Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Emma Behm

Cross-border post-merger integration and employee well-being

Case: A Finnish multinational company

School of Management
Master's thesis in international
business

Vaasa 2025

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA			
School of Management			
Author:	Emma Behm		
Title of the thesis:	Cross-border post-merger integration and employee well-being: Case: A Finnish multinational company		
Degree:	Master’s degree in international business		
Supervisor:	William Degbey		
Year:	2025	**Pages:**	82

ABSTRACT:

Mergers and acquisitions (M&As), especially in cross-border setting, have been growing in number. During the latest decades, many companies strive to expand their operations through acquiring or merging with their competitors. M&As have received an increased amount of interest among researchers. However, little is known about the connection between cross-border post-merger integration processes and employee well-being. During M&A processes, employee well-being is often overlooked, as process-related issues, such as gaining synergistic advantages, tend to be the primary focus of M&As. Maintaining employee well-being during cross-border post-merger integration (PMI) must be studied more to learn how to prevent the well-being of employees from deteriorating during PMI. This thesis is focused on how to carry out cross-border PMI to ensure employee well-being. The main goal is to discover the factors that cause deterioration in employee well-being and about the factors that support employee well-being during cross-border PMI processes. The subject of the study is a Finnish multinational company that recently carried out cross-border PMI. The purpose is to discover how this specific case company should carry out PMI to ensure the well-being of its employees. To provide solutions, integration matrix, task and human integration theory and JD-R Model are utilized as the theoretical framework for the thesis. The research findings emphasize the importance of planning the PMI, finding a balance between job resources and demands as well as task and human integration processes during post-merger integration. The case company’s PMI was characterized by high job demands, including excessive workload, ambiguity, and poor leadership, as well as a scarcity of formal resources. Team support appeared to be the primary buffer for eliminating the negative effects of job demands during the case company’s PMI. The case company achieved a partial success through successful task integration. To ensure complete success, the thesis suggests investing in planning, strong leadership and communication, as well as hiring more employees to decrease the workload of the employees. Hence, more balanced and correctly targeted combinations of job resources and demands, as well as task and human integration are needed.

KEYWORDS: International business, cross-border, post-merger integration, mergers and acquisitions

VAASAN YLIOPISTO
Johtamisen akateeminen yksikkö
Tekijä: Emma Behm
Tutkielman nimi: Cross-border post-merger integration and employee well-being: Case: A Finnish multinational company
Tutkinto: Kauppatieteiden maisteri
Työn ohjaaja: William Degbey
Valmistumisvuosi: 2025 **Sivumäärä:** 82

TIIVISTELMÄ:

Viime vuosikymmeninä yhä useammat organisaatiot ovat pyrkineet laajentamaan toimintaansa ostamalla kilpailijoitaan tai fuusioitumalla niiden kanssa. Rajat ylittävien yritysostojen ja fuusioiden suosio on ollut kasvussa, ja konsepti on herättänyt yhä enenevissä määrin kiinnostusta myös tutkijoiden keskuudessa. Kansainvälisessä ympäristössä tapahtuvien yritysostojen ja fuusioiden jälkeisten integraatioprosessien ja työntekijöiden hyvinvoinnin välisestä yhteydestä tiedetään kuitenkin vähän. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset kuitenkin osoittavat, että usein tämänkaltaisten tapahtumaketjujen aikana työntekijöiden hyvinvointiin kiinnitetään usein huomattavasti vähemmän huomiota kuin asioiden integraatioprosesseihin. Ostojen ja fuusioiden ensisijainen tavoite on saavuttaa liiketoiminnallisia hyötyjä, kuten synergiaetuja, minkä vuoksi hyötyjen saavuttamiseen kiinnitetään usein enemmän huomiota kuin muihin osa-alueisiin. Jotta työntekijöiden hyvinvoinnin heikkenemistä näiden prosessien aikana voitaisiin oppia paremmin ehkäisemään, työntekijöiden hyvinvointia ylläpitäviä ja heikentäviä seikkoja on tutkittava lisää tässä asiayhteydessä. Tämä opinnäytetyö tutkiikin sitä, kuinka kansainvälisiä yritysostoja ja fuusioita voidaan toteuttaa niin, että työntekijöiden hyvinvointi mahdollistetaan. Tavoitteena on selvittää ne tekijät, jotka heikentävät työntekijöiden hyvinvointia, sekä tunnistaa ne, jotka tukevat sitä yritysostojen tai fuusioiden aikana. Tutkimuksen kohteena on suomalainen monikansallinen yritys, joka on hiljattain saanut vietyä kansainvälisen fuusion jälkeisen integraatioprosessin päätökseen. Tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten tämän tietyn tapausyrityksen tulisi toteuttaa tämänkaltaisia prosesseja työntekijöidensä hyvinvoinnin varmistamiseksi. Ratkaisujen löytämiseksi opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu integraatiomatriisista, tehtävien ja ihmisten integraatioteoriasta, sekä JD-R-mallista. Tutkimustulokset korostavat integraatioprosessien huolellisen suunnittelun merkitystä, tasapainon löytämistä työn resurssien ja vaatimusten sekä tehtävien ja ihmisten integroimisen välille näissä prosesseissa. Tapausyrityksen integraatioprosessille oli ominaista korkeat työvaatimukset, mukaan lukien liiallinen työmäärä, epäselvyys ja heikko johtaminen, sekä virallisten resurssien niukkuus. Tiimin tuki näytti olevan ensisijainen puskuri työvaatimusten negatiivisia vaikutuksia vastaan tapausyrityksen integraatioprosessin aikana. Tapausyritys onnistui kuitenkin viemään integraatioprosessin loppuun onnistuneen tehtävien integroinnin avulla. Kokonaisvaltaisemman integraation onnistumisen saavuttamiseksi opinnäytetyössä ehdotetaan investointeja suunnitteluun, johtajuuteen, viestintään sekä työntekijöiden palkkaamiseen työntekijöiden työmäärän vähentämiseksi. Oikein kohdennetut ja tasapainotetut työn resurssit ja vaatimukset sekä tehtävien ja ihmisten integroiminen mahdollistavat integraatioprosessin onnistumisen ja työntekijöiden hyvinvoinnin prosessin aikana.

KEYWORDS: International business, cross-border, post-merger integration, mergers and acquisitions

Contents

Figures

Tables

Abbreviations

M&A=Merger and Acquisition

PMI=Post-Merger Integration

JD-R Model=Job Demands-Resources Model

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Statista's most recent statistic (2023) shows that the number of cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&A) deals has increased remarkably since 1985. Since the year 2000, companies worldwide have spent over 57 trillion USD in M&A (IMAA, 2021). The number of deals made in 1985 was 472 and in 2021 13,783 (Statista, 2023). The growing number of cross-border M&A deals is a positive sign in terms of representing global economic growth and internationalization. However, the rising trend of internationalization and cross-border M&As have also brought light to some concerning aspects related to human resource management. According to Zahoor et al. (2022), academic discussions suggest that cross-border M&As tend to be unsuccessful rather frequently, meaning that around 50 to 80 percent of all M&As underperform. M&As are inherently complex processes, and the employee perspective is often disregarded during post-merger integration (PMI), as the primary focus tends to be on integrating organizational systems and capabilities, in other words, task integration. However, according to multiple studies (see Kummer, 2008; Zahoor et al., 2022), the key factor that determines the success or failure of M&As is people related.

