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What Managerial Behaviors are Supportive for Knowledge
Sharing by Employees?

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Abstract

With a changing global environment, there is an increased need for organizations to be able to efficiently and effectively share and use the knowledge resources that exists within the firm to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage. How to manage and facilitate knowledge sharing in organizations is becoming increasingly important to achieve organizational success. Research has found a positive relationship between the management's support for knowledge sharing and the employee's willingness to share. To build onto this research, we will in this study look at how different managerial behaviors and actions affect the employees perceived support for knowledge sharing.

To shed light on our research question, we have reviewed relevant theory that will serve as a foundation in our study. We have included literature on knowledge, knowledge sharing, knowledge management, managerial behaviors and managerial actions and behaviors that are related to facilitation of knowledge sharing. Based on the theoretical background for our research, we have developed seven propositions related to answering our research question.

Towards the end of this paper, we describe the research method and how to conduct the data collection. We have chosen a qualitative research design with in-depth interviews as our aim is to get an in-depth understanding of which managerial behaviors and actions that facilitate knowledge sharing and that are perceived as supportive of knowledge sharing. We have also included a thesis progression plan.

1 Introduction

The traditional business world as we once knew is changing. The European economy has in the three last decades' experiences two main changes in the economic environment; communication technology (ICT) and globalization. The economy as of today is called various things such as '*network economy*' and '*knowledge economy*' (Schwartz, Kelly & Boyer, 1999). With the increased access to information and changing environment, it is now more than ever, important to manage this knowledge, and exploit the knowledge-based resources that already exist within the organizations to increase and sustain a competitive advantage. It is also common for organizations to instigate collaboration across the organization and with other organizations, where sharing and gaining knowledge is key.

Several studies have found different predictors that may facilitate for knowledge sharing, such as having a trusting and trustworthy work environment (Cameron 2002; Goh, 2002; Sveiby & Simons, 2002), top management commitment (Hislop, 2003; Mrinalini & Nath, 2000; Rowley, 2002), focus on innovation and learning culture (Goh, 2002) and willingness to voluntary share knowledge (Dixon, 2002) among others.

Denning (2006) argues that a fundamental problem faced by many organizations is that a lot of employees lack the desire to share their knowledge with the other participants in the organizations. Connelly and Kelloway (2003) looked more specifically at how employees perceived the supervisor's and coworker's support and encouragement of knowledge sharing, and found that the management's support for knowledge sharing is found to be positively associated with the employees' perception of a knowledge sharing culture and to the willingness to share knowledge.

1.1 Research question

How does different managerial behaviors and action affect the employee's perceived support for knowledge sharing?

In our study we will want to add on to the existing research and look at what kind of managerial behavior and actions that affect and facilitate the employees perceived support for knowledge sharing. Our study will look at actions and

behaviors managers can do to facilitate for knowledge sharing such as encouraging willingness to share (e.g. voluntarism, openness to experience and innovation), leadership commitment (e.g. leaders actions as symbols and rewarding of desired behavior) and trust (e.g. leader facilitating both explicit and tacit knowledge, creating trusting environment and acting as a role model).

2 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge is one of the corner stones of human existence, allowing us to define, shape, and learn how to solve a task or problem (von Krogh et al., 2000). As with the importance of knowledge as an organizational resource to gain competitive advantage, it is just as important to be able and willing to share it with others. Organizations who are good at facilitating for different types of knowledge (e.g. tacit and explicit), are often more able to adapt to changing environments and create a good knowledge sharing climate in the organization.

2.1 Knowledge

Knowledge is considered a critical organizational resource that provides a sustainable competitive advantage in our competitive and dynamic economy (Wang & Noe, 2010). According to Davenport and Prusak (1998) knowledge can be described as a "...mix of framed experiences, values and conceptual information, providing us with the necessary framework for evaluating and incorporating new information". Where Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) describe it as a dynamic human process where a flow of messages interacting with others' beliefs and ideas. Looking at knowledge as something that is processed by individuals ranging from ideas, facts to judgments relevant for individual, team and organizational performance (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Bartol & Srivastava, 2002).

