested that when employees perceive greater support from their supervisors, they respond in a positive manner, resulting in a higher engagement with their job. He also suggests that there is a huge need to communicate consistently and clearly in order to achieve engagement, claiming that employees who are more engaged will have a more positive relationship with their employers. Internal communication is considered crucial for achieving employee engagement (Welch & Jackson, 2007). They suggest that open communications between managers and employees and reliable information sharing was critical in promoting a sense of commitment and belonging as well as helping employees to successfully understand the goals of the company. Studies have also shown various strategies that can be employed by organisations to engage employees, strategies like, leadership communication, internal communication, and communication from managers (Watson Wyatt, 2009).

Internal communication has been mentioned numerous times throughout various studies that have taken place in the recent past. It is thought to be responsible for a number of positive outcomes for the organisation if executed correctly. Employee commitment, and trust between employees are key results of successful

internal communication. In order to increase employee enthusiasm it is important for the organisation to link internal and external stakeholders of the business, this in turn will result in improved customer service (Cheney, 1999). It can be presumed that the more engaged an employee with the organisation, the more likely they are to build positive relationships both within the organisation and outside of the organisation. The important message that is being relayed throughout the literature is that, positive employee attitude is formed early and within the confines of the organisation itself through the use of effective internal communication. This then results in not only an engaged employee who is productive within the business, but also an engaged employee who is productive outside the business, i.e. positive word of mouth communication, positive attitude to dealing with customers, general high morale, job satisfaction and ultimately loyalty to the organisation. Gronstedt (2000) suggests that, if an employee develops a relationship with any external stakeholder, ideally customers, they are more likely to become an advocate or ambassador for the organisation. There have been recent studies carried out to reinforce this theory. A study by Edelman (2012), found that interactions between employees of an organisation and customers were credible sources of information about the firm, not just corporate advertising and information relayed from the organisation's hierarchy. This provides evidence that there is a need for retail managers to use effective internal communication with their employees in order to become a trusted source of information for external stakeholders. Employee Engagement plays a huge role in this study and the academic theories outlined above will be tested in later chapters of this dissertation.

2.10. Employee Engagement and Performance

There has been a positive link found between engagement and job performance in studies carried out in European countries such as; Spain, Greece and the Netherlands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p.216). Some of the key factors discovered were; positive emotions, better health, ability to mobilise resources and transfer of engagement to others. MacLeod & Clarke (2009, p.34) concludes that employee engagement creates better financial performance in the private

sector and better results in the public sector. There is a copious amount of literature to back this up, much of which was cited in the earlier section on Employee Engagement; however throughout this literature the evidence suggests that there is a lack of consensus among academics on what is meant by employee engagement and the broad definitions that exist (Gebauer & Lowman, 2008, p.2; Cook, 2008, p.3; MacLeod & Brady, 2008, p.11; Axelrod, 2002) direct correlations to performance outcomes are very hard to find. However, it has been suggested that “most of engagement measures we have seen failed to get the conceptualisation correct” (Macey & Schneider, 2008 p.21). The argument has arisen that previous studies have answered the question of which comes first, performance or engagement. Gebauer and Lowman (2009, p.9) suggest that this is missing the point and “what matters most is that engagement and performance feed each other in a continuous virtual circle”. In contrast to this point, Buckingham (cited in MacLeod and Clarke, 2009, p.13) suggests that “it is engagement that leads to performance, and this is a four times stronger relationship than performance leading to engagement.” There is a strong argument that evidence exists that suggests that improving engagement correlates with improving performance (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

Much of the research into engagement and performance has been carried out by large consultancies such as the global study carried out by Towers Perrin - ISR in 2006. The research carried out showed that in companies with high levels of engagement, operating income improved by 19.2% over 12 months. Other research conducted by the same firm suggests that “a 15 per cent increase in engagement correlates with a 2.2 per cent increase in operating margin” (cited in MacLeod & Brady, 2009, p.46). Profitability is not the only benefit of employee engagement, it has also been suggested that higher customer advocacy and higher productivity are also included (Gallup, 2006). Cook (2008, p.21), highlights that “highly engaged employees are 33 per cent less likely to leave their organisation within the next year. General health and well-being is also another benefit of engaged employees, Gallup (2006) also found that 86 per cent of engaged employees found that they felt happy at work, compared to just 11 per cent of the disengaged.

2.11. Employee Voice

Alfes et al., (2010), has highlighted the importance of employee voice as one of the two most important factors for employee engagement. Throughout history there have been many uses for the term “employee voice”. Hirschman (1970) used the term in relation to employees’ efforts to change dissatisfying working conditions. The term voice was first explored in business in the early 1980’s by Freeman & Madoff (1984); they argued that it made a lot of sense for both the company and its employees to have a “voice” mechanism. This theme was then developed by Spencer (1986), he concluded that if given the chance to voice their opinions, employees within an organisation would be more likely to remain in that organisation. His work also led to suggest that “On the organisational level of analysis, future research should consider not only formal voice mechanisms and their quality, but also organisational cultures that create and sustain those mechanisms” (p.500).

Van Dyne et al., (2003, p.1370) concluded that the term “employee voice” is used to “represent the intentional expression of work – related ideas, information and opinions”. They also suggested that it is wrong to think of employee voice as a single construct, and they highlight their proposed idea for three different types of voice, which are; Pro Social Voice, Defensive Voice, and Acquiescent Voice. It is a theory of the different ways that employees choose to use their voice. In a different approach, Dundon et al., (2004, p.1152) suggest four categories for employee voice; individual dissatisfaction, collective organisation (as a counter to the power of management), management decision making, and mutuality (a partnership for long term sustainability). This perspective on voice show the complexity of the topic and the different reasons why employees might use their voice.

Employee voice is also a term that ties in with other communication related topics such as empowerment, involvement and democracy (Budd, Gollan & Wilkinson, 2010). Academics have suggested that there are different dimensions to employee voice; direct communication, upward- problem solving and representative participation (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005). A similar approach is taken by

Pecci et al., (2010); they suggest three different mechanisms which are; the recognition of a union, the presence of a joint committee or works council, and finally the existence of formal mechanisms of direct participation such as problem – solving groups. Employee Voice is a vital ingredient in this study and the theories outlined above will be tested later in later chapters.

2.12. Interpersonal communication and Employee Engagement

“The level of engagement of a manager is a major factor in the ability of him/her to engage their team or group (Luthans & Peterson, 2001, p.379). Bambacas and Partickson (2008) highlight the importance to be able to provide clear and concise messages. On the other hand, Truss et al., (2006, p.42) concludes that the ability to consult and involve are critical managerial skills that require more development for a substantial proportion of managers”. Salem (2008) suggests that poor interpersonal communication skills and conflict avoidance are key obstacles.

2.13. Conclusion

The author feels that he has referenced an appropriate amount of literature in order to test his own theory against and has also gained a huge knowledge of the academic literature that is already written on the topic area. In later chapters the author will be testing his own sub-objectives against theories included in this literature review.

Chapter 3

Company Background

3.1. Eason & Son Ltd

The company was originally founded in 1819 as Johnston & Co. Since its foundation the company has lived through some of the most exciting events in Irish history and has grown to become the main supplier in Ireland of books, newspapers and magazines. It was late in the 1800's that Charles Eason and his son acquired the business from W.H Smith, 1886 to be exact.

During the 19th Century, the company was directly involved in the industrial and literary revolutions occurring throughout Ireland. Their railway bookstalls became popular, but this depended on a growing literacy rate. More and more people could read and so written information became much more important to the country as a whole.

Eason & Son Ltd. Is a private limited company, registered in Ireland (number 1279), with its registered office at 80 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin, Ireland.

3.2. Retail Stores

Eason & Son have more than 60 outlets in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the flagship being our store on O' Connell Street, Dublin. This is an extensive shop with four shopping floors, reading areas and The Muse Cafe contributing to a relaxed environment. Throughout the country, our stores stock and extensive range of books, newspapers, magazines, greeting cards, and stationery. Some stores also stock music, video, DVD's, toys, and computer accessories.

3.3. Easons.com

The Eason's website was founded in 1998 in order to provide our customers with another way to purchase books and Eason Gift Cards from the comfort of their own computers. Easons.com has grown into Ireland's best online books and eBooks shop. Eason's offers free delivery anywhere in Ireland and the UK for

orders exceeding €10 and a huge range of titles are available. Easons.com provides the great value and service central to the Eason brand, both nationally and internationally. The Eason website enables people from all over the world to purchase Irish books not always available to them locally. In 2012, Easons.com won the Retail Excellence Ireland award for National Website of the Year.