Since the 1990s, burnout has developed into a significant problem in the majority of Western countries (Bakker & Demerouti, 2016). Grawitch et al. (2007, p. 275) discuss deteriorated work well-being in their article, as well, referring to a study cited by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, 2006), which discovered that 40 percent of working people experience their jobs as very or extremely stressful. According to the same study, more than 26 percent of working people experience symptoms of burnout at work.

Throughout the history of workplace well-being, research about the topic has been carried out extensively. Numerous recent studies (see Dewe & Cooper, 2012; Hone et al., 2015; Canaff & Wright, 2004; Day & Randell, 2014) indicate that employee well-being significantly impacts the success of organizations and individuals. Employee well-being is beneficial for companies (see Huang & Wright, 2012; Parzefall & Huhtala, 2007). It is not only a critical aspect of ethical and responsible business but also a key factor in achieving success. Throughout the history of workplace well-being, the topic has been the subject of considerable research. Numerous recent studies (Dewe & Cooper, 2012; Hone et al., 2015; Canaff & Wright, 2004; Day & Randell, 2014) indicate that employee well-being significantly impacts the success of organizations and individuals. Huhtala and Parzefall (2007) suggest that when employees face overwhelming demands at work, they are likely to experience symptoms of occupational stress and burnout which prevent innovativeness. Moreover, stress and burnout can become costly. On average, occupational stress costs companies around 300 billion USD annually through health care visits, absences, and weakened productivity (The American Institute of Stress, 2025). In conclusion, reducing occupational stress is expected to lead to both cost reductions and revenue growth.

Currently there are two simultaneously occurring concepts in the Western world, which are the growing number of work-related health issues and cross-border M&A projects where the focus has frequently been shown to be on task integration. Although employee well-being and M&As have been studied extensively, employee well-being continues to be overlooked in many cross-border M&A projects. Moreover, this thesis focuses on a case company and aims to explore how PMI should be executed to ensure the well-being of employees of the case company. The company has recently initiated an integration project to merge the financial management processes of its three subsidiary companies into a single unified service center, which is managed by the parent company in Finland. The purpose is to discover how this Finnish multinational company should approach cross-border PMI to protect the well-being of its employees and to discover what aspects of the project affected the well-being of the company's employees and how.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

The purpose of the study is to gain insight into how cross-border PMI should be carried out to protect the well-being of employees of the case company. Hence, the main research question of the thesis is :

> *''How can the multinational case company undertake cross-border PMI to ensure the well-being of its employees ?''*

The potential factors that disrupt and contribute to employee well-being during the PMI processes must be identified to understand how PMI should be carried out. Therefore, the supportive research questions are :

1. *How do the demands affect the well-being of employees during cross-border PMI?*
2. *How are the resources arranged to ensure the well-being of employees during cross-border PMI?*

The main objectives of the thesis are to explore how the well-being of employees was preserved during the cross-border integration in case company, and what happened during the cross-border integration that affected the well-being of employees.

1.3 Definition of key concepts

Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A):
M&As are often referred to as synonyms. They are often discussed together, although they represent slightly different chains of events (Giddy, 2009). Rao (2021) defines a merger as combining the processes of two organizations, indicating that the two entities unite to form a single entity. Whitaker (2012) describes an acquisition as the purchase of a target firm by an acquirer. Both processes lead to the aftermath of PMI.

Post-merger integration (PMI):

Following the establishment of the new entity, employees must adapt to new strategies, systems, and procedures that are implemented within the unified entity (Zahoor et al., 2022). Bodner and Capron (2018, p. 2) define PMI as ''*the process that unfolds in the aftermath of the deal closure to reconfigure merging firms by redeploying, adding, or divesting resources, lines of products or entire businesses, to achieve the expected combination benefits.*'' The process encompasses the operations involved in merging and reorganizing businesses, which take place immediately after the initial decision to merge. It is a process of merging or integrating the systems and processes of two or more organizations.

1.4 Delimitations of the study

The thesis does not encompass all literature about cross-border M&As but instead commits to focusing on the PMI perspective. This study focuses on employee well-being specifically during the PMI stage and does not take other M&A related issues into careful consideration.

The data is collected from the case company's employees working in accounts payable team in Finland. The list of employees that are to be interviewed is provided by the company. The subjects of this study participated to the PMI project and took the majority of the responsibilities of the three subsidiary companies overseas, whose processes were acquired by the parent company in Finland. The study does not take the Swedish and Danish employees into consideration. Therefore, the results of the study provide views representing the Finnish employees' well-being during the PMI. The company remains anonymous in the study as the integration phase is still ongoing and any formal statements by the company about the project have not been released to the public yet.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The subsequent section presents the theoretical background of the thesis, which outlines the theoretical framework and introduces the most relevant theories related to the key concepts of the thesis. The theoretical section is followed by a description of the research methodology. The subsequent sections present the results and their analysis. Finally, the thesis discusses the key findings, along with conclusions and suggestions for future research.

2 Theoretical background: employee well-being in a cross-border PMI context

To provide solutions to the research questions about employee well-being in a cross-border PMI context, the theoretical section introduces the most relevant theories. Concepts of PMI, cross-border M&As, employee well-being and Job Demands–Resources Model are introduced in the following paragraphs.

2.1 Mergers and acquisitions (M&A)

2.1.1 M&A in general and cross-border M&A

Although mergers and acquisitions are distinct processes, they are often used interchangeably in the literature, as both involve an integration phase in which the new entity must adapt to the changes. Many of the matters that occur throughout the processes are similar between mergers and acquisitions. They are, however, different concepts.

A merger's processes involve integrating the operations and structures of two organizations (Rao, 2021). The main objective of a merger is to unite separate organizations and form a single entity (Rao, 2021). An acquisition, on the other hand, takes place when an acquiring firm purchases a target firm and takes control over its operations and processes (Whitaker, 2012). When either of these distinct processes occur in an international setting, indicating that a company aims to merge or acquire another company overseas, cross-border M&A takes place. While the core principles of M&As remain consistent in both domestic and cross-border contexts, the international aspect introduces additional challenges. Companies that undertake cross-border M&As must consider factors such as cultural, linguistic, and legal differences, which add to the already complex nature (Zahoor et al., 2022) of the process. As a result of cross-border M&As, the management of assets and activities can be transferred to a company overseas, meaning that the company operating overseas may take control of the other company’s operations (Chen & Findlay, 2022).