2.1.1 The concept of knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing is becoming increasingly important to organizational success due to the highly competitive nature of the global environment (Grant, 1996). The success of organizations relies in many ways on its ability to create and share this knowledge effectively (Abrams et al., 2003). Knowledge sharing refers to the provision of task information and know-how to help others and to collaborate with

others to solve problems, develop new ideas, or implement policies or procedures (Wang & Noe, 2010).

Knowledge sharing is premised on the theories regarding social exchange and social capital. Social Exchange Theory is based on the premise that knowledge sharing occurs “...*due to reciprocation of favors received such as job security, status, balance of power and maintenance of future relationships*”(Casimir et al. 2012). This theory is used to help explain employee’s motivation for their potential organizational citizenship behavior (e.g. behaviors above what is formally required), which is something that can affect their knowledge sharing intention. Social Capital Theory explains that the sharing of knowledge occurs due to provision of social benefits (e.g. enhanced reputation), for not only the recipient, but also the organization (Nahapiet & Ghosal, 1998).

In the process where knowledge is shared between individuals, knowledge must be presented in a form that others can understand, learn from and make use of. Therefore according to Ipe (2003), knowledge sharing is basically the act of making knowledge available to others. This sharing-process involves some form of conscious action on the part of the individual processing the knowledge. Davenport (1997) also defines knowledge sharing as a voluntary act because individuals have a tendency to share their knowledge even when there is no compulsion to do. There is some disagreement however between researchers on how we should understand and view the knowledge sharing process. Some researchers, such as Yi (2009) looks at the process from a unidirectional perspective, claim that the sharing of knowledge only goes in a single perspective (e.g. from provider to recipient). Whereas Linyange et al. (2009) and Hooff and de Ridder (2004) on the other hand view knowledge sharing from a bidirectional perspective, arguing that the sharing process involved a mutual exchange of knowledge between individuals.

2.1.2 Distinctions

The terms *knowledge* and *information* are often used interchangeably and researchers have not reached a consensus on the distinctions (Wang & Noe, 2010). Knowledge sharing is different from information sharing, which can typically involve management making information available to employees in the

organization, while knowledge sharing contains a level of reciprocity (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). In this paper we will join several researchers (e.g. Machlup, 1989; Kogut & Zander 1995) that argue that information is in fact a form of knowledge, but that knowledge is more than just information. That knowledge may include information and know-how (Wang & Noe, 2010).

Also the term knowledge exchange has been used interchangeably with knowledge sharing, but we will in this paper follow the idea that knowledge exchange includes both knowledge sharing (e.g. employees providing knowledge to others) and knowledge seeking (e.g. employees searching for knowledge from others) (Wang & Noe, 2010).

2.2 Different types of knowledge: Tacit and explicit knowledge

Knowledge in organizations can be seen both as explicit and tacit (Nonaka, 1994). Polanyi (1966) defined *explicit* knowledge as the type of knowledge that we can easily “... *express, capture, store and reuse*”. He saw explicit knowledge as something systematic, universal and transparent. This is the type of knowledge we can describe to others through language and established processes (Smith, 2001), and it is something that can be easily codified, stored, and transferred across both time and space, independent of any individuals. Explicit knowledge is considered an asset because it can be reused a number of times by different individuals, to solve problems and challenges (Hansen et al, 1999). A lot of organizations spend a lot of money on how to code and store relevant explicit knowledge.

But it is not all knowledge we can articulate or store. Polanyi (1966) argues further that knowledge which we are not formally taught, and we cannot express in words is *tacit* knowledge, which is based on the idea that humans know more than we can tell. Nonaka (1991) defined tacit knowledge as something highly personal and deeply ingrained in people’s individual experiences, ideas and emotions. He also believed that tacit knowledge is something that we individually acquire through actions and experiences (Nonaka, 1994). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that knowledge is either tacit or explicit. Both tacit and explicit knowledge are essential for creation of knowledge in an organization, and one should ideally strive to have a balance between the two different types of knowledge (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). They base this on the idea that

explicit and tacit knowledge interacts through knowledge conversion and represents two ends of a continuum (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This implying that the creation of knowledge in an organization is dependent on making tacit knowledge, explicit. But the explicit knowledge would be quite meaningless without the insights from tacit knowledge (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000). This is in contrast to Tsoukas (2011), who believes that all explicit knowledge is underlying by some form of tacit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge can more easily be expressed, shared and communicated through written form, making it easier to access, especially in communication in digital channels within the organization. Tacit knowledge on the other hand can be more time-consuming and costly to make shareable (Dhanaraj et al, 2004). It can also be considered more valuable for the employee, and therefore the willingness to share it is dependent on other factors. But this will also imply that kind of knowledge will be highly valuable for the organization if shared.