3.4. O'Connell Street Branch

This is the branch of Eason & Son Ltd that the author has chosen to conduct his research in. This is the biggest of all of the stores and is praised as the company's flagship. There are over 60 employees currently working full time and part time at this store. There are four shopping floors in this store and it has hailed as one of O'Connell Streets busiest and most famous stores. Due to the high level of employment at this store the author decided that it would be the prime candidate in which to complete this research.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

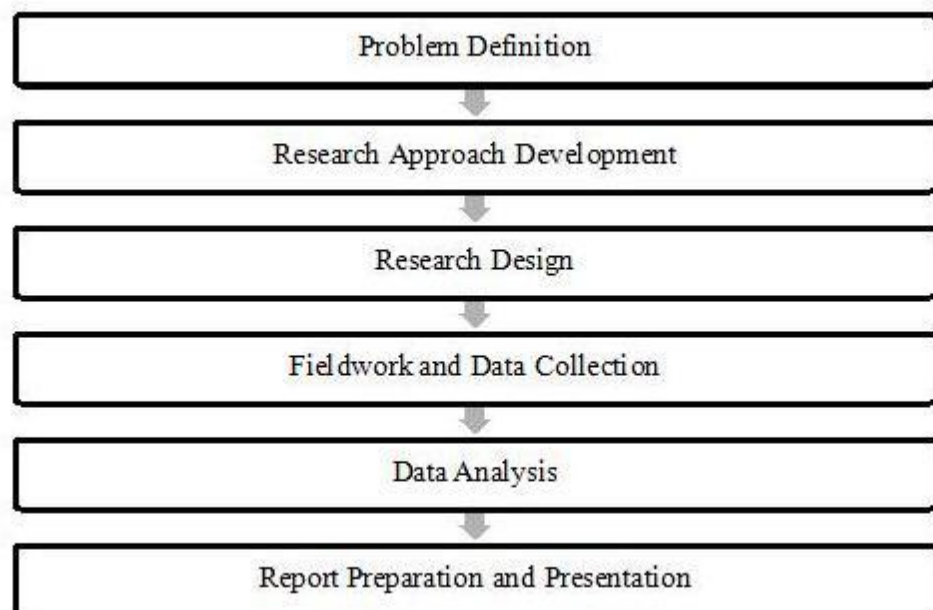
Parasuraman et al. (2006) state that research methodology is the principles and techniques that the researcher followed to systematically collect, record, analyse, and interpret data. Similarly, Crotty (1998) identifies research methodology as the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes. This chapter will be used to identify the reasons for conducting the research and how the research process was identified and conducted. The chapter discusses the different types of research methods, i.e. Qualitative and Quantitative research methods, differences between the two methods will be discussed and the reason to use qualitative methods over quantitative methods will also be explained. This chapter will discuss semi-structured interviews as the method for data collection, the benefits and limitation that arise with this method of data collection will also be discussed. The reasoning and rationale behind the use of semi – structured interviews, the sample interviewees chosen, and the limitation and constraints in the research are also identified in this chapter

4.2. Research Process

In order to solve the identified problems in previous chapters, the author will identify an appropriate research process to follow. Mason (2002) states that while researcher have minimal difficulty identifying a broad area or topic for research, difficulty arises when trying to design an appropriate and effective research project with a clear, relevant and intellectually worthwhile research process. There are several definitions and approaches that can be adapted to the research process (Crotty, 1998). It is also difficult to divide the research process into clearly separated phases (Flick, 2009). Saunders et al. (2003) used the “research process onion “as a framework for conducting research. Saunders et al. (2003) identified

five “layers”, or areas to the research process which are; research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, time horizon, and data collection methods. Each layer has a dependency on the one before it finishing, therefore the researcher must begin at the research philosophy stage and make their through each layer until they reach the final data collection methods layer Saunders et al. (2003). Other approaches exist to the research process, Malholtra (2010), suggests a more linear approach to the research process, it includes a more conceptualised, liner six step process which provides a more precise guide to follow through the research process. Crotty (1998) argued that the research process could be simplified down into four elements. Flick (2009) offers up another linear process to research design, this framework involves a seven – step process and also a circular model of the research process. For the purpose of this research project, the author has decided to follow, Malholtra’s (2010) six step research process which can be seen in table 4.1, for its clarity and easiness to follow. The six steps involved will be further broken down into smaller section. The final two steps will be discussed in later chapters, in which the data analysis, findings and conclusions are identified and discussed.

Table 4.1 Malholtra’s (2010) Six Step Research Process



4.3. Problem Definition

Domegan and Fleming (1999) argue that the first step in any piece of research is identifying the problem that currently exists. In order to develop an approach to the problem, the researcher must identify and develop analytical frameworks and models, research questions or hypotheses. Malholtra (2008) argues that problem identification involves “stating the general problem and identifying the specific components of the research problem”. Regardless of how easy or difficult it is to identify a problem, problem identification is the most important step in the research process, because research cannot progress in its absence Malholtra (2008). Collis and Hussey (2009) argue that defining the problem can come about from reviewing the literature that surrounds a certain topic; it is from this literature review that a problem can be identified and therefore, can be used for further research. The more emphasis that is put on defining the problem, the more useful the research can be. Malholtra (2003) argues that problem definition involves generally stating a problem that exists and then followed by stating set components of the problem. Saunders et al. (2003) argue that in order for research to be successful; a general research question must be identified which would then lead into the development of a number of detailed sub-objectives. Creswell (1994) states that research questions, objectives and hypotheses become signposts for explaining the purpose of the research study. I will now identify the main research question for this dissertation based on the above information as;

“Internal Communication: Does it help to create Employee Engagement and Trust in a Single Irish Retail Company?”

4.4. Rationale for main research question:

The researcher wanted to investigate if Internal Communication within an Irish retail communication can play a role in employee’s feeling more engaged with their work, also the researcher wanted to find out if a trust can be built between employees and management through the use of Internal Communication.

The author identified a number of sub-objectives to assist the investigation of the main research question. These sub-objectives were consolidated into the following:

4.5. Sub – Objectives

Sub – Objective 1:

“To investigate the Internal Communication that exists between employees and management in a single retail store environment”

Rationale:

The researcher wanted to establish what kind of Internal Communication already existed in a single retail store in order to get a view into the system that was already in place and how it could be better utilised.

Sub – Objective 2:

“To investigate the differences between Technological and Face-Face Communication methods in a single retail store”

Rationale:

The researcher felt there was a need to investigate Cheney’s (1999) theory that face – face communication is considered to be more reliable than written communication in a business situation due to the fact that it provides a lot more information to the other party involved.

Sub – Objective 3:

“To investigate if Internal Communication creates a trust between employees and manager in a single retail store environment”

Rationale:

The researcher felt it was necessary to test Gavin and Mayers’ (2005) theory that internal communication can improve trust between employees and management.

Sub – Objective 4:

“To investigate if Internal Communication can assist in making employees feel more engaged with their work and an appreciated part of the company”

Rationale:

The researcher felt there was a need to investigate Welch and Jackson's (2007) theory that internal communication is considered crucial for achieving employee engagement.

Sub – Objective 5:

“To investigate if employees feel that they have a voice in the company”

Rationale:

The researcher felt there a need to investigate Alfes et al. (2010) theory that the importance of employee voice is the most important factor for employee engagement.

4.6. Research Approach

The next step in the research process which is established by Malholtra (2010) is identifying the way in which the primary research is going to be approached. Saunders et al. (2007) argue that research falls into one philosophical domain. It is not a matter of which choice is better; the choice is determined by the type of research question that is being asked Saunders et al. (2007). The research philosophy paradigm considers the views of the researcher based on values, models, and beliefs within the research. Hussey and Hussey (1997) argue that the research approach to a project is simply how the research should be conducted. There are two broad opposing research philosophies or approaches that can be adopted for research Saunders et al. (2007). The two approaches are identified as positivism phenomenology (Saunders et al. 2003; Hussey and Hussey 1997; Creswell 1994). The two approaches can be summarised as qualitative (phenomenology) and quantitative (positivism) Creswell (1994). Malholtra (2010) refers to phenomenology as the “interpretive” paradigm. When deciding on

which of these approaches to use it is important to highlight the key differences between the two types. Table 4.2 below illustrates the differences between the two as identified by Hussey and Hussey (1997).

Table 4.2: The Fundamental Differences between the Positivist and Phenomenological Paradigms (Hussey and Hussey, 1997).

Positivist Paradigm	Phenomenological Paradigm
Tends to produce quantitative data	Tends to produce qualitative data
Uses large samples	Uses small samples
Concerned with hypotheses testing	Concerned with generating theories
Data is highly specific and precise	Data is rich and subjective
Reliability is high	Reliability is low
Validity is low	Validity is high
Generalises from sample to populations	Generalises from one setting to another

Adoption of the positivist paradigm can help the researcher to build their strategy using existing theory to develop hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2007). Mason (2002) on the other hand finds that the downside to this paradigm that if used for the purpose of qualitative research it can be too restrictive. With the fundamental differences between the two paradigms summarised in Table 4.2 above, and also with the research question and research sub-objectives that the author has outlined above, the author has chosen a phenomenological approach for this research, and therefore the research process. The phenomenological approach was chosen because there is no single reality. The world around us is subjective; this approach was also taken because the area of Internal

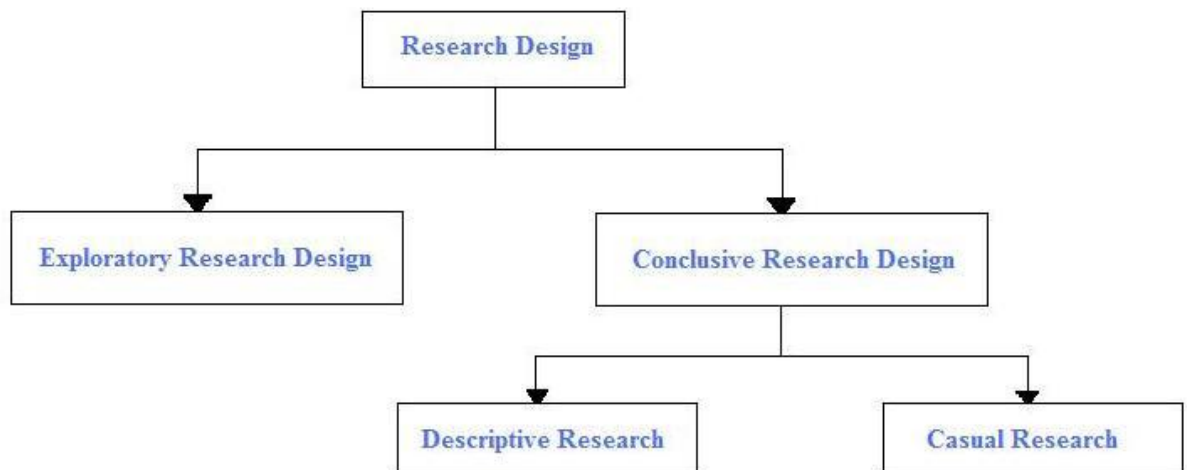
Communication and the role it plays in a business are subjective. It was because of this subjectivity that a phenomenological approach was taken.

4.7. Research Design

Malholtra (2012) describes the research design as a framework or roadmap used for conducting a research project. Similarly, Domegan and Fleming (1999) argues that “it is a grand or master framework to guide the remaining steps of the research process – data collecting, measurement, analysis and reporting”.