2.1.2 Cross-border M&A motives, success and failure factors

Bodner and Capron (2018) indicate that the motives behind M&As are related to achieving combination benefits through rearranging, adding or divesting resources. M&A processes enable enhancing productivity levels when both acquired and existing resources are redistributed in accordance with where and which resources are considered necessary. Cross-border M&As are executed to achieve both domestic access overseas as well as resources (Shimizu et al., 2004), such as technology, intellectual property (e.g., patents, trademarks), human capital, natural resources or branding, for example. Through domestic access overseas, M&As provide access to foreign markets, allowing companies to establish a presence in a particular region through the target company, expand their operations internationally, and reach new customers. However, as lucrative and intriguing as M&As may sound to companies, they are very complex. As stated in the introduction section, many of them fail. Zahoor et al. (2022) claim that organizational behavior and people management issues are considered as the main cause for the number of unsuccessful M&As. On a more general level, Kummer (2008) states that the most important success or failure factors of M&As are related to people, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Communication significantly impacts the success of M&As: Angwin and Meadows (2009) highlight the importance of communication and state that communication is often referred to as the most critical success factors of M&As. Unfortunately, most M&As report poor communication as one of the most considerable issues during the process (Whitaker, 2012). Whitaker encourages M&A participants to communicate everything five times or more, emphasizing the importance of communication and recommending overcommunication during M&As. Employees utilizing a variety of communicative means have been shown to have a positive effect on the performance of M&As (Reus & Lamont, 2009). It is widely recognized that communication that is timely, purposeful, and engaging, significantly supports the integration phase, whereas bad communication can cause multiple issues, such as knowledge transfer barriers, disrupting the process (Angwin & Meadows, 2009). Jackson et al. (2003) state that even maintaining key talent within the firm begins with communication. Cartwright and Cooper (1993) argue that employee uncertainty and resistance can be significantly reduced through transparent communication during M&A.

Strong leadership has been shown to be essential in overcoming challenges and ensuring that organizational culture and business practices align smoothly during M&A. For example, Asdar (2023) states that through strong leadership and communication, employee expectations are managed, and organizational objectives aligned during the change. To be able to execute and lead the change that occurs in the integration phase, planning is a key factor leading to success. Moreover, regarding change and leadership, according to Angwin (2020), researchers agree that leaders (e.g., CEOs) who are selected from outside of the organization, the *Outsider*s, are often linked to more radical and analytical change compared to *Insider*s who undertake more subtle changes in the organization. The type of leadership that is considered desirable is not unambiguous, though. In some situations, it is necessary to make more fast-paced and radical decisions and vice versa – Angwin and Meadows (2009) suggest that successful selection of leaders should be carried out based on the planned integration type.

According to Cartwright and Cooper (1996), successful cross-border M&As concentrate on cultural compatibility and the adaptation of company practices to unify the norms and values of the organizations. They highlight that paying attention to culture is essential to successful M&A. Cross-border M&As, in particular, are complex, multidimensional processes that include a variety of different challenges and opportunities faced by leadership. Cross-border M&As require the integration of operations and employees from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which adds more challenges to the already complex and emotionally charged process. Cultural differences exist at different levels of organizations, and they have the ability to cause M&A to fail through operational and strategic conflicts (see Angwin & Meadows, 2009; Weber et al., 1996). Degbey (2016) highlights that cultural issues are among the primary challenges of the aftermath of M&As, particularly in cross-border context. Managing cultural differences may become complicated when two or more organizations integrate, as the cultural differences may become multi-layered (Angwin & Meadows, 2009).

The aforementioned success and failure factors mostly occur in the PMI phase of M&As. According to Shimizu et al. (2004), the aftermath of the initial decision to merge or acquire – the PMI phase, is considered by scholars and practitioners as the most critical stage in the process. Similarly, Bodner and Capron (2018) argue that both practitioners and academic literature regard PMI phase as a critical factor in achieving a successful merger or acquisition. Also El Zuhairy et al. (2015) state the following:

> *''research confirms that the integration and implementation stage (post-M&A) has a major impact on the success or failure of a merger or acquisition. Therefore it has become increasingly important to explore the post-M&A phase further in order to support the management teams of organizations pursuing a merger or acquisition in meeting all their desired objectives.''* (p. 1)

PMI has received increased attention in academic literature due to its critical role in the M&A process.

2.1.3 Post-merger integration (PMI)

PMI represents the integration and integration phase of M&As (Shimizu et al., 2004). The integration phase may take place within the scope of the target (e.g., new subsidiary), in the pre-existing organizations or in a recently established business unit (Bodner & Capron, 2018). The motive behind PMI is often related to the desire to enhance effectiveness, productivity, and harmony within a company (see Chen & Findlay, 2022; Giddy, 2009), as well as growth (see Bodner & Capron, 2018; Atabey, 2023). PMI creates processes where the operations of the previous structures are combined into one. Combining the structures of two or more organizations impacts various structures of the organization, including e.g., individuals, their roles and assignments, finances, and other resources.

The essential PMI decisions are related to merging resources and merging structures (Bodner & Capron, 2018). The resource aspect addresses which resources should be integrated during the integration process to achieve synergistic advantage, focusing on the decisions firms make about the integration of resources, such as operational divisions or product categories (Bodner & Capron, 2018). The structure aspect examines the level of structural integration required to achieve the optimal level of integration in terms of strategic principles of the firm (Degbey, 2016), which revolves around the question of which extent the operations should be integrated (Bodner & Capron, 2018). Bodner and Capron (2018) state that extensive integration of the target firm may result in a loss of autonomy, leading to disrupting the target firm's innovation capabilities, as well as employee retention and motivation. Similarly, Degbey (2016) states that complete integration is not desirable for all mergers. Whitaker (2012) also describes integrations as disruptive and states that integrations should be expected to disrupt operations and complicate the continuity of business, highlighting the importance of planning the integration before the integration stage.

2.1.4 Post-merger integration (PMI) and frameworks

According to Bodner and Capron (2018), early iterations of PMI were based on the belief that as a result of the integration process, one of the merging parties must disappear and fully embed into the acquiring company. In 1991, Haspeslagh and Jemison introduced a transformative theory about different models of PMI and challenged the previous perceptions related to the topic. Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) created the integration matrix, which introduces four different types of PMI, that are categorized by the degree of strategic interdependence and need for organizational autonomy of the acquired company. Bodner and Capron (2018) state that Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) formulated the integration matrix based on the thought that the purpose of PMI process is to discover the most effective way of utilizing the combined resources of the merged organizations. In Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) approach to PMI, the ideal operating method is found by balancing the strategic need for capability transfer between the merging firms and the organizational needs of the target company (Bodner & Capron, 2018). Value creation in PMI results from the effective transfer of core competencies which should enhance the competitive advantage of one or both companies (Haspeslagh & Farquhar, 1994). Consequently, the choice among the four different types of PMI depends on the need for strategic interdependence between the merging firms and the target firm's requirement for autonomy to function most effectively. The four types of PMI according to Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) are preservation, holding, symbiosis and absorption (see Figure 1).