In this paper we will focus on both types of knowledge, following Brown and Dugid's (2000) mind of thinking, where they argue that the most successful organizations are still going to be the ones that manage to find the right balance between the natural tension that exist between explicit and tacit knowledge. By understanding that knowledge can be differ, and that not all knowledge can be taught through courses, manuals and other similar approaches, we can realize the need and adapt to other solutions to create a good knowledge sharing environment in the organization.

3 Knowledge management and managerial behaviors

Knowledge is considered to be the most important asset that an organization has (Drucker, 1985) and the most significant economic resource. Due to this, efforts are being made to be able to determine how the organization can acquire it, represent it, retain it and manage it. In this study we are looking at what kind of managerial actions and behaviors are perceived as being supportive of knowledge sharing by the employees in an organization. This implying that the managers' role is important and can influence how effective the knowledge sharing climate is within the organization.

3.1 Knowledge management

Knowledge sharing has been considered the most important part of knowledge management. The ultimate goal of sharing employees' knowledge is its transfer to organizational assets and resources (Dawson, 2001).

Knowledge management is conceptualized as the process of capturing, disturbing and effectively using knowledge (Davenport, 1994). Though, there is no one definition that fits all. Knowledge management is also seen as a strategy to be cultivated in a firm, ensuring that knowledge will reach to the correct people at the appropriate time, and that they will disseminate and use the information to enhance the overall function of the organization (O'Dell and Grayson, 1998). Bounfour (2003) and Dow and Pallascke (2010) found that knowledge management constitute of the basis of companies' capabilities construction, underlying the performance of organizational and management processes. Even though there are some variations in the descriptions and definitions of knowledge management, a consensus seems to be that knowledge management is a set of processes that allow the use of knowledge as a main determinant to add and generate value for the firm (Bueno and Ordonez, 2004). Knowledge sharing is a critical step in knowledge management, due to enabling organizations to leverage their most valuable asset of employees sharing their knowledge with others (Wasko and Faraj, 2005).

Due to the potential benefits of knowledge sharing, many organizations have invested time and resources into knowledge management including knowledge management systems that use state of the art technology to facilitate the collection, storage, and distribution of knowledge (Wang and Noe, 2010). Carter and Scarbrough (2001) found that an important reason for the failure of knowledge management systems, to facilitate knowledge sharing is the lack of consideration of how the organizational and interpersonal context, as well as individual characteristics influences knowledge sharing.

3.2 Managerial Behaviors

How the leader behaves can affect how knowledge is managed in the organization. Different leadership styles and managerial behaviors can either help or weaken the organizational climate and willingness for knowledge sharing

among different hierarchical levels. Burns (1978) distinguishes between transactional and transformational leadership.

3.2.1 Transactional leadership

Transactional leaders motivates through different types of exchange, such as reward systems (Yang, 2006). This view of leadership has an emphasis on organizations being led from the top. Jay Conger (Beer et al., 2000) assumes that the top-led approach is not led only by the CEO, but also the team of senior executives. In addition, the members of the executive team are talented and sensitive to the changes unfolding in the world around them. This top-led view does not exclude the participation by the levels below.

3.2.2 Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders are paying great attention to being interactive with followers to create organizational collectivity. They want to understand the needs of people in the organization and aims to stimulate their followers to achieve organizational goals (Yang, 2006). In contrast to transactional leaders, this type of leadership is more flexible in their approach. This view of leadership has an emphasis on organizations being led by leaders having high participation and high involvement with the employees.

Warren Bennis (Beer et al., 2000) argues that organizations are becoming more complex, technologically sophisticated and knowledge intensive. Ron Heifetz (Beer et al., 2000) asserts that with relatively simple and technical problems, leadership is relatively easy and top-down leadership can solve these kinds of clear-cut problems. However, with more complex and adaptive problems, many stakeholders must be involved and mobilized.