Therefore the research design sets out the procedure needed to complete the remaining steps in the research process. The main task of the research design is to decide whether the research is to be designed in one of three ways; exploratory, descriptive, and/or casual (Malhotra, 2008). Malhotra (2008) breaks down the research design into two broad categories; exploratory and conclusive. Table 4.4 displays Malhorta’s (2008) classification of research designs.

Table 4.4: The Classification of Research Designs, Malhotra (2008)



Exploratory research can be utilised in a number of different research situations; gaining background information, clarifying existing problems, defining terms, and to establish research priorities. Exploratory research is flexible in nature and this

is the primary advantage that is available from its use. Table 4.5 below shows the main differences between exploratory and conclusive research as outlined by Malhotra and Birks (2000).

Table 4.5: The Fundamental Differences between Exploratory Research Design and Conclusive Research Design (Malhotra & Birks, 2000)

	Exploratory Research Design	Conclusive Research Design
Data Type	Qualitative	Quantitative
Aims	To describe or explain	To establish cause and effect
Nature of Variables	Known association and documented	Known exactly, supported clearly
Degree of Formality	Some to extensive	High mathematical
Data	Literature Review In-depth interviews Observation Focus groups	Literature Review Experiments Surveys
Sample Size	Small to large	Large
Question Types	Some probing	No probing
Hypothesis	Generates or develops	Tests

The purpose of this research is to gain an insight and understanding of the problem presented. Exploratory research design allows for this insight and understanding to be gained therefore it will be utilised for this research. Hussey and Hussey (1997) argue that this particular type of research design is undertaken when little or no research exists on the topic or area which is true in the case of Internal Communication in Irish retail. The researcher feels that exploratory research is, by its nature, a good starting point to gain further insights and

understanding into an under – researched topic such as this one. Although exploratory research is the chosen research design, the author argues that regardless of the advantages, the conclusions drawn from exploratory research cannot be seen as theoretically definitive based on limitations that it poses, these limitations will be discussed in the limitations section later on. “Findings of exploratory research should be regarded as tentative or as input to further research” (Malhotra, 2008).

4.8. Data Collection Method: Quantitative or Qualitative

There are no strict rules that determine what data to gather when investigating a particular problem (Patton, 2002). Regardless of the problem being investigated, Patton (2002) outlines a set of guideline questions that can be followed for research; what is the purpose for study? What are the primary audience for the findings? What questions to guide the enquiry? What data will answer these enquiry questions? What resources are available to support the enquiry? There are a number of limitations to quantitative research which include the use of independent general statements about the solid cases studied; the observed phenomena are classified on their frequency and distribution (Flick, 2009). Qualitative research methods have been introduced in the context of the critique of Quantitative research methods (Flick, 2009). Flick (2009) argues that the main theories that drive qualitative research are different from those that drive quantitative research. Patton (2002) suggests that qualitative study facilitates study of issues in depth and detail. Qualitative research has a greater advantage over quantitative research in that it can be used without the assistance of the latter, whereas quantitative research needs qualitative research to explain the relation of the findings (Kleining, 1982). Patton (2002) also argues that findings of qualitative research may be presented alone or with quantitative data collected. Table 4.6 below outlines the main differences between qualitative and quantitative data.

Table 4.6: Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Data (Saunders et al. 2007)

Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
Based on meaning derived from numbers	Based on meanings expressed through words
Collection results in numerical and standardised data	Collection results in non-standardised data requiring classification in categories
Analysis conducted through the use of diagrams and statistics	Analysis conducted through the use of conceptualisation

4.9. Selection of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research allows for the discovery and development of empirically grounded theories and the creation of new theories (Flick, 2009), this is one of the main reasons that the researcher has chosen this research methodology to use in this research project. Qualitative research methods are relevant here as this study aims to identify subjective experience of Internal Communication in a single retail store. Qualitative methods are also relevant to this research as it can produce large quantities of information for such a small number of people and a single case company (Patton, 2002). Mason (2002) argues that by using qualitative research methods the researcher can change the research questions throughout the research process which will allow for greater flexibility.

4.10. Data Collection

The next step in Malhotra's (2010) six step research process is fieldwork and data collection. Numerous data collection methods exist for qualitative research. Saunders et al. (2003) identify three methods for collecting qualitative data for exploratory research; a literature review, in-depth interviews with subject excerpts, and focus groups. The secondary data for this research was conducted through a literature review on the concept, theories and models on the area of Internal Communication. This left the author with the option of choosing between

conducting in-depth interviews or conducting focus groups to collect the primary data for this research. The data collection method is vital in order for the research to be accurate.

4.11. Interviews

Patton (2002) argues that interviews yield direct quotations from individuals regarding their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. The term “Qualitative Interviewing” refers to in depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviews (Mason, 2002). Malhotra (2008) defines an in- depth interview as an “unstructured, direct, personal interview, in which a single respondent is probed by a highly skilled interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on a topic”. Mason (2002) argues that “unstructured” interviews that are used by many authors, is not an accurate term, stating that “no research interview can be completely lacking in some form of structure”. In-depth, semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended questions which are questions that are worded so that the single respondent must elaborate on their own personal experiences on the topic in question. Saunders et al. (2007), state that semi-structured interviews are normally audio – recorded due to the nature of questions being asked and a discussion taking place. Table 4.7 summarise the argument for and against semi-structured interviews.

Table 4.7: The Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews (Malhotra, 2010; Flick, 2002)

Advantages	Disadvantages
Data has greater depth and insight than a focus group	Lack of structure makes them susceptible to interviewers influence
Allows the interviewer to 'probe' for answers, especially if the interviewees opinions need to be built on	Quality dependant heavily on the interviewers skills
Allows the interviewer to attributes specific responses	Lack of generation of ideas compared to focus groups
Easier to control than focus groups	Susceptible to interviewer bias
Gives interviewees the chance to express their opinions in an openly designed manner	Confidentiality can be a problem with some interview candidates

The author has chosen to conduct in-depth semi – structured interviews for this research based on the previous research of the two research methods available. This method of interviews allows the author to maintain a strong level of control over each interview whilst also allowing the interviewee’s the freedom to express their opinion on the topic as they see fit. It also gives the author a chance to include additional questions where it is relevant. Flick (2002) argues that semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to “probe” for answers, especially if the interviewee’s opinions need to be built on. The author believes that the research question involved in this study requires the use of semi-structured interviews in order to gain the best insight and understanding into the topic area of Internal Communication.

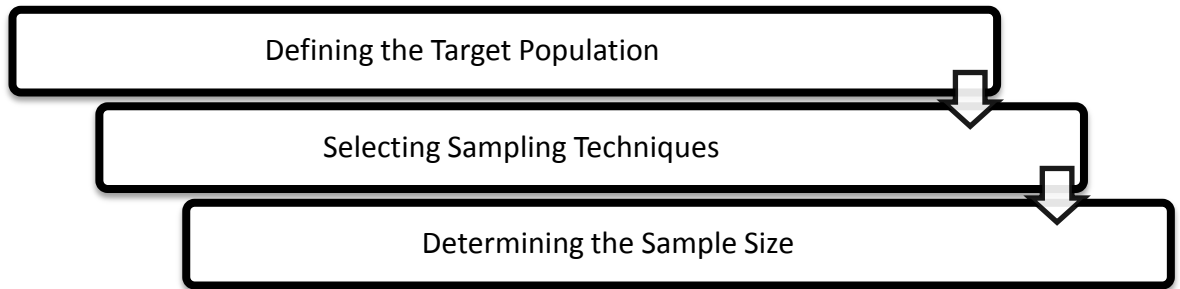
4.12. Unit of Analysis

At this point the author finds it necessary to clarify the unit of analysis for this research. Decisions about the samples, both the size and strategy, depend on prior decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis for the research (Patton, 2002). White and Marsh (2006) argue that data collection and unit of analysis may vary. Units of analysis are considered to be the basis for reporting analysis (white and Marsh, 2006). The author has defined the unit of analysis for this research to be a single retail store. There are limitations to this decision, while it allows for an in-depth and narrow analysis of a specific retail store, the broader picture is being ignored, i.e. the entire retail sector is not being included in this research, and this is a single case with one retail store in Ireland. The company has been chosen for this research is Eason & Son Ltd, and the specific store that is being research is the biggest branch in the company which is located at 40 O'Connell Street Lower, Dublin 1.

4.13. Sampling

Sampling is described as being made up of members of a target population, allowing the researcher to gather data on a representative of the population (Malhotra, 2003). Saunders et al. (2007) state that sampling can be described as a procedure used to “provide a range of methods that enables the researcher to reduce the amount of data needed to be collected by considering only data gathered from a sub group rather than all possible cases or elements”. Mason (2002) argues that the work your sample will do is to provide data which you will need to address your research questions. Table 4.8 below shows Malhotra's (2008) sampling design process.

Table 4.8: The Sampling Design Process (Malhotra, 2008)



Defining the Target Population

Malhotra (2003) argues that the first step in the sampling process is to identify the target population for the study, in other words the group of individuals who possess the information sought after by the researcher. Malhotra (2008) argues that the target population is “the collection of elements or objects that hold the information sought by the researcher and about which inferences are to be made”. The author realises that the target population of huge importance as it allows the author to obtain accurate information, an irrelevant sample could result in an insufficient collection of data. It is for this reason that the author has identified the target population as;

“Managers, Supervisors, and Employees within the O’ Connell Street branch of Eason & Son Ltd, who are deemed to have an inside working knowledge of the company’s Internal Communications and the role it plays in creating trust and employee engagement”.

Selecting the Sampling Technique

Selecting a sampling technique consists of several factors and decisions that can be narrowed down into two different techniques of sampling; probability and non-probability. Saunders et al. (2003) suggest a similar approach, mentioning two techniques, described as, probability or representative sampling, and non-probability or judgemental sampling. Malhotra (2008) argues that probability sampling is generally associated with quantitative research methods due to the high need for analytical estimates. Probability sampling makes the assumption that all of the units selected in the sample have an equal chance of being selected.