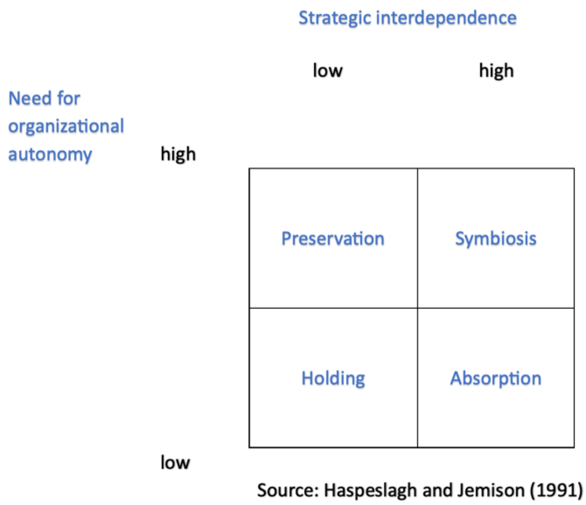

Figure 1. Integration matrix (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991, p. 145)

According to Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991), through preservation, the operations of the acquired organization are not fully integrated into the acquiring organization. They state that in this PMI type, the acquired organization remains autonomous – However, some of the structures of the acquired organization may be integrated such as the financial reporting along with other financial processes. According to Angwin (2020), the purpose of preservation is to ensure that the existing operations of the acquired company are protected to maintain the continuity of operations and to learn from the acquired company, which may in some cases become difficult due to different cultures and organizational structures. Holding, on the other hand, represents a PMI type where acquired organization is owned by the acquiring organization, but the operations are not integrated to the acquiring organization (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). The operations of the acquired organization remain as they were prior to the acquisition (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). Holding requires low need for organizational autonomy and low strategic interdependence. From one end of the spectrum to the other, in symbiosis, the goals and motives of the PMI define where integration is required (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991), as the integration type represents high strategic interdependence (Angwin, 2020). The decisions to integrate operations are made based on what fulfils the purpose of the integration (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). The purpose is to create synergy gain between the integrating companies while maintaining high autonomy to preserve the operations of the target company (Angwin, 2020). Companies collaborate to improve their ways of working and aim to discover new ways of functioning which means that changes may happen slowly and subtly (Angwin, 2020). Lastly, through absorption, which includes high strategic interdependence but low need for organizational autonomy, the acquired organization is completely merged with the acquiring organization (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). In this PMI type with high strategic interdependence, all processes of the acquired organization are integrated into the acquiring organization such as personnel, assets, resources, and logistics (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991), leaving little autonomy for the acquired company. The purpose is to become more efficient through eliminating duplications in operations (Angwin, 2020). Acccording to Angwin (2020), acknowledging the different integration strategies enables acquirers to connect their preacquisition strategy with a suitable PMI strategy. Being aware of the PMI type supports planning the integration process, which again helps setting achievable and logical goals and communicating the process to employees so that the employees know what to do and expect.

Another notable study related to PMI by Birkinshaw et al. (2002) distinguish two major perspectives in PMI processes, which are the task and human perspectives. Task perspective, or process perspective, aims to focus on value creation which is carried out through task integration (Birkinshaw et al., 2002). Task integration is viewed as the main purpose of the acquisition, meaning the transfer of capabilities and resource sharing between the acquiring and acquired company. Human perspective, or organizational behavior perspective, on the other hand, concentrates on enhancing employee satisfaction and establishing a shared identity among the employees from the acquiring and acquired company, during the acquisition process (Birkinshaw et al., 2002). Individuals, their well-being, and a unified corporate culture are seen as important attributes in organizational behavior perspective. Birkinshaw et al. (2002) acknowledge that although human and task perspectives are very different approaches, they cannot be completely distinguished from one another as they are interactive, as Figure 2 shows – for example human integration has the potential to make resource sharing more effortless.

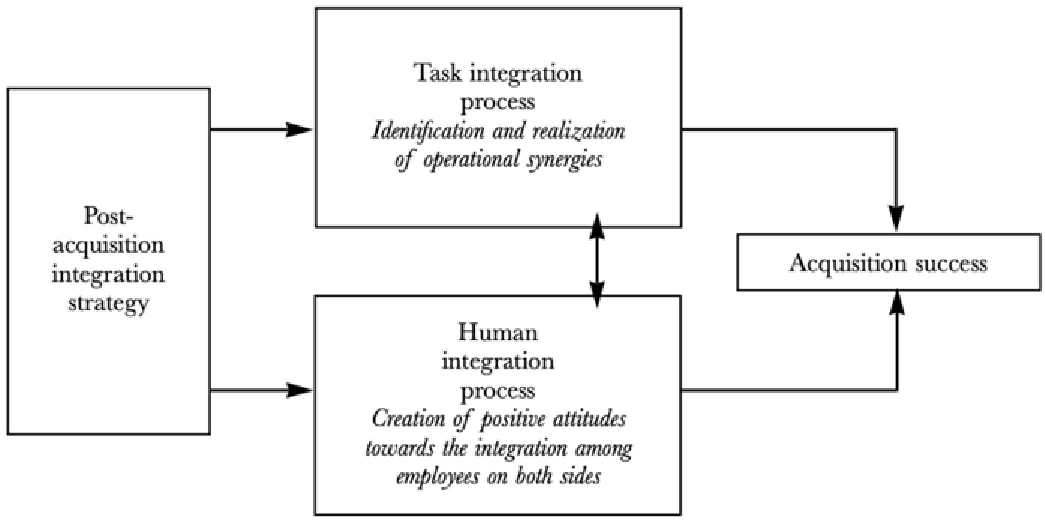

Figure 2. Framework for integration management by Birkinshaw et al. (2002, p. 400):

Birkinshaw et al. (2002) highlight that during the integration process both task and human perspectives do not necessarily receive equally as much attention in relation to one another. They state that this imbalance caused by focusing more on either dimension may result in negative effects on the end result of the acquisition project, as portrayed in Figure 3 – Focusing more on human integration, for instance, can potentially lead to happy employees with the cost of lacking skills and resources needed to perform well in the new unified entity. Therefore, a balance between the two perspectives should be found to carry out successful acquisition integration.

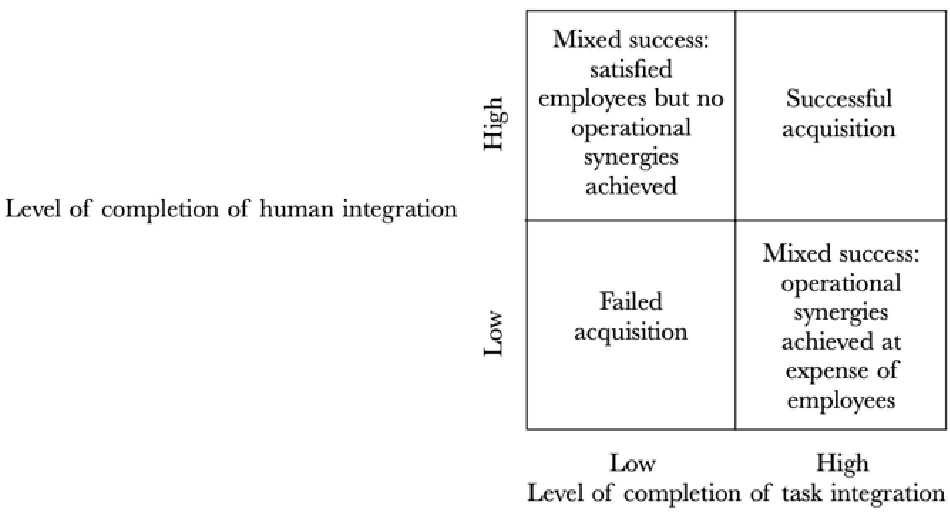

Figure 3. Impact of task and human integration processes on acquisition outcome by Birkinshaw et al. (2002, p. 399)

Birkinshaw et al. (2002) state that it can be too commonly seen in acquisition projects that the human perspective is neglected by leaders, who are focusing more on the task integration processes, such as transferring capabilities. Similarly, El Zuhairy et al. (2015) argue that the reason some mergers manage to succeed while others do not often lies in how well managers consider the company's human capital throughout the process. They state that managers have a tendency to neglect the fact that integration processes involve more than merely acquiring assets, capital, and equipment. In addition, they argue that successful acquisitions require acknowledging the importance of human resources, which include corporate structure, management styles, employee expectations, and policies. Merely the process of adapting to new strategies, structures, and processes can influence the emotions of employees of both companies (Zahoor et al., 2022). Birkinshaw et al. (2002) acknowledge that managing these different perspectives of integration require different management operations, which is why it is not surprising to see managers often focusing more on one perspective along with the tasks that they have been given, while neglecting the other perspective and the bigger picture. Birkinshaw et al. (2002, p. 398) state the following, referring to multiple studies: *''Long-term success, it is argued, can only be achieved through process management, effective communication and sensitivity to the concerns and expectations of individuals on both sides of the acquisition.''* This statement, supported by multiple studies, indicates that both task and human integration should be carefully considered to achieve long-term success through PMI.