3.2.3 Leadership style and knowledge sharing

Most research on leadership style as a predictor for knowledge sharing has focused on transformational leadership, because transformational leadership is expected to be a factor that can lead to higher knowledge sharing levels in organizations (Wang and Noe, 2010). It has been reported a direct and positive relationship between transformational leadership and knowledge sharing at the individual level (Chen and Barnes, 2006; Garcia-Morales et al., 2007). Li et al. (2014) found that transformational leadership was positively related to knowledge

sharing in addition to the individual level. According to Podsakoff et al. (1990), transformational leadership is comprised of six leader behaviors: Articulation a vision, providing an example, providing an appropriate model, accepting group goals, having high performance expectations and providing intellectual stimulation.

Quinn and McGrath (1985) describe eight leadership roles that are expected to support knowledge sharing on different degrees. This framework argue that leaders in an organization can play the roles of *monitor* (e.g. govern subordinated in accordance with organizational rules), *coordinator* (e.g. simplify routines and build up a good relationship with subordinates), *director* (e.g. clarify goals roles and future directions through plans, structures, instructions and practical solutions), *producer* (e.g. emphasize employee productivity and achievement through goals and assignments) *innovator* (e.g. absorb information and knowledge collected from the external environment), *broker* (e.g. focus on retention of external legitimacy and collection of external resources), *facilitator* (e.g. emphasize group harmony, consensus in interpersonal relationships and involvement of subordinates) and *mentor* (e.g. assist subordinates with empathy and consideration to develop job-related competencies) (Yang, 2006). These eight types of roles are either more transactional or transformational in their nature.

Proposition 1: *Innovator, facilitator and mentor roles contribute positively to perceived support for knowledge sharing by employees.*

4 How can managers facilitate knowledge sharing?

Knowledge sharing is something that needs to be facilitated for, and certain characteristics of knowledge sharing is important to understand in order to be able to utilize the resources within the firm. There are of course a lot of different factors that are important in regards of knowledge sharing. Due to scope of this paper, we will focus on different managerial behaviors and actions that can encourage and foster knowledge sharing in organizations.

4.1 Create willingness to share

4.1.1 *Voluntarism*

To have a good climate for knowledge sharing, one must have the element of voluntarism. This is based on the idea that the individuals in the organization share their knowledge, even when they are not demanded to do so. Reychav and Weibsborg (2009) demonstrated that people, who are willing to share their tacit knowledge to others, are more likely to share their explicit knowledge also. By encouraging people to share, one can create a more sharing- climate within the organization. This is important, because it is not ideal if employees *only* share their explicit, more formal knowledge, with each other. Therefore one may argue that there will be a difference if we share knowledge as part of the job, or if we share knowledge more based on it being a voluntary act. When being able to motivate for more voluntary acts of knowledge sharing, then the threshold for the more personal –natured tacit knowledge may become higher, due to more willingness to share. By breaching this threshold, one can make employees more willing to share their knowledge and expertise.

Proposition 2: If the manager is able to create an environment where employees feel willing to share knowledge, they will share more tacit knowledge with each other.

4.1.2 *Openness to experience*

Other factors that can contribute to the willingness to share are how open individuals in the organization, such as managers, are to new experiences. Cabrera et al. (2006) found this to be positively related to individuals self-report of knowledge exchange. This implicating that individuals high in openness to experience have a tendency to have a higher level of curiosity and will therefore seek others inputs. In an exchange of knowledge, this can help develop a reciprocal relationship and encouraging the employees to share, rather than to just share information in a unidirectional manner. Constant et al (1994) found that employees who have a higher level of education and longer work experience are more likely to share their expertise to novices who needs it in the organization, as well as having more positive attitudes towards sharing. It is not only the manager's openness that is important. Gupta, Iyer and Aronson (2000) argue that

if organizations have a culture high on openness with incentive themes that facilitate and integrate individual competences (e.g. skills, knowledge and experience) it will be easier transform this into organizational knowledge through learning, sharing and knowledge creating.