Non – probability sampling uses the researcher’s judgement for selecting a sample. Non – probability sampling can be left open to criticism due to the possible researcher bias and judgemental selection. Malhotra (2008) argues that estimates made from non-probability sampling are not statistically projectable to the population.

Nothing better distinguishes quantitative and qualitative research approaches than the different logics that underline sampling approaches or techniques (Patton, 2002). A prime example of these different logics is the fact that qualitative methods tend to focus in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) describes the logic of purposeful sampling in the selection of “information – rich cases” for study in depth; “Information – rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term “purposeful” sampling”. Purposeful sampling therefore attempts to select information –rich cases which will “illuminate” the questions being asked by the researcher (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) also suggests that there are no perfect designs when selecting a sample. The sample strategy selected for this research has been chosen to fit the purpose of the study, from the resources available to the researcher, the questions being asked in the study and the outlined constraints or limitations faced in the research.

The author has opted to use a non-probability or purposeful sampling technique. This technique has been chosen for its ability to best answer the research questions and address the research objectives. The author argues that information – rich cases need to be selected purposefully in order to gain enough depth to the research with the resources and time available.

Determining the Sample Size

Selecting the sample size is the final part of the sample design process. Sample size refers to the number of respondents or elements used in a study. Patton (2002) argues that there are no rules in deciding on the sample size in a qualitative study. Qualitative research samples are generally small in size because of time and

money constraints (Malhotra, 2003). Patton (2002) argues that the in-depth information provided by qualitative research of a small number of people however can be extremely valuable, especially if the cases are information rich. Hussey and Hussey (1997) argue that the size of the sample in a research study is of the utmost importance as it has significant implications for the accuracy of the results. Due to the nature of this study, the author has chosen to involve six participants which include; two managers, two supervisors, and two retail assistants from the O'Connell Street branch of Eason & Son Ltd. This will allow the author to answer the main research questions and sub – objectives.

4.14. Fieldwork

Patton (2002) argues that fieldwork is the central activity of qualitative enquiry. The six interviews took place between July 18th and July 29th July 2014. The author made contact to each identified interviewee through email in which the respondent was given a brief on the interview topic to be discussed. Interviewees were identified through contacts in the industry or by use of the internet to identify the appropriate managers. Saunders et al. (2007) suggest that the location of the interviews can have a bearing on the information from the respondent and therefore the location should be one of which the respondents feel comfortable with. I was with this in mind that the author decided to carry out all six interviews within the store in question, organising to meet outside of working hours. The respondents are summarised by the role they play in the company, this is shown below in table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Overview of Respondents

Respondent A	Eason & Son Ltd	Stationery & Cards Department Manager
Respondent B	Eason & Son Ltd	School Books Department Manager
Respondent C	Eason & Son Ltd	Stationery & Cards Department Supervisor
Respondent D	Eason & Son Ltd	Books & News Department Supervisor
Respondent E	Eason & Son Ltd	Stationery Retail Assistant
Respondent F	Eason & Son Ltd	Easonology & Games Sales Assistant

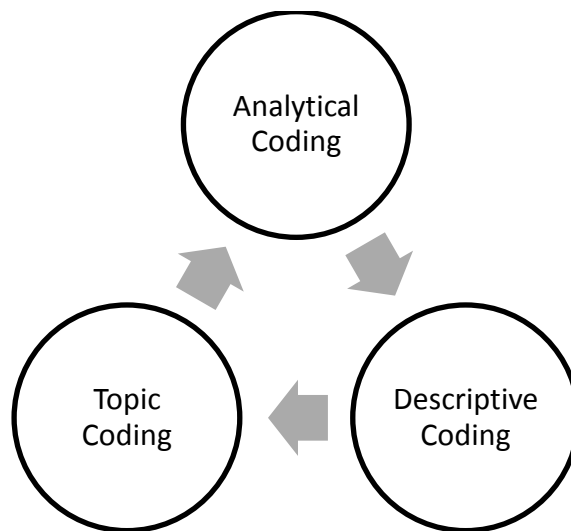
4.15. Data Analysis

All of the six interviews were audio recorded for the purpose of the study and then transcribed by the author in order to analyse the data. The transcriptions were then analysed on different areas of analysis; investigation of each respondent, comparative cross- analysis between respondents, and the association with the literature discussed in the literature review. Malhotra (2010) argues that transcription allows the researcher to identify key themes from the interviews by generating data. When the interviews had been transcribed the author then coded the interviews.

4.16. Coding

Coding is a series of approaches which helps the researcher to retrieve and interpret the primary data collected (Malhotra, 2010). It had also been described as an analytical form of thinking (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). The use of coding can show the researcher the most important and representative categories of data. Developing a form of useful classification or coding scheme is the first step of analysis (Patton, 2002). White and Marsh (2006) argue that the researcher continually analyses the answers given by the respondents in relation to his research questions against the literature review, in particular for situation or topics that do not fit the interpretation or suggest new connections. Richards (2009) suggests three methods of coding that can be seen in table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Methods of Qualitative Coding (Richards, 2009)



For the purpose of this research the author has decided to adopt a topic coding system. Richards (2009) describes this type of coding as delegating data to certain topics or issues. Richards (2009) also states however that all three methods of coding can sometimes be involved.

4.17. Limitations of this Methodology

It is necessary at this point for the author to outline and acknowledge the limitation of the methodology selected for research. Let it be known that there are limitations to any form of research. The limitations of this qualitative research have been summarised in Table 4.11 below.

Table 4.11: Methodology Limitations

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of honesty among respondents interviewed.<input type="checkbox"/> Bias resulting from poor questions or in respect to respondents answers<input type="checkbox"/> Time and costs to perform this methodology was limited. If more time was available the sample covered could have been bigger and the amount of different branches of the company could have been investigated.<input type="checkbox"/> The number of respondents is low which limited the array of levels of the company hierarchy that could be analysed.<input type="checkbox"/> The sample used was selected by the author and not random with all interviewees having a common position in the company where possible.<input type="checkbox"/> The sample size of six respondents could be seen as a limitation as it is generalizing a large retail sector.<input type="checkbox"/> The results are prone to subjectivity by the author.<input type="checkbox"/> The respondents can provide the answers the interviewer is seeking.<input type="checkbox"/> Interviewing is complex and depends in part on the interviewer's skills.<input type="checkbox"/> Standardising the interview questions can be difficult.<input type="checkbox"/> The study only covers a single Irish retail store, it does not look at all branches of the company and not at the retail sector as a whole. |
|--|

The author understands the weaknesses of adopting a qualitative research approach for the methodology for this research; however feels that the limitations outlined above have been mitigated sufficiently, and that the research provides satisfactory levels of validity and accuracy that conclusions and recommendations can be drawn from.

4.18. Conclusion

This chapter highlights the approach adopted by the author to produce data related to the research topic and why they were chosen. This chapter explained the first four steps of the research process. Now that these four steps have been outlined, the chapter that follows will provide a detailed presentation of the analysis and findings that resulted from the primary research conducted by the author.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis & Findings

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings obtained from the primary research conducted. The chapter is divided into five sections. It outlines the findings through each of the five sub-objectives identified in the methodology. This chapter also draws on the literature to identify similarities will real life scenarios. Contradictions, if any, are also outlined.

5.2. Sub – Objective 1:

“To investigate the Internal Communication that exists between employees and management in a single retail store environment”

As stated previously the author wanted to investigate if employees and management understand the Internal Communication system that exists in their store and indeed if they feel one exists at all. The author revisited the literature to investigate arguments around the topic of Internal Communication. Tourish and Hargie (1998) argue that Internal Communication in the modern day world of business is focused on challenging and stimulating employees, managing the ever – changing work environment and gaining employee engagement and commitment. However, the literature fails to acknowledge that for the above argument to be true, the employees and management within a workplace must first be aware that an Internal Communication system is in place and also that they feel they can use it. Then and only then can we suggest that Internal Communication fulfils all of these tasks. In this instance the unit of analysis is the employees within a single retail store, therefore the author will attempt to assess the impact of the knowledge and opinion of existing Internal Communication systems according to the employees of the chosen retail store. This will be based on the qualitative data collected through the interviews conducted for this research.

As identified in the methodology chapter for the purpose of this research the author will adopt a topic coding system (Richards, 2009). This style of coding can be simply described as delegating data to certain topics to certain topics or issues (Richards, 2009). The author will use pattern recognition, which involves the ability to identify patterns in seemingly random information, as part of the content analysis (Patton, 2002). Through identification of key words in the qualitative interviews conducted the author was able to identify key themes and patterns in the data collected. The author had to work back and forth between the data and his own perspective and understandings to make sense of the evidence (Patton, 2002). In order to obtain the data required to answer this sub-objective, the author asked questions in relation to the company’s existing Internal Communication system and how it worked in each Respondent’s opinion, questions such as; what is your understanding of Internal Communication? Is there a system for it in place in this store? What do you think good Internal Communication can achieve? What are the information channels that exist in this store in your opinion? Where does your information come from, and where do you pass it on to? This allowed the author to gain an insight to their definition of Internal Communication and what system they felt was in place in their workplace. The full set of questions can be found in Appendix A, but each question allowed the author to get a feel for the general knowledge each respondent had about the Internal Communication in their store. The key terms that allowed the author to identify the key themes that were relevant can be seen in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: The Main Themes Identified as to How Much Employees Know about Internal Communication in their Workplace

Themes for Sub-Objective 1
Top/ Down Communication
Group Communication
Content Quality

The author will now go through the main themes identified and draw on the distinctions, if any; between each respondent’s opinion and role they hold in the

store. To be clearer, all six respondents are broken up into different hierarchical roles on the organisational chart. The author will state if any distinctions arise in the opinion of a respondent because of the role they hold in the business in contrast with another. Respondents A&B are managers, C& D are supervisors, and E&F are retail assistants.