2.2 Employee well-being

2.2.1 Definition

Well-being is a well-studied, multifaceted concept that still lacks an unambiguous definition (Forgeard et al., 2011). It consists of an individual's psychological, social, emotional, and physical conditions. The definitions in existing literature often encompass overall life satisfaction or happiness, including aspects such as sound physical and mental health, a sense of purpose and the ability to manage stress (see Davis, 2024; Khatri & Gupta, 2019). Existing literature (see Juniper, 2011; Keeman, et al. 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Warr, 1994) often recognizes the connection between the perception of the individual and well-being when discussing and defining the concept. For example, Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that well-being consists of emotional experiences, personal functioning, and the individual's evaluative standards. According to Hati and Pradhan (2021, p. 381), employee well-being is most frequently defined as *''employees' total well-being that they perceive to be determined primarily by work and can be influenced by workplace interventions.''* Key antecedents, consequences and theoretical frameworks of employee well-being are discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.2.2 Antecedents, consequences, and theoretical frameworks

Academic literature often mentions job design as a key antecedent of employee well-being. According to Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) Job Demands-Resources Model (Figure 4), there is a relationship between job design and job satisfaction. The model is based on the assumption that although all professions have their own specific risk factors for work stress, all work-related characteristics can be categorized into two general categories, which are job demands and job resources. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007) :

> *''Job demands refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs.''* (p. 312)

Emotionally challenging social interactions, a high work pressure, and poor physical working conditions are examples of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources, on the other hand, are defined by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) in the following manner:

> *''Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are either/or:*
>
> - *Functional in achieving work goals.*
> - *Reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs.*
> - *Stimulate personal growth, learning, and development.''* (p. 312)

Autonomy and support are examples of job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

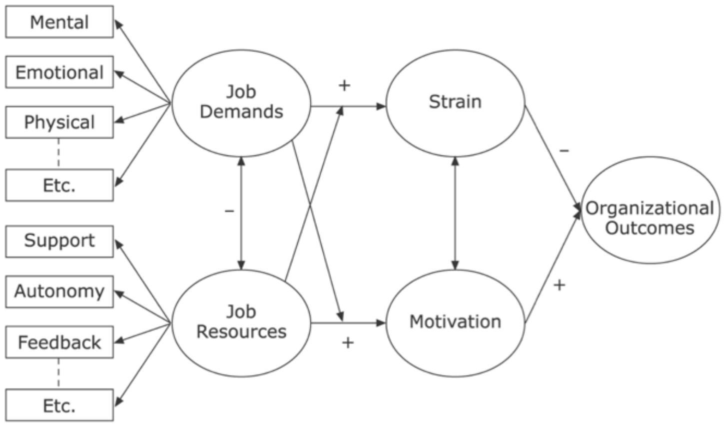

Figure 4. The Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 313)

The JD-R model is applicable to different work environments regardless of the kinds of demands and resources they have (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The JD-R Model assumes that job strain develops when job demands are high and job resources are limited (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Conversely, work engagement often peaks when job resources are available, even when high job demands are experienced at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Bakker and Demerouti’s (2007) model proposes that job resources alleviate the effect of job demands on job strain, contributing to employee well-being. Therefore, work engagement often peaks when job resources are available, even when high job demands are experienced at work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Bakker and Demerouti (2007) introduce a study by Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) which studies the relationship between job demands and job resources in the working life of home care employees. The study found that even after continuously interacting with demanding clients, the employees did not show signs of exhaustion or pessimism when they had access to required and sufficient resources. Job resources seem to notably impact motivation, especially under conditions of elevated job demands: When employees work in a highly demanding environment but are provided with a lot of resources, they are able to challenge themselves, becoming more motivated to learn new ways of going about things, which further contributes to personal development and growth (Bakker & Demerouti (2016).

Motivation, which is the consequence of high-resource high-demand environments, enhances job performance, while job strain detracts from it (Bakker & Demerouti, 2016). Bakker and Demerouti (2016) state that motivation makes employees strive for goals and keep their focus on the assignments at work. Moreover, they claim that engaged employees hold the vitality and passion to prosper at work. On the contrary, they state that research has shown that employees who are exhausted or have other health-related issues do not have enough resources to achieve the desired goals, which potentially leads to deteriorated organizational outcomes. Bakker and Demerouti (2016) argue that the employees who experience strain, which is the consequence of low-resource high-demand environments, are inclined to show signs of self-undermining practices. Furthermore, undermining oneself results in increased job demands and subsequently elevates job strain. Bakker and Demerouti (2016) state that the impact of job demands go beyond experiencing strain – Stressed employees ''create more job demands over time'' (Bakker & Demerouti, 2016, p. 4). They say that exhausted employees show signs of weak communication, committing more errors, and generating additional conflicts.

The JD-R Model demonstrates that employee well-being is linked to having sufficient resources that are in balance with the workplace demands. When job demands and job resources are aligned, motivation and satisfaction at work increase. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), employee well-being is related to various positive organizational outcomes, such as increased productivity. Other studies agree: For example, Murtin et al. (2002) state that a balanced work environment, where job resources meet job demands is linked to better physical and mental health, higher job satisfaction and increased motivation among employees. Furthermore, Harter et al. (2002), state that satisfied employees show more commitment towards their job (Harter et al., 2002). They also find a significant connection between employee satisfaction and productivity. Moreover, a study by Fannin et al. (2024) show that employee well-being negatively correlates with absenteeism, indicating that healthier employees are less likely to be absent. Reducing absenteeism, employee turnover and healthcare visits through improved overall health reduces costs, therefore, bringing financial benefits to the company. Moreover, committed employees tend to speak positively about a company, making the company a desirable place to work at. Good reputation often leads to gaining access to the best employees, which builds competitive advantage.

2.2.3 Employee well-being in organizational change

All individuals in every company experience change as they exist in a world that is in continuous change – Changing supply, demand, and customer needs are examples of why organizational change is essential (Senior & Fleming, 2006). Different factors drive organizational change. The drivers of organizational change can be internal, such as leadership changes or company growth (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999), external, such as market competition or economic shifts (see Kotter, 1996; Burnes, 2017) and strategic, such as M&As or digital transformation (Buono & Bowditch, 2003). Change may occur organically, or it can be mechanically-driven. Organic change is gradual, it occurs naturally over time, and it is continuous (Weick & Quinn, 1999), whereas mechanically-driven (episodic) change is pushed through different stages (Buono & Bowditch, 2003). M&As are mechanically-driven, often top-down, rapid and externally imposed forms of change, which typically lack the gradual adaptation found in organic change (see Cartwright & Cooper, 1993; Buono & Bowditch, 2003; Weick & Quinn, 1999; Bordia et al., 2004).