Proposition 3: *If the manager demonstrates openness to new experiences, it will increase perceived support for knowledge sharing in the organization by the employees.*

4.1.3 Emphasize on innovation and organizational learning

Nonaka et al. (1994) found that knowledge-creating activities can result in innovation, which is the key to survival for most organizations. Organizational learning is important in this context, and Goh (1998), Garvin (1993), and Senge (1990; 1992) have identified the ability to transfer knowledge quickly and effectively from one part of the organization to others as one of the attributes. Knowledge that is just a repository of information in a database or in someone's private knowledge domain cannot be used by an organization to learn (Goh, 2002).

Goh (2002) found that it is important that there is a strong culture of continuous improvement and learning, linking this to problem seeking and problem solving. The employees should be encouraged to gather relevant information, to use and share this information, and use this knowledge in problem solving and implementation of innovative solutions (Goh, 2002).

Proposition 4: *Managers who emphasize innovation and organizational learning are perceived as demonstrating supportive behavior that facilitates knowledge sharing in the eyes of the employees.*

4.2 Leadership commitment to knowledge sharing

4.2.1 Management commitment to facilitate for knowledge sharing

Martiny (1998) found that leadership commitment to knowledge sharing is a potential predictor for knowledge use in organizations. She argues that uncertainty about leadership commitment in regards of knowledge sharing is a key challenge. But it is also a question on what kind of approach you as a leader should take

when it comes to encouraging knowledge sharing among employees. In the end, the leaders approach (e.g. suggestions versus orders) is secondary to the employees when they make their final decision about whether or not to share their knowledge with others, but may have an influence because employees often want to please their superior (Davenport, 1994).

Lee et al. (2006) also found that what kind of commitment the top management displays to facilitate for knowledge sharing influenced both the level and the quality of knowledge sharing, as well as the employees' commitment to knowledge management. Kim and Lee (2006) found that knowledge sharing is facilitated by having a less centralized organizational structure, which can imply that relationships matter in regards of wanting to share knowledge or not. Creating a work environment that encourages interaction among employees (e.g. through the use of open workspace) (Jones, 2005), encouraging communication across departments and informal meeting (Liebowitz, 2003) among others, has been found to facilitate knowledge sharing, whilst organizational hierarchy, rank and seniority should be deemphasized.

4.2.2 Leaders actions and behaviors working as symbols

Whether or not the employees perceive their managers effort in regards of encouraging knowledge sharing as supporting of knowledge sharing, are not only influenced by the actions and behavior of the leader, but also what kind of signals the management and leader wants to send to the employees. Employees look at symbols (e.g. objects, acts, relationships) and form judgments about their managers' support for knowledge sharing (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). An example of this can be if the management spends a great amount of resources on either developing or purchasing knowledge sharing technology. In the eyes of the employees, this could work and be interpreted as a symbol for both the management commitment to knowledge sharing, and also a statement about what kind of climate one wants to nurture in the organization (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). But for this to create the ripple effect into the organization, the management and leader must be perceived as committed to implement it. Therefore how the manager's knowledge sharing intention are perceived by the employees and interpret, may influence future knowledge sharing behavior of the recipients (Bolino, 1999; Kelley 1967). If the managers' knowledge sharing efforts and

behaviors is attributed to politics or impression management motives, the employees will view this as less favorably and they are less likely to reciprocate knowledge (Casimir et al., 2012).

Proposition 5: How committed a manager is perceived to be by the employees in demonstrating and implementing knowledge sharing effort, affects the knowledge sharing climate in the organization.

4.2.3 Leader rewarding desired behavior

Incentives like recognition and reward are suggested as factors that can facilitate knowledge sharing and contribute as a sign of a supportive culture (Hansen, Nohria, & Tierney, 1999; Liebowitz, 2003; Nelson, Sabatier, & Nelson, 2006). There are mainly two types of rewards that are explored, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Sajeva, 2014). Examples of extrinsic rewards can be bonuses, commissions etc., whilst intrinsic rewards are psychological or internal rewards achieved directly from performing the task itself (Sajeva, 2014).