After conducting the interviews the author began to identify themes and patterns from the data collected. All interviewees were able to give some definition of Internal Communication, however only two could give straight definitions which were similar. Respondent E explained “What I think it is? Eh, well the internal communication is how all the staff, I guess, communicates with each other.” Respondent F stated “Internal communications would be communications between all the staff, managers, and all the communications that filter down through everybody.” A theme that was evident in the six interviews was the use of the terms “filtered down” and “passed down” which highlight the theme of “Top – Down Communication”. All of the respondents, regardless of their position in the business felt that the Internal Communications system in place in the store worked on a structure where all of the information was passed down from the top, through each level on the organisation’s hierarchy, all the way down to the bottom. Respondent A for example stated that “Ok, for me, the first information that I see would be the “Retail Comms” coming through from Head Office by email.” “Well now believe it or not I’m not great at giving “huddles”, I don’t like them so I was terrible, so I’ve now allocated them to my supervisor and she loves them, so she would relay the information to staff.” Here we can see that from a manager’s point of view that the Internal Communication in the store worked on a top – down communication basis. This was mirrored by Respondent C who mentioned “Ok, so like as in when one of the managers comes and gives us a new promotion or something like that they might want us to pass on down to the staff, or a new procedure that we’re doing on the tills, and then we kind of call a “huddle” in store with a group of the staff and we then pass that communication on to them, so that they know what they’re going to have to do.” Respondent D argued “Ok, so my communication would come through whatever managers or supervisors are on the same shift as me, so when I come in they would inform me of what’s going on

and then I would pass it on to the staff, whatever manager is in on the shift that I'm on would normally have had a "huddle" with the staff on the Saturday, and then I'd pass it on through "huddles" on the Sunday morning." We can see from the examples above that all of the respondents felt that they had an idea of Internal Communication and what it entailed. Respondents all agreed that a system was in place and that a top – down communication method was used to spread information throughout the company and every level on the hierarchy received the information from their superior and then in turn would pass it down to the staff below them, the one difference that was highlighted was the fact that retail assistant would share information across their level with other sales assistants, this was due to the fact that they are on the bottom of the hierarchy and could not pass information down any lower.

Another theme that was evident in the interviews performed was the term "Group Communication", this term was manufactured having seen the term "Huddle" mentioned numerous times throughout all six interviews. This term relates to the staff meetings that take place on the shop floor before the start of every work day. Every staff member in the store is present, so everybody receives the same information. These group effects lead the author to highlight the term "Group Communication". Kalla (2005) described Internal Communication as "social interaction through messages"; this idea was evident in the answers given by all respondents. Respondent C explained "The system that's in place now has been improved over time so the system that we have in place is now working for us, eh, because like we are having a lot more regular "huddles" with the staff, I'm having a lot more "huddles" with the managers above me to find out the information." Respondent E shared a similar view as their colleague by stating "Well the supervisor will bring his/her staff, say me and a few other people into the office and just kind of explain whatever communication have been brought down from head office, like offers, how the store is doing, overall performance, if money is up or down, how the shop looks in terms of how clean and tidy it is, how well stocked out the shelves are, and just anything that's happening." This shows that the store is dedicated to sharing messages socially, in large groups, which makes it easier for all staff to be on the same page. This sense of "group" shows that

everybody is involved in the internal communication and it's all communal. When asked, the respondents agreed that the "huddles" were not a chance to give opinions; they stayed more in line with the top – down communication theory mentioned earlier. Respondent E argued "Eh, no, it's not really about voicing opinion, it's just about listening to what's being read of the sheet, that's what it is like, and it's not up for argument like and that's fine, that's the whole point of it, it's not a debate it's more of an information session." This response was mirrored by Respondent A who mentioned "wouldn't say all of the communication is two-way; a lot of it is one-way, because it's all information that they're giving you, they're not asking you questions, they don't really want you to answer to most of the information that is passed on so it's more a case of information being pushed down the line rather than up as well." These views indicate that there is a strong level of community in relation to how the information is delivered, the theory of it being top – down communication is still echoed throughout. Kalla's (2005) statement mentioned above was seen to be proved in the instance messages are delivered social in a group environment.

The final theme that was apparent was the term "Content Quality". Every respondent was asked if they were happy with the quality of the content that was delivered to them from above. Bambacas & Patrickson (2008) conducted research to show that that "the skill of maintaining clarity and consistency of messages was rated as having the utmost importance." The author sought to see if the respondents agreed with this theory and if so, was the information they received of a quality nature? Respondent F stated "Well the stuff we get told, we do generally have enough time to prepare for, but a lot of it is mish-mash, there's no kind of steady flow to what's going on, it's kind of this will happen then, as in a couple of weeks, and then all of sudden, it's there." This opinion of unclear information was mirrored by Respondent E who argues "It would be more helpful if there was more information in the "huddles". Respondent C mentioned "Yeah, Yeah, and it gives them more of a confidence as well that you're not just sending them off just to do kind of a fool's job, that they are doing something productive for the company. All respondents were in agreement with Bambacas & Patrickson's (2008) theory that clear concise information is essential to the

business, however all felt that more information was needed and it could be clearer.

In conclusion to answer the above sub-objective of whether an Internal Communication system existed between employees and staff in the chosen retail store; in terms of the overall store, every respondent from every role recognised an Internal Communication system in place, they also outlined the structure in place, by which information is passed down throughout the levels of the hierarchy, and finally they highlighted the importance of information clarity when it came to making work life easier. All respondents were on the same page which was good to see and is an interesting finding of the research.

5.3. Sub-Objective 2:

“To investigate the differences between Technological and Face-Face Communication methods in a single retail store”

As highlighted in the methodology the author wanted to find out the differences between the uses of technological and face – face communication methods for Internal Communication in a single retail store. The author sought to find out what employee and management thought was better to use for Internal Communication, and if any contradictions of the literature came to light. This objective developed from the literature. Holtz (2003) argues that Intranet systems can improve speed of information delivery and facilitate global communication, whereas, Bland (2005) highlights that “people management is about interaction and conversation; technology should not de-humanise that interaction or you will drift away”. Academic evidence has suggested that the two can exist hand in hand with a balance being the best case scenario. Although technology can make life easier in terms of internal communication within an organisation, it is important, however, to remember the traditional methods, and to implement any technological changes alongside the traditional methods such as face – face and print communication (Holtz, S. 2003).

Similarly to the last sub-objective, the author will adopt a topic coding system will be adopted (Richards, 2009). The author will also be using pattern recognition

(Patton, 2002). Two main themes were identified during the analysis of the data due to the popularity of these terms being mentioned in the interviews. The themes can be seen in the Table 5.2 below:

Table 5.2: The Main Themes Identified as to How Employees feel about Technological and Face – Face Methods of Communication

Themes for Sub-Objective 2
Anonymous
Personal

After conducting the interviews the author began to identify themes and patterns from the data collected. Each interviewee was asked a number of questions about which method of communication they felt worked better in their workplace. All levels of staff were asked the same questions which can be seen in Appendix A. The first theme that became apparent was the term “Anonymous”, when asked about the Technological Communication, all respondents felt that the emails received from head office were packed full of information, however they felt anonymous, because they were dealing with a computer screen. Respondent A states “There could be a lot of irrelevant stuff in the emails that doesn’t apply to me and then I’m fed up reading through all the other stuff that by the time I get to stuff that is relevant that relates to me that I end up missing it.” Respondent E argues that “I think Face-Face is always the best way to receive information or communication because of the way our brain is hooked up, we remember talking to somebody as opposed to reading it of a computer screen.” Respondent C also states “the “Retail Comms”, because that is store wide communication, you know like all across the company, but a lot of time our “huddles” will be about our internal problems.” A pattern can be seen here that shows that staff feels that the technological communication is more for companywide passing of information, whereas the face-face communication is more personal and effective.

That leads onto the second theme of “Personal” that was mentioned above. Respondents, when asked about face-face communication, felt that it entailed a

more personal touch and that they were happier to receive information from another human being. Respondent B states “That’s a great form of communication, because people use it as they’re time to come to me about anything, you know, that anything can be thrown out on the table, and they know that once it comes to me that I will pass it on, and we have come across issues where I wasn’t aware of something until somebody piped up and said it, it builds a trust between me and the staff or whoever is doing it.” This view is consolidated by Respondent E who says “I think you do kind of remember it better or take it in better if somebody is talking with you face-face.”

In conclusion, the above views show that for this research, the respondents all seem to favour face-face communication as a method of communication; all six shared the same view and agreed with Bland (2005). This sub-objective has been answered with a resounding consensus, the six employees, all from the same store and all from different levels of the business found that they felt face-face communication was a better form of communication because it had a more personal sense and that technological communication such as email was just too anonymous. Cheney’s (1999) theory that face – face communication is considered to be more reliable than written communication in a business situation due to the fact that it provides a lot more information to the other party involved, turned out to be true in this case.

5.4. Sub-Objective 3:

“To investigate if Internal Communication creates a trust between employees and manager in a single retail store environment”

As highlighted in the Methodology the author wanted to investigate if Internal Communications can be used to create a trust between employees and management in a single retail store. The author sought to find out how employees communicated with their managers and supervisors, and if through this communication, a trust was built. Contradictions of the literature were also sought after. This objective developed from the literature review. Botan & Taylor (2004)

considers trust to be a vital aspect of the organisation’s internal relationship. Wilson (1994) found that both employees’ and public perceptions of commitment, trust, and mutual respect are important for understanding organisation – public relationships. Gavin and Mayer (2005), show that internal communication has been shown to improve trust between employees and managers. Similarly, in more general terms it has been said that “sound relationships can only be developed on the basis of trust and reliable information” (Dolphin, 2005). Academic authors that have conducted research on this area have all suggested that the element of trust is vital to any work related relationships, and also that quality communication can only benefit the construction of trust. The author wishes to investigate these theories to see if respondents in this research complement the existing literature.