Mechanically-driven change is likely to cause strain on employees as a result of multiple factors. Cartwright and Cooper (1993) state that M&As can negatively impact the well-being of employees through uncertainty and lack of control. Bordia et al. (2004) discuss uncertainty during organizational change and conclude that uncertainty and poor communication in change processes lead to psychological strain among employees. Employees may experience lack of control, as mechanically-driven change is often a top-down process where decisions come from top management. Additionally, as discussed earlier, M&As are often carried out to achieve structural efficiencies and therefore the focus of the change is more on the structures rather than employee well-being. This focus limitation may lead to reduced job satisfaction and engagement (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005).

The motives behind M&As can result in many transformational changes, such as changing working methods, reducing the number of employees or combining the team members from different units, which all may disrupt the employees' sense of stability and increase stress levels. Moreover, as mechanically-driven change often lacks gradual adaptation and includes intense and fast-paced processes, employees may become overwhelmed, increasing the risk of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Employees may also experience a loss of connection to their organization and sense of belonging (van Dick et al., 2006) because of changes in e.g., organizational culture and team dynamics. Especially in cross-border M&As, organizational culture may become a challenge.

Multi-cultural communication requires additional time and effort as misunderstandings are likely to occur and people attempt to mitigate or correct the potential harm resulting from them (Jackson et al., 2003), which may cause additional strain to individuals. This may lead to avoiding contact with dissimilar people, which leads to unresolved matters, which lead, ultimately, to stress. During cross-border M&As, cultural clashes are likely to occur as individuals find it challenging to adapt to one another's cultural differences (see Degbey, 2016; Malik et al., 2023). Cultural differences may result in conflicts regarding the manner of task completion or the appropriate, desired, and acceptable methods of communication in the workplace. Conflict can shatter opportunities and relationships as it hinders productivity, disturbs teamwork, and even has the potential to deteriorate the physical and mental health of employees (Coleman & Ferguson, 2014). Barkema et al. (1996) introduce the concept of double-layered acculturation, which refers to the process in which the integrating companies must manage both their own corporate cultures, as well as their national cultures. Furthermore, a study by Weber et al. (1996) found high acculturative stress to be a significant obstacle in integration during M&As, hindering and disrupting the process.

In general, during cross-border M&As, employees are likely to be faced with multiple different kinds of job demands in addition to job demands related to normal working conditions where change occurs naturally and over time. Cross-border M&As include job demands related to changes, which occur within a scheduled time frame. Moreover, different (organizational) cultures and languages add up onto the already rather challenging setup, making communication and working more demanding due to having different processes, norms, and ways of communicating, for example.

2.3 Theoretical framework for successful employee well-being in cross-border PMI

The theoretical framework (Figure 5) is a combination of three different theories. It is built around the framework for integration management by Birkinshaw et al. (2002, see Figure 2). The framework is based on the assumption by Birkinshaw et al. (2002) that M&A success is achieved through high human integration and high task integration (see Figure 3). The theoretical framework utilizes the integration matrix theory by Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991, see Figure 1) to discover the main characteristics of the PMI phase in the post-acquisition integration strategy phase. Moreover, the JD-R Model (see Figure 4) by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) is utilized to explain how demands and resources should be arranged to be able to carry out high task integration and high human integration without compromising the well-being of employees. Moreover, the model is utilized in this research to evaluate the relationship between job design and employee well-being.

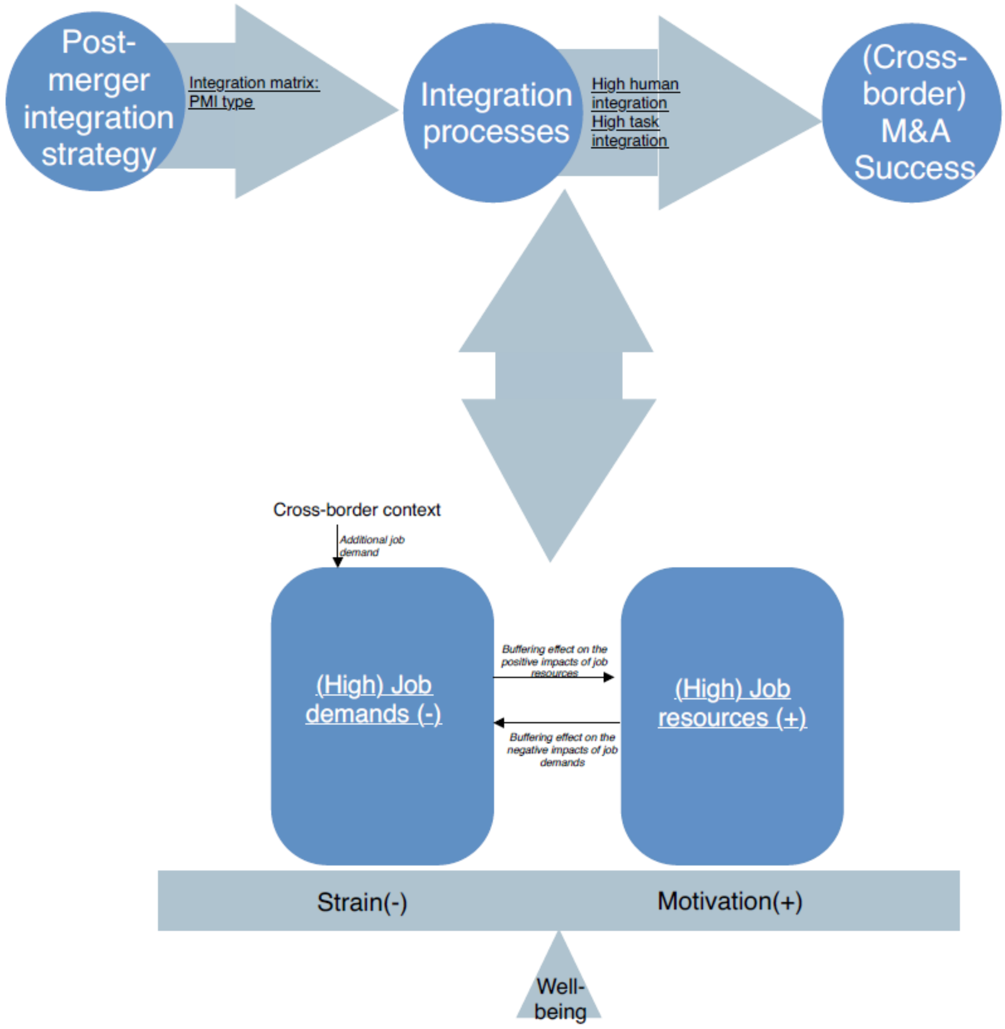

Figure 5. Theoretical framework for successful employee well-being in cross-border PMI