Kankanhalli et al. (2005) found that rewards such as bonus, higher salary and promotions were positively related to the frequency of knowledge contribution made to KMSs, especially when the employee identified with the organization. Researchers have also found that emphasize on performance-based pay systems had a positive contribution to knowledge sharing (Kim and Lee, 2006). Yao et al. (2007) found that the lack of incentives is a barrier to knowledge sharing. Not all rewards and incentives are positively related to knowledge sharing. Anticipated extrinsic rewards, for instance, has been found to have a negative effect on the attitudes toward knowledge sharing (Brock et al., 2005). Sajeva (2014) found that the intrinsic/psychological rewards like, sense of belonging, sharing common values, sense of achievement and success, sense of competence, sense of usefulness, sense of respect and recognition, and a sense of trust were important for fostering knowledge sharing among employees. The type of reward system also has an impact on knowledge sharing. A cooperative reward system has been found to have a positive effect on sharing knowledge, where as a competitive reward system had the opposite effect (Ferrin and Dirks, 2003).

For managers it can be vital to know what kind of actions and incentives they can instigate to encourage and create more sharing of knowledge in the organization. But as with a lot of the other predictors of knowledge sharing, other factors are also important, such as the trust dimension.

4.3 Trust as a cornerstone for knowledge sharing

In most organizations, the interpersonal relationships we have at work are important for the level of knowledge sharing. Trust is viewed by a lot of researcher as the basis of interpersonal relationships and a precondition for knowledge sharing, and is therefore important for the companies overall competitive advantage (Tan & Lim, 2008). Trust is the willingness of someone to be vulnerable to the action of others based on the expectation that the other will perform a certain action important to the trustee (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995).

4.3.1 Leader facilitating a trusting environment

One of the basic notions of trust is building upon people's willingness to be vulnerable to actions of others. This is in consensus with the idea of reciprocity, that one holds expectations that others will do something that benefits you if you have shared or helped them. Even though interpersonal trust in organizations is something that is dependent on many different factors, managers can still promote and facilitate for interpersonal trust and create a trusting environment in the organization.

Abrahams et al (2003) found a set of consistent set of actions and behaviors that they called *trust builders*, which managers can use to promote interpersonal trust in their organization. These trustworthy behaviors range from that you as a manager should engaging in collaborative communication, act with discretion and be consistent between word and deed, to other actions such as ensure that decisions are fair and transparent and that you ensure frequent and rich communication. Other more relational factors they argue works as trust builders, is the importance of creating personal connections and to give away something of value. This is possible if you disclose your expertise, as well as your limitations (Abrahams et al, 2003). All of these different behaviors are relying on some sort of interaction among the managers and employees, where the manager have to be

a part of the implication, demonstrate with own behavior and create a climate for trust in an organization. This important because according to Baker et al. (2006) individuals will still tend to share more knowledge when they see others as honest, fair and trustworthy, and by facilitating and encouraging this type of behavior, it can among other things, contribute to making knowledge exchange less costly (Abrahams et al, 2003).

Proposition 6: Leaders who are perceived as honest, fair and trustworthy will increase the perceived support for knowledge sharing in the organization.

4.3.2 Facilitating for both explicit and tacit knowledge sharing

Different levels of trust is likely to impact how knowledge is shared, regardless of knowledge types (e.g. tacit or explicit), but one can still consider how trust affects the different forms of knowledge. As mentioned previously, as a manager it is important to encourage sharing of both explicit and tacit knowledge. As explicit knowledge is considered less personal and often backed up by formal language and academia, it is often considered that trust plays a lesser role for this type of knowledge. This is contrast to tacit knowledge, which is considered more personal and relies much more on interpersonal relationships and communication. Because tacit knowledge can not be codified or supported by any formal language or academic data, we need to trust that the other individual we share knowledge with cares about our wellbeing (e.g. benevolence trust) and also have the expertise that is needed and trust our competency (e.g. competency trust)(Abrahams et al, 2003). Therefore, tacit knowledge is more sensitive to the quality of the interpersonal relation.

Proposition 7: If the leader fosters good interpersonal relations with employees, their perceived support for sharing tacit knowledge will increase.

The manager can assist and encourage the employees to become conscious of their tacit knowledge and facilitate for knowledge sharing between participants to create a knowledge interflow. This will enable employees to enhance their competency and create new knowledge (Sveiby, 2001). If the manager is able to create a platform for sharing of both tacit and explicit knowledge, the social

capital becomes stronger, as the ones who share their knowledge gets an opportunity to refine it, and the recipients are able to learn.