Similarly to previous sub-objectives, the author will adopt a topic coding system will be adopted (Richards, 2009). The author will also be using pattern recognition (Patton, 2002). Two main themes were identified during the analysis of the data due to the popularity of these terms being mentioned in the interviews. The themes can be seen in the Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3: Main Themes Identified as to How Employees Feel Internal Communication Creates Trust

Themes for Sub-Objective 3
Personal Problems
Empathy

After conducting the interviews the author began to identify themes and patterns from the data collected. Each interviewee was asked a number of questions about Internal Communication and Trust, all of which can be seen in Appendix A. The first theme that became apparent was that of the term “Personal Problems”. Respondents from the non-managerial positions described how they felt there was an open door policy in place in their store, there was no problem for them to talk with their managers or supervisors about personal problems. Respondent E stated

“There is yeah, for me anyway and on the floor I work on I reckon there is an open door policy, which I have used in the past, like if a problem has arisen, be it personal or about work I have gone straight in and just said it to them, and you know the supervisors have been open and understanding and have helped me out with the problem straight away, and given me a solution or advice on how to go about fixing it, but that’s for me, I assume if they treat me like that, they will treat the rest of the staff like that, I think that this is important because you need to keep people happy if they are going to work better.” Respondent F showed a similar view, “Oh yeah, like you can generally walk in, you don’t normally have any issues walking up to the supervisors or managers and saying “Look this is a problem”, I certainly don’t because I do be in close quarters with them most of the time, but for the most part it if you need to ask for time off, or complain about something, you literally just have to go up to them and say “Look ,this is what’s gone wrong”, and they will do their best to solve it.” These respondents showed a trust in their management due to the openness of communication that is available to them in their place of work.

The second theme that was apparent from the research was the term “Empathy”. This related to respondents who held managerial positions in the store. Each respondent empathised with their employees when it came to listening to both their work related and personal problems. They all felt that if you can open a personal level of communication with staff that they will start to show trust and this will relay into their working relationships. Respondent A stated “Like I said, you have to listen though, you know even from my point of view, if you’re talking to me, I have to listen to you, because what you’re talking to me about is important to you, do you know what I mean so I have to listen..... certainly if you communicate with people on a personal level that does build a confidence for when you are giving commercial information.” Respondent C shared this view by saying “Absolutely, but I means that if you have any problem in any part of your job you would feel if the communication was so good between everybody you would have no problem approaching your manager about anything, not even your manager, your colleagues, you now, it’s important that staff communicate with each other too.” It is clear from the data collected that empathy is shown between

management and employees. It is this empathy, through communication, that helps to build a trusting relationship.

In conclusion, the author successfully answered this sub-objective and there were no contradictions to the literature. All of the respondents' answer complemented (Botan & Taylor 2004; Wilson 1994; Gavin and Mayer 2005; Dolphin, 2005). The author also found that trust is create between employees and management through personal communication primarily, which then carries into the working relationship.

5.5. Sub-Objective 4:

“To investigate if Internal Communication can assist in making employees feel more engaged with their work and an appreciated part of the company”

As highlighted in the methodology the author wanted to find out if Internal Communication can assist in making employees feel more engaged in their work and also part of the company. The author sought to find out what employee and management thought about Engagement, and if any contradictions of the literature came to light. This objective developed from the literature. Kahn (1990) conceptualised the term engagement which he defined as the ability to harness an employee's enthusiasm on their roles at work. Studies have also shown various strategies that can be employed by organisations can use to engage employees, strategies like, leadership communication, internal communication, and communication from managers (Watson Wyatt, 2009). The important message that is being relayed throughout the literature is that, positive employee attitude is formed early and within the confines of the organisation itself through the use of effective internal communication. Edelman (2012) found that interactions between employees of an organisation and customers were credible sources of information about the firm, not just corporate advertising and information relayed from the organisation's hierarchy. This provides evidence that there is a need for retail managers to use effective internal communication with their employees in order to become a trusted source of information for external stakeholders. The academic authors mentioned above all suggest that engaged employees are crucial

to the business and that internal communication plays an integral role in achieving this engagement. . The author wishes to investigate these theories to see if respondents in this research complement the existing literature.

Similarly to previous sub-objectives, the author will adopt a topic coding system will be adopted (Richards, 2009). The author will also be using pattern recognition (Patton, 2002). Two main themes were identified during the analysis of the data due to the popularity of these terms being mentioned in the interviews. The themes can be seen in the Table 5.4 below:

Table 5.4: Main Themes Identified as to How Internal Communication Can Assist Employee Engagement

Themes for Sub – Objective 4
Necessary Information
Inclusion

After conducting the interviews the author began to identify themes and patterns from the data collected. Each interviewee was asked a number of questions about Internal Communication and Engagement, all of which can be seen in Appendix A. The first theme that came to light was the term “Necessary Information”, the author found that all of the respondents felt that if they were to feel more engaged in their work, that the necessary information needed to be passed on to them. Respondent E stated “I think it does yeah, because, when you have the information that you need in your workplace its helps you to work, I wouldn’t say harder, but it makes you work better, like it puts you in a better mood, and it makes you feel better about the whole thing in general which is good, because in the end apparently that can increase sales.” The view was mirrored by Respondent F “I can explain things to them and explain things in a proper manner, then yeah they will get looked into, and more often than not I will have that change implemented, so communication between me and them does work out brilliantly in terms of if I make a complaint about something, the complaint will be looked into, if I give an option to change something it will be changed, so yeah it is

looked into, so I definitely feel more engaged in my work and part of things.” It is evident from this data that staff feel more engaged when they receive the necessary information that allows them to do their job appropriately.

The second theme that was highlighted was the term “Inclusion”. The author found that employees felt more engaged with the company when they received information regarding the company as a whole. The fact that they were being included in company activity, made respondents feel more part of the corporate machine and resulted in them being more engaged in their work. Respondent B mentioned “, I think when you get information it makes you feel a part of something, and staff need to feel a part of something in order to perform properly, it has to happen, it’s a human thing like if you feel segregated or outside of the machine in any way you’re not going to perform to your potential.” Respondent C shared this view, “I feel that I play a big part in communicating what is happening throughout the company and the fact that are specific supervisors meeting and we have a chance to put our view to our superiors makes us feel part of the team.” This data highlights the fact that when staff feels more included in the happenings of the company, they in turn feel more engaged in their work. This is accomplished through Internal Communication.

In conclusion the author answered the sub-objective well; there were little contradictions to the literature review, with the results of the data collected complementing the literature mentioned earlier, (Kahn, 1990; Watson Wyatt, 2009; Edelman 2012). The author also found that staff was more entitled to feel engaged when they were included in all forms of communication from the business. Welch and Jackson’s (2007) theory that internal communication is crucial for achieving employee engagement, has also been complemented.

5.6. Sub – Objective 5:

“To investigate if employees feel that they have a voice in the company”

As highlighted in the methodology the author wanted to find out if employees feel that they have a voice in their store and if a two-way communication exists in the company. The author sought to find out what if staff had a voice, and if any

contradictions of the literature came to light. This objective developed from the literature. Alfes et al., (2010), has highlighted the importance of employee voice as one of the two most important factors for employee engagement. Spencer (1986) concluded that if given the chance to voice their opinions, employees within an organisation would be more likely to remain in that organisation. Van Dyne et al., (2003) concluded that the term “employee voice” is used to “represent the intentional expression of work – related ideas, information and opinions”. The academic authors mentioned above all suggest that employee voice plays a crucial role in the business and that internal communication plays an integral role in achieving this voice. . The author wishes to investigate these theories to see if respondents in this research complement the existing literature.

Similarly to previous sub-objectives, the author will adopt a topic coding system will be adopted (Richards, 2009). The author will also be using pattern recognition (Patton, 2002). One main theme was identified during the analysis of the data due to the popularity of this term being mentioned in the interviews. This theme can be seen in the Table 5.5 below:

Table 5.5: Main Theme Identified as to Whether Employees Felt That They Had a Voice in the Company

Theme for Sub-objective 5
Two – Way Communication

After conducting the interviews the author began to identify themes and patterns from the data collected. Each interviewee was asked a number of questions about Employee Voice, all of which can be seen in Appendix A. The main theme that came to light was the term “Two – Way Communication”. The author found that every respondent shared the same view when it came to this topic. Respondent F states “A lot of what is said is taken on board but then it is just placed in a filing cabinet and left in the dark, a lot of the employees are listened to but there is only so much management can do, I think when it comes to this topic, there is a lot of frustration because you might be getting your point across and then you won’t see

it go anywhere.” Similarly Respondent E states “the way you’re supposed to voice your opinion up the ladder, like you’re supposed to use the kind of ranking system, so when it reaches the top he has to bring it to his superiors which are not around, they would be outside of the building and I would say that could be a stumbling block to get your information out there.” Respondent B, “I wouldn’t say all of the communication is two-way; a lot of it is one-way, because it’s all information that they’re giving you, they’re not asking you questions, they don’t really want you to answer to most of the information that is passed on so it’s more a case of information being pushed down the line rather than up as well.” The author found that respondents all felt there was a lack of two – way communication in the store. The main finding that is evident from this data is that they channel is there, it is just not being used. Once information reaches a certain level, it becomes obsolete and is forgotten. The data shows that this normally occurs when the employee voice leaves the confines of the store. When it comes to trying to project employee voice up the company ladder, it dissolves progressively as it moves up the organisation.

In conclusion, Alfes et al., (2010) theory that has highlighted the importance of employee voice as one of the two most important factors for employee engagement, is supported. However, although the importance of employee voice is recognised by respondents, they are unanimously agree that there is lack of it in their store and it is difficult for them to move their opinions up the company ladder.

5.7. Conclusion

All data has been collected and analysed as proposed in the Methodology chapter. The author has uncovered some very interesting findings in relation to how staff feels about Internal Communication and what it can help to achieve. The author has successfully answered all of the proposed sub-objectives that were set out in the Methodology chapter. All of the findings will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter along with some future recommendations that the author

feels are necessary for further research. A final discussion and conclusion will be outlined in the next and final chapter.