The main question that the framework aims to address is how cross-border PMI can be carried out in a way that ensures M&A success while maintaining the well-being of employees. According to Birkinshaw et al. (2002), successful M&A is achieved through two different phases, post-acquisition integration strategy phase and integration phase. Regarding cross-border PMI strategy, to figure out the main focus points for the integration (e.g., which processes are integrated, what the key obstacles during the integration phase could be, etc.), PMI type should be identified. Bodner and Capron (2018) state that in Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) approach to PMI, the ideal method of operating is discovered through balancing the strategic need for capability transfer between the merging firms and the organizational needs of the target company. It is important to know what kind of changes will and should take place to complete the integration successfully. Companies have different goals, which define the characteristics of the integration processes. Regarding integration phase, Birkinshaw et al. (2002) state that the integration processes should include both high human integration and high task integration for the outcome to be successful. They also state that task integration, meaning the transfer of capabilities and resource sharing between the companies, is considered as the main purpose of acquisitions. Therefore, during PMI, human integration is frequently neglected by leaders, as their attention tends to gravitate towards task integration (Birkinshaw et al., 2002). Both dimensions should be treated with equal importance to achieve a successful acquisition (Birkinshaw et al., 2002). According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), job strain develops when job demands are high and job resources are limited. Moreover, JD-R Model proposes that job resources have the ability to diminish the effect of job demands on job strain (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), which contributes to well-being. Motivation and engagement towards work peaks when employees are given adequate job resources, even when they experience high job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This framework suggests that high task integration and high human integration during cross-border PMI can be achievable through high-demand high-resource strategy, where employees will face high demands occurring from changes, cultural differences, and other characteristics of cross-border PMIs, but the demands are balanced with resources (see Figure 5). As a result, employees should feel motivated and engaged, without experiencing too much strain, as the adequate job resources buffer the effect of job demands on job strain.

3 Methodology

3.1 Case company

The case company originates in Finland and is currently among the most well-known companies in its home country. In the domestic market, it has succeeded in acquiring the position of a market leader within its industry sector. Recently, the company reported an annual revenue of almost 2 billion (€). At present, the multinational company has subsidiaries in a couple of countries, where it has managed to secure a significant market presence. In all countries of operation, the company is either the market leader or the second largest competitor, making it a notable actor in its industry sector overall. In addition to its international presence, the company has exporting operations, which have become a significant part of its business. Currently, the most relevant export target markets for the company locate in the far East and the Europe.

The cross-border integration took place between three countries of operation, where the Finnish parent company has subsidiaries. In Table 2, some basic information about the participating subsidiaries is provided.

Cross-border integration project participants		
Location: Finland	Location: Sweden	Location: Denmark
Parent: Company A *Number of employees:* Average of 2.000 in Finland *Annual group turnover*: Over 1 billion EUR	**Subsidiary 1: Company B** *Number of employees*: Average of over 500	**Subsidiary 4: Company C** *Number of employees*: Average of over 400

Table 1. Case company's merged units

Prior to the integration project, the company's subsidiaries had their separate financial management units which operated independently. The main goal of the integration project was to fuse the operations of the company's three financial management units. To execute the integration, the action plan was to establish a shared service center in Finland to manage the activities across the three countries. The units of the three countries, A, B, and C, which operate in Finland, Denmark and Sweden, participated to the project and created an international and multicultural project environment. Company A did not purchase the subsidiaries; they were built, and later, the operations were integrated. The aim was to transfer most of the responsibilities from the financial management units of the Danish and Swedish subsidiaries B and C to the Finnish unit. As a result, the company's Finnish financial management unit acquired the majority of the responsibilities of the Swedish and Danish units. Currently, the shared service center is functioning, and the initial integration period has been completed successfully and the recently acquired processes are being continuously developed.

3.2 Research approach

Qualitative research method was selected as the research approach as the purpose is to gain insight into the well-being of a specific group of people and to provide solutions based on the experiences of the case company's employees and existing literature: *''– qualitative methods are typically used for providing an in-depth understanding of research issues''* (Nor Rashidi et al., 2014, p. 29). This research method enables the author to focus on how the integration phase impacted the well-being of the employees to provide solutions to the research questions. The subjects of this study are all participants in the specific integration project and the purpose is to understand this specific integration process better. The results do not apply to all PMI processes. This research combines secondary data with primary data. Secondary data is utilized when analyzing the data gathered from the subjects and to describe the project.

3.3 Research design

The research design is a case study of a Finnish multinational company conducting M&A, more specifically the company's accounts payable team who were impacted by the M&A. This thesis solves research questions by finding patterns in the collected data related to the theoretical framework to discover how the case company should conduct successful M&A and ensuring employee well-being. The aim is to reflect on the company's previous M&A experience and discover, whether ensuring the success of the M&A and employee well-being were successfully (or unsuccessfully) ensured, what were the factors impacting the result and what potential changes should be made.

3.4 Data collection

The primary data was collected through a structured interview. Structured interview is a qualitative research method where respondents receive the same set of questions in the same order (Nor Rashidi et al., 2014). Using structured interview as data collection method decreases the risk for interviewer bias (Hughes, et al. 2020), when all respondents respond to similar sets of questions. This supports the purpose to find patterns and some causal relationships between employee well-being and features of PMI. Moreover, to be able to receive responses from all relevant individuals and to make participating to the research more effortless, responding to the interview questions has been made easy. The interview is in written form and in the participants' native language.

The respondents remain anonymous in this study. To distinguish between the respondents, codes V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, and V6 replace the names of individuals. The interview link was sent to the participants 7th of April 2025. The respondents were given ten days to complete the interview. All participants responded to each interview question. The interviews included the definitions of key terms and concepts.

Code	Position	Date of the interview	Time	Tenure
V1	Purchase invoice processor	03/04/2025	21:19	Four years
V2	Purchase invoice processor	07/04/2025	12:08	Three years
V3	Process owner	08/04/2025	12:12	Seven years
V4	Purchase invoice processor	09/04/2025	9:10	Four years
V5	Purchase invoice processor	09/04/2025	18:44	Four years
V6	Purchase invoice processor	16/04/2025	14:52	Four years

Table 2. Interviews overview

The respondents received a link to the interview questions in Google Forms. Interview themes and questions are shaped by the most relevant theoretical frameworks discussed in the theoretical background section of the thesis. The study subjects responded to open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are used as they require the respondents to elaborate on their feelings, experiences, and opinions (Komildjanovna, 2024). The link to the interview was sent out to all participants of the case company's integration project, who work in the Finnish accounts payable team. The interviewees were first contacted through WhatsApp to inquire their willingness to participate in the research.

Participants received information about research topic and purpose of the interview before the interview questions were sent. Important terms and concepts were defined and explained. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 1. The original interview responses can be found in Appendix 3 and the coded version in Appendix 2.

3.5 Data analysis

Coding supports researchers in categorizing data to identify recurring ideas, patterns, or contradictions across respondents (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The collected data is coded to discover potential cause and effect relationships between task and human integration and M&A success, the job resources, demands and employee well-being. Data coding was carried out manually. Moreover, as the data was in written form, no transcription was required.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

The data was collected from six respondents. The questionnaire was sent to six individuals, who participated to the integration project with a response rate of 100 per cent. In that sense, the results accurately describe the experiences of the case company's AP team during PMI processes. In qualitative research, perfect replication is not expected as the data is context-specific. However, as the data collection method is consistent, a structured interview, it helps improve reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Validity may be limited due to the structured nature of the interview, as it may restrict participants from fully expressing themselves, although open-ended questions that are well-designed may still produce valid and meaningful data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Direct quotes from the interview responses have been translated from Finnish to English; However, the original interview responses are included in Appendices.