4.4 The Leader as a role model

All of the different factors above are things that could be important for a manager to be aware of if wanting to create, nurture and facilitate for increased knowledge sharing activities in the organization. What we can review from the literature is that the field of knowledge sharing is wide, with a lot of different predictors for what can influence knowledge sharing. But as we focus on what kind of activities and behaviors managers can implement, we find it important to focus on creating a willingness to share within the organization, which can be hard if you don't have interpersonal trust. The leaders might work as a symbol of their own, therefore the leaders are often perceived as role models. If the managers are early on with adaptation and implementation of the things perceived as supporting for knowledge sharing by the employees, it might increase the willingness to share. So even though knowledge is something employees can choose to share, it is important to encourage and be part of the knowledge sharing process as a manager, and facilitate the platform for sharing in the best possible way.

4.5 The importance of knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing is according to Jackson et al (2006) “... *the fundamental means through which employees can contribute to knowledge application, innovation, and ultimately the competitive advantage of the organization*”. It is also positively related to reduction in production cost, team performance and performance (Abrams et al. 2003). By having a good knowledge sharing culture in the organization, the knowledge sharing between employees, and within and across teams, will be more effective and allow for capitalization of knowledge-based resources (Wang & Noe, 2010). Individuals that share their knowledge with each other are drivers in the knowledge-creating company (Nonaka, 1994).

In this study we are, as previously mentioned, interested in looking at what kind of actions and behavior that the employees perceive as being supportive for knowledge sharing, and view this as interesting due to knowledge about how important employees perception about management can be necessary for the

creation and maintenance of a positive knowledge sharing culture in an organization (Wang & Noe, 2010).

5 Research Method

Within the organizational studies, there has been an increase of interest in the use of qualitative techniques (Benbasat et al., 1987). A qualitative approach has been chosen to test our research question and propositions. There are several qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews, observations, and focus groups. We will focus on in-depth interviews as our aim is to get an in-depth understanding on which managerial behaviors and actions that is facilitating knowledge sharing and being perceived as supportive of knowledge sharing. In-depth interviews are designed to obtain an in depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, feeling and knowledge (Patton, 2002). It involves the posing of open-ended questions and follow-up probes designed to achieve an in-depth understanding of the participant (Patton, 2002). In-depth investigative methods are suggested to be used for discovering the nuances of knowledge sharing processes, as these studies being able to identify factors that facilitate and inhibit knowledge sharing within the contexts chosen for the study (Ipe, 2003).

5.1 Literature review and interviews

In the literature review, relevant literature within the fields knowledge sharing, knowledge management, managerial behaviors and actions, and behaviors related to facilitation of knowledge sharing have been elaborated. This theory has served as the foundation for developing the propositions, and will further be used when explaining the results of our analysis. In addition, the gathered literature will form the basis of the interview guide. The interviews are thought to be semi-structured with open-ended question in order to explore the research question in depth. As an initial phase, we will begin with pre-interviews to determine if the interview-guide is suitable in addition to get an increased understanding of the context. If necessary, we will make adjustments to the interview-guide before conducting more interviews.

5.2 Unit of analysis

An individual, a team, an organization, a relationship, a community may all be the unit of analysis. Our intention for this research is to investigate how the

employees in two different departments in the same organization perceive their manager's behaviors and actions in relation to facilitating knowledge sharing and make a comparative analysis based on the selection from these two departments.

5.3 *Context of the study*

The context of our study will be the Norwegian Business Sector. The organization must be large enough to have separate departments within the organization. Ideally, the organizations different departments have different organizational cultures and the managers have different managerial behaviors.

Thesis Progression Plan

See appendix 1

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Appendix 1: Thesis progression plan

Month	Activity
January	Preliminary thesis report and finding an organization to cooperate with
February	Developing an interview guide
March	Conducting pre-interviews and adjusting the interview guide. Beginning the data collecting
April	Conducting interviews and finishing data-collection. Begin analysis if time.
May	Analyzing data and interpreting the results.
June	Finish writing the thesis and final touches.