Chapter 6

Discussion & Conclusions

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is the final of this dissertation and aims to discuss the findings that were discovered from the data collected in the interview process. All of the data has been analysed and results have been published in the previous chapter. The main discussion will be on how the findings compare to the theories that have arisen in the Literature Review chapter of this study. The author will approach each sub-objective individually in order to discuss the findings separately. A final summation will be given afterwards, in which the author will discuss if the main research question has been answered and some future research recommendations will also be given, a final conclusion will be given to close this research paper.

6.2. Sub-Objective 1

“To investigate the Internal Communication that exists between employees and management in a single retail store environment”

The author wished to find out the knowledge that employees had of Internal Communication and if they were aware that such a system existed in their workplace. Tourish & Hargie’s (1998) theory that Internal Communication plays a huge part in the success of a business was the main literature being tested here and the author wished to gain the employees’ opinion of the topic area.

The findings very much agreed with Tourish & Hargie (1998), the themes that were discovered all showed that the employees of the chosen store had a very good idea of Internal Communication and could speak as to what system was in place at their workplace and also if it was working or not. The themes Top/Down Communication, Group Communication, and Content Quality all showed how the respondents felt about the area. The respondents all outlined knowledge of how important Internal Communication is to success in a business, however all shared the view that there was a lack in this particular store. Whilst the findings complement Tourish & Hargie (1998), the author feels that his research has

proven that while it is important for staff to have a knowledge of their Internal Communication system, it is more important for management to put in place an Internal Communication system worth understanding. The author feels that this sub-objective has been answered and it contributes to answering the main research question.

6.3. Sub-Objective 2

“To investigate the differences between Technological and Face-Face Communication methods in a single retail store”

The author wanted to investigate which form of communication method was preferred by employees for Internal Communication. Technological and Face – Face were the two communication methods that existed in the chosen store, therefore they were the two chosen for investigation. Cheney’s (1999) theory that face- face communication is considered to be most reliable in business was the main academic tested in this study. The respondents all showed a similar view to which method they felt was better and once again it complemented the literature. The themes that were discovered from the interview were Anonymous and Personal. Respondents all found that technological communication was too anonymous and it was harder to really get a full understanding of information from reading an email. On the other hand, all agreed that dealing with colleagues and management through face-face communication made it feel that information was being passed in more of a personal sense and this made them feel happier. The face-face communication also allowed for personal problems to be discussed and an open door policy was embraced at this store. The findings further consolidate the theory put forth by Cheney (1999) and prove that employees from the same company, regardless of role, feel that face-face communication is a better suited form of communication for Internal Communication.

The author feels that he has successfully answered this sub-objective and has complemented the existing literature on the topic area. The author also feel that the findings presented will contribute to the answering of the main research question.

6.4. Sub-Objective 3

“To investigate if Internal Communication creates a trust between employees and manager in a single retail store environment”

The author wanted to investigate if the respondents of this research felt that Internal Communication plays a role in creating trust between employees and management. Gavin & Mayer’s (2005) theory that Internal Communication can improve trust between employees and management was the main academic literature that was tested in this study. Once again, all respondents shared the same view and consolidated the literature. All felt that Internal Communication plays a massive part in creating trust between employees and management. The themes that were discovered in the findings were; Personal Problems, and Empathy. Respondents found that they could approach management with their personal problems and the respondents who were management reiterated how important it was for them to know that employees felt that they could approach them with their problems. This sense of an open door policy and the fact the communication could exist on a personal level as well as a corporate level really made the respondents feel that they could trust management. It is through this personal Internal Communication that a trusting relationship exists. Empathy was also apparent through the data collected. The fact that management showed an interest in the staff as human beings and not just as workers instilled a sense of trust in them.

These findings definitely complement Gavin & Mayer’s (2005) theory and contribute hugely to answering of the main research question.

6.5. Sub –Objective 4

“To investigate if Internal Communication can assist in making employees feel more engaged with their work and an appreciated part of the company”

The author wanted to investigate if the respondents felt that Internal Communication can assist in making them feel more engaged in their work and an appreciated part of the company. Welch and Jackson’s (2007) theory that internal

communication is considered crucial for achieving employee engagement, was the main academic literature tested in this research. Ultimately, the respondents felt that Internal Communication did play a part in making them feel more engaged and part of the company. The themes that were discovered in the analysis of the data were; Necessary Information, and Inclusion. Respondents felt that in order to for them to do their job to a high standard, communication had to include the necessary information to do so. Staff could only feel more engaged with their roles if the information communicated was clear and concise and the author discovered that this was not always the case in this store. Respondents also felt that being included in all meetings and company communications made them feel more engaged and part of the company, yet again, this was not always the case in this example. The author feels that these findings do complement Welch and Jackson's (2007) theory; however, simply acknowledging that Internal Communication can assist in creating employee engagement is not enough. The respondents in this study agreed that it would help to create engagement but the company was not doing it well enough to do so. Theory is all well and good but practice is more important. This sub-objective has been answered and has greatly contributed to answering the main research question.

6.6. Sub-Objective 5

“To investigate if employees feel that they have a voice in the company”

The author wished to investigate if employees felt that they had a voice which they could echo around the company and be heard. Alfes et al., (2010), has highlighted the importance of employee voice as one of the two most important factors for employee engagement. This was the main academic literature that was being tested in this research. To follow the pattern throughout the findings, all respondents agreed with this theory; however they felt that they had a voice in their company but not one that could breach the premises. It was interesting to find that staff could speak up about anything they felt appropriate, but only in terms of the store in which they worked. Respondents all felt that once a problem reached the store manager level that it got put on the back burner. The higher their voice travelled up the organisational ladder, the more muffled it got. The theme

that was discovered in this research was; Two – Way Communication, and how it existed to a point. The problem existed once information left the confines of the store. If employees wanted to voice their opinion to HQ, roadblocks started to pop up. The author feels that these findings complement Alfes et al., (2010); however they did find that once Internal Communication starts to go back up the organisational ladder, voices start to drown out.

6.7. Main Research Question

Internal Communication: Does it help to create Employee Engagement and Trust in a Single Irish Retail Company?

The author used the five sub-objectives to build a theory that could answer the above main research question. The author feels that he has answered this question successfully, through the findings discussed from the five sub-objectives.

Ultimately, the author discovered that in a single Irish retail company, Internal Communication does help to create Employee Engagement and Trust. All of the research findings back this theory up and also every single finding complemented similar research theories. Whilst Internal Communication has been found to help in the creation of Engagement and Trust, the author feels that company involved must put in place an Internal Communication system that can do so. The company used in this study clearly had a group of employees who all agreed that Internal Communication can help to create these two things, but perhaps failed to because the company had not got the appropriate system in place to do so. The author feels that this adaptation of Mishra, Boynton and Mishra's (2014) study has contributing massively to the topic area and has given a more narrow insight into Internal Communication through the use a single retail store. The author feels that he has answered the main research question asked, and that this work will contribute to the topic area.

6.8. Future Research Recommendations

The author feels that while this research has been successful, there are a number of studies that can be conducted to further research the topic area. This study focused on a small sample of six employees from the same retail company, there

is room to conduct a study involving five or more employees from the same store, but perhaps to investigate more than one company, this could be done with a view to gaining a greater insight from a much larger sample.

Future research involving Internal Communication outside of the immediate store environment, with a view to looking at the whole organisation structure should also be conducted. This research involved only the staff members up to the store manager position, and the problems were only viewed to begin after this position. This would definitely be a great research opportunity.

6.9. Final Conclusion

The author feels that he has successfully completed this study and has learned all he intended to do so and more during the completion of this research. It has been tough but very rewarding to know that he has in some way contributing to the academic literature surrounding the topic area of Internal Communication.

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Appendix A

Sample Interview

Interview with Respondent E, Floor Staff, Stationery Department, Eason & Son Ltd on the 28th July 2014, (Int = Researcher, Par = Participant).

Int: So, I'd like to just ask you first off what you think Internal Communication is within your company, and how it work in your eyes?

Par: What I think it is?.... Eh, well the internal communication is how all the staff, I guess, communicates with each other, that's the stupid explanation of it. The way I think it works in this shop is, I think it's mostly emails filtered down by managers, high up managers, to lower down managers, and then that gets dispersed among the floor staff, I think that's how it's supposed to work , but it doesn't always work like that, emmm Internal Communications? It's just everybody keeping in touch with everybody else, which seems a difficult thing to keep on top of, because everybody doesn't know everything, like there's always gaps, always gaps, as in there's always people who don't know what's going on, but that's not down to any one person, that's down to communication flow problems, which they're trying to address at the moment I think.

Int: I would like you to tell me how you receive your information, i.e., anything that's going on in the store, promotions, general need to know information, etc?

Par: More often than not, I'd find it out from the person on the till next to me, or if I get the promotion up at the till from a customer, more often now than it used to you would be called into the office with a few other people for a "huddle", and everything is explained kind of in a regulated kind of way, but often enough it would be just finding out on the floor, on the go like.

Int: So do you reckon, that these "huddles" work? Could you run me through what goes on in a huddle?

Par: Well the supervisor will bring his/her staff, say me and a few other people into the office and just kind of explain whatever communication have been

brought down from head office, like offers, how the store is doing, overall performance, if money is up or down, how the shop looks in terms of how clean and tidy it is, how well stocked out the shelves are, and just anything that's happening, the main offers are usually explained at that point as well, but that would be the main or most official method of communication, like there's a lot of kind of casual unofficial ways, like they'll just grab you aside and say well, this is this, and this is this, for example. If you come across a manager or a supervisor up in the stockroom, they could also tell you something unofficially in a more personal, one-one way, and that's just to name a few different ways that I receive information, but I don't think the "huddle" is implemented properly in order to maximise its effectiveness, like they could do better.