4 Findings

This section presents the research findings and follows the same structure as the interviews. The discussion includes the key themes of the theoretical framework.

4.1 Overall experience of the M&A

First, the interviewees were asked to share their thoughts about their PMI experience and to categorize the M&A as either successful or unsuccessful. When describing their overall experience of the PMI, most participants report having experienced mental strain or exhaustion during the project, which indicates that most of the respondents had a deteriorated well-being during the case company's PMI process:

> *My experience was mentally very difficult. The work drove me to the brink of exhaustion once, after which it has been difficult to return to similar jobs. (V2)*
>
> *The project has been challenging and mentally taxing. (V4)*
>
> *The project was burdensome and stressful, as it was assumed that after minimal training you would know everything you needed to know about posting invoices from other countries and all the key people in the new organization to whom the invoices had to be routed. (V5)*
>
> *As a new employee, it was very exciting at first, but as the project progressed, it became quite hectic and mentally demanding. - - it also took a toll on my mental well-being. (V6)*

Deteriorated well-being emerged in the form of mental strain among most of respondents due to the stressful nature of the PMI process. However, on the contrary, V3 refers to the experience as positive and developmental, leading to personal growth:

> *For me, the project was pleasant: it was challenging, brought variety to work, and gave me more responsibility than before. In addition, the project and the time after gave me experience working in an international environment. (V3)*

In addition to V3, also V2 and V6 describe the experience as challenging and a personal learning experience, although the experiences throughout the project eventually led to deteriorated well-being:

> *However, I am grateful for the experience. The project challenged my problem-solving skills, my ability to handle pressure, and my language skills, among other things. (V2)*
>
> *The project provided a lot of valuable work experience at an international level. (V6)*

V1 describes the overall experience as bad but does not directly report decreased well-being:

> *A really bad experience. My own feelings about the project were very mixed. If things weren't done well in the service center, they weren't done well in the original team either. (V1)*

4.2 M&A success/failure

When being asked to categorize the M&A as either a successful or unsuccessful, half of the respondents state that the M&A was unsuccessful. On the contrary, V3 categorizes the overall project as successful, whereas some respondents rate the project as successful, but that it was achieved at the expense of employee well-being. To justify their categorization, most respondents express that during the PMI, onboarding or instructions as well as the support from the supervisor were inadequate. For example, V1 and V6 describe the conditions in the following manner:

> *Poor guidance from the supervisor, which means that employees have a lot of responsibility. (V1)*
>
> *No orientation except for a small group, no support from superiors, too few resources compared to the work tasks. (V6)*

In addition to the lack of onboarding, the majority of the respondents think that the employees were given too few resources to survive from the demands faced during the project. V4 describes the experience in the following words:

> *The goal was perhaps achieved, i.e. the financial administration of Sweden and Denmark was transferred to Seinäjoki, but it was largely at the expense of the well-being of the employees and with insufficient resources. (V4)*

Along with inadequate onboarding and resources, poor leadership is described by half of the respondents as one of the main reasons for unsuccessful M&A. V6 lists the three elements that most respondents report as the failure factors of the PMI:

> *During the project, perhaps more emphasis was placed on its completion and technical implementation, but everything else seemed to have been left halfway. Orientation only for only a small group, no support from the supervisor, too few resources compared to the work tasks. For example, more temporary project employees could have been recruited for the duration of the project, who would have helped with the daily work tasks. (V6)*

On the other hand, when categorizing the project as successful, V3 refers to the successful transfer of processes and mentions employee reductions as potential factor leading to M&A success:

> *The project was generally successful. The operations were successfully transferred from the source country to the target country. Presumably also financially successful, as the number of personnel decreased, and the personnel was concentrated in a country with a lower salary level. (V3)*

This is inconsistent with the experiences of other respondents as most of them view employee reductions as a negative factor impacting M&A success while V3 points out that it might have been a way to increase the overall success of the M&A.

4.3 Human and task integration

Interviewees were then asked about human and task integration and if there were any methods utilized to ensure human integration during the process. According to most respondents, no effective support or methods were utilized.

> *For my part, I didn't get any kind of support regarding the new environment and situation. I was just made to perform and learn things relatively independently (I was trained once/a couple of times). (V2)*
>
> *I don't remember. At least not in any significant ways. (V3)*
>
> *Human integration was carried out through various excursions, both within the Finnish team and internationally. However, I feel that these excursions did nothing, as other problematic situations were ignored. (V6)*

Human integration efforts appear to have been ineffective as they were not directed at combating the difficult situation at workplace caused by PMI processes. Furthermore, only official project members were included in shared activities or information sharing, which excluded the rest of the employees who participated to the PMI processes and prevented task integration, as well. For example, V1 and V2 explain the lack of information sharing and joint activities in the following way:

> *There were some joint activities that only those officially in the project were allowed to participate in. (Although there were many more people involved in the project.) (V1)*
>
> *Probably those integration-related meetings that I never got to attend and didn't know about for a very long time. (V2)*

Referring to responses indicating that human integration attempts were insufficient, Covid-19 pandemic was said to have had a negative impact on human integration during PMI. V4 states that remote work and Covid-19 made human integration more difficult, although some team spirit training was arranged:

Corona also made the situation more difficult when we had to work remotely. - - An external consultant gave us one uplifting training, where we got to know each other a little. (V4)

To ensure the transfer of capabilities and resource sharing between the employees of the subsidiaries and the parent company, Teams meetings and email were used as the main tools. Regarding task integration in general, some attempts were made:

To transfer the know-how, a small group of people went to Sweden for a few days to see what they do, and based on this, we had to make our own work instructions. So there were no ready-made work instructions for things, we had to make them ourselves. - - I was taught (by interns) the programs in a few sentences. (V4)

A few employees from different teams visited Sweden for a few days, where they introduced one another, and the sessions were recorded. After the visit, there were regular meetings where the project progress was reviewed and there was an opportunity to ask questions about any concerns. (V6)

On-site and remote teaching sessions during the actual project. In addition, we received short training sessions on VAT practices in different countries. (V3)

Visitations at the subsidiaries, short training sessions, Teams meetings, and email were the main tools for transferring know-how. However, all participants were not included in the meetings or on-site training sessions. In addition, interestingly, V3 reports having received support from the local colleagues from the source countries, and highlights its importance throughout the process, whereas some other respondents report, in other parts of the interview, the lack of it:

The most significant means was the continuous support of local finance employees during and after the project. (V3)

Some Swedish colleagues did not respond to emails after several attempts, and the difficult issues were left on our shoulders. (V2)

- - answers to questions often took a long time to arrive. (V5)

The responses by V3, V2 and V5 indicate that individuals working in the same team had very different experiences regarding local support from the source countries. Overall, the responses indicate that task integration attempts were inadequate. V4 explains that inadequate onboarding might have been due to lack of know-how of local employees of the source countries.

When the interviewees were asked to compare the received attention between human and task integration, half of the participants think that task integration received more attention. Some think that human integration