Int: Do you reckon within these "huddles" that it is a two-way communication or is it more of a way of management giving you information and not really providing you with a chance to give feedback?

Par: Eh, no, it's not really about voicing opinion, it's just about listening to what's being read of the sheet, that's what it is like, and it's not up for argument like and that's fine, that's the whole point of it, it's not a debate it's more of an information session, eh it probably would be good if there was some kind of I guess, forum for staff members to give their opinions, now I know there's a website where we can go and write on but I've never had to, or been "hit with the lightning bolt" to actually bother, but there is a way but, no it's just you listening to what they're telling you, and you just nod your head in agreement and go out on to the floor and do your thing.

Int: Do you reckon you are happy with the amount of information you receive currently or would you like more to help you do your job better?

Par: It would be more helpful if there was more information in the "huddles", but I can do my job fine, like we did our jobs fine before the "huddles" even existed, but I suppose the small advantage of the "huddle" is that you know more at the right time, instead of finding it out from a customer that something is out of stock,

or that an offers on, you know like it's better to find out in a more official capacity, but eh, I don't think I've benefited too much from the "huddles".

Int: So if the "huddle" is one side of it, where a lot of your supervisors and managers receive information is through emails, would you see any emails?

Par: No, I wouldn't see any emails, I'm kind of below all of that like I would be told by my supervisors, they would get all of the emails because that's obviously a management thing, I don't have to be concerned with contents of all those emails, all that I have to concerned with is, are the shelves full, did I make sure that my stock is coming in, and help the customer, that's all. That's my main kind of responsibilities, and the "huddles" are meant to help with that, the make us aware of offers so that we are knowledgeable about what's going on in the shop, they let us know if sales are up or down, they try and encourage us to try and sell harder, and to make sure that the condition of the shop must be neat and reasonably tidy for the customers.

Int: So most of the information that you receive is face-face, do you reckon that this method trumps emails, or would emails be better than you being told something face-face?

Par: I think Face-Face is always the best way to receive information or communication because of the way our brain is hooked up, we remember talking to somebody as opposed to reading it of a computer screen, I think that's just the way people are, because as well if you have any questions, you can ask somebody if its face to face, where as if you want to ask questions by email, you have to send emails back and forth and it could days for replies, so emails are kind of efficient to relay information lie you know, X,Y,Z, and bullet points, but I think you do kind of remember it better or take it in better if somebody is talking with you face-face.

Int: Can I just ask you if you've ever had any training in relation to communication, I've noticed with your colleagues the "Skillsnet" programme get's mentioned a lot, do you reckon that this training would be of any use to you?

Par: Honest opinion, from how the “Skillsnet” has been going, I haven’t learned anything new at all ,it’s basically just put down on paper what we do everyday anyway, so I don’t think this type of training would be of any help to me. Like, I have learned about communication in a purely experiential manner, I learn as it happens and you learn from those experiences, and like it’s probably the best way to learn ,like “learning on the fly”, in a shop like this, it’s probably the only way to learn properly, like training, people have been crying out for more training for ages, and then they kind of produce this “Skillsnet” thing and it’s kind of a bit weak and it’s kind of like more official with the books and you get a cert at the end, I suppose it’s IBEC like, it’s a FETAC qualification and all, but it’s a bit weak, like the best way to learn in a shop is to learn on the floor, dealing with customers in a practical way because we don’t have too much to acknowledge in the shop that we need proper training for, I suppose that you could get into the argument that we don’t get enough training for certain products such as the hard drives, e-readers and that type of stuff that we sell and because there’s no proper training, or that not enough people have the appropriate knowledge, I’d know a good bit about that kind of stuff just because I’m interested in computers, but there would be other people who wouldn’t have a clue, so it’s just stuff like that, it’s kind of misplaced training, or mismanaged training.

Int: If we just, move away from how you receive information on promotions and things from a commercial level, and look at how communication on a personal level, do you feel that there is an open door policy in this store and can you approach supervisors and managers with personal problems?

Par: There is yeah, for me anyway and on the floor I work on I reckon there is an open door policy, which I have used in the past, like if a problem has arisen, be it personal or about work I have gone straight in and just and said it to them, and you know the supervisors have been open and understanding and have helped me out with the problem straight away, and given me a solution or advice on how to go about fixing it, but that’s for me, I assume if they treat me like that, they will treat the rest of the staff like that, I think that this is important because you need to keep people happen if they are going to work better.

Int: In relation to this idea, do you reckon that the level of face-face communication that you have with supervisors and managers would be enough to create a “Trust” with them and help you to get on better in work?

Par: Yeah for me it does, it develops a relationship, gives you a rapport with supervisors and managers, and the more communication you get with them ,the more you would start to trust them , I do trust my managers and supervisors, yeah, eh, I would never have thought of trust myself, but yeah I suppose you do, you learn to trust them through talking to them and receiving things from them face-face, it doesn't happen all the time but every now and then they'll stick something up on the wall and say “everybody read that”, that is communication but it's not. I think that one there is a personal trust with management, you begin to trust them in terms of the commercial side of things as well, I think as you get to know someone in kind of a work environment you learn whether or not they take up the communication they are getting properly, so you'd know whether would be 100% sure of what they are passing down the line or if they only half know, and you can tell who it is by talking to them so if you're receiving information from somebody who only half knows about it, you might go and ask somebody else to fill in the gaps, now not in a bad way or anything .

Int: So if you are not paying attention in a “huddle” for example, could you rely that others have taken in the information and relay it to you on the floor afterwards? That there is an employee – employee communication that does not involved management?

Par: There is yeah, there's always somebody who know something you don't, like if I'm watching a fly on the window or something , there's always somebody who will fill in that gap for you, like we all help each other out with stuff like that, there's no real kind of animosity or anything like that, there's good communication between same level staff, really good communication, eh in like my level and e floor staff, and with supervisors as well actually, yeah the communication between everybody on the floor is good, it's good amongst all of the different levels, in my department anyway, inside the store anyway, like there's all kinds of communication problems outside the store, like getting

information from head office and all that but inside the store, especially in my section on my floor the communication would be quite good about my stock, like I can get things sorted pretty quickly, and get information around fast enough.

Int: Another term that I would like to discuss would be “Engagement”, in your opinion, do you feel that the better the communication, both personal and commercial that you receive helps you to feel more engaged and perhaps part of the whole company?

Par: I think it does yeah , because, when you have the information that you need in your workplace its helps you to work, I wouldn't say harder, but it makes you work better, like it puts you in a better mood , and it makes you feel better about the whole thing in general which is good, because in the end apparently that can increase sales. So yeah it does, I think when you get information it makes you feel a part of something, and staff need to feel a part of something in order to perform properly, it has to happen, it's a human thing like if you feel segregated or outside of the machine in any way you're not going to perform to your potential.

Int: There has been a big comparison with the last 2 years and the years further back, do you feel more engaged and part of things since the new communication system has been introduced or was it better before it was introduced?

Par: There is more communication going on now, in comparison to the past, so I do feel a little more in the loop, whereas before it was kind of all word of mouth communication, now there is actually is notices being put up and a lot more emails and there's the “huddles”, and all this kind of stuff, and information is coming from loads of different places and the amount of information has increased and yeah it has improved the communication in the last couple of years, which does make everything a little bit easier and helps staff to feel more engaged and part of things.

Int: The last topic I'd like to ask you about is the idea of “Employee Voice”, and whether you feel that on your level, the employee has a voice that gets heard up the line and even outside of this store, so if you could imagine your voice travelling up the hierarchy, where would you reckon it gets hindered?

Par: I'd say it would meet roadblocks at the store manager level, not because the store manager wouldn't relay my opinion, just because he's in charge of the whole shop, so you have to, the way you're supposed to voice your opinion up the ladder, like you're supposed to use the kind of ranking system, so when it reaches the top he has to bring it to his superiors which are not around, they would be outside of the building and I would say that could be a stumbling block to get your information out there, eh, but it's not down to the store manager's personal fault of not bothering with us lowly floor staff, its literally I think, the kind of work he does would be very different from the work we do and he would not have the same level of face-face communication with his superiors as we do with ours, once you leave the store surroundings it gets harder, like you can send an email to head office or there's the HR department that you can directly contact, so there are ways that can be taken if a serious problem were to arise that would allow us to get right up to the top but it would take time and would be hard . Trying to get whatever the issue is out of the store is not a big stumbling block but it is harder because you cannot just walk up to somebody and talk to them, there has to be another layer of communication.

Int: Do you reckon in-store, that there is a way that may not always be listened to, but is available for you to voice your opinion?

Par: I do yeah, I've made suggestions before that have come through, eh, just about like, kind of like almost insignificant little things, like I'd say like "Why don't you try this?", or "Why don't you do that?", and they have been listened to, and I feel I do have a voice that does easily go up the line within the store to the store manager, they've all asked my opinion on stuff, and I've been listened to and taken note of in the past.

Int: So, in an overall sense, taking into account everything we have talked about over the interview, do you reckon that good internal communication is a must and that it is an important part of the puzzle and helps to drive the machine forward?

Par: Oh yeah it's an essential part of the machine, like if communication breaks down the whole thing breaks down, like you need to know what's going on, even

if something seems insignificant, it could be important later on, and good communication is vital for a business to succeed, like it just has to happen, like you can't not communicate and you can't keep people in the dark about stuff, because then things just don't work and it doesn't tick over properly.

Int: And one last thing would be if you feel that it's happening in this company, or it's trying to happen, and do you think it will get better in the future?

Par: Yeah, I think it's not quite there yet , they're trying out different things, eh, and it seems to me like that the effort to improving communication is almost like an afterthought in comparison to like the bigger problems like making money and profits, it does seem like they're doing it not because they have to but because want to improve things, it's a bit forced and a bit strained but it is getting better and improving but I thinks it's a bit of a working progress, but it's still a bit tense and forced so in my opinion it's still in its toddler years.

Int: Well, thanks a million for your time and I appreciate your opinion.

Par: No worries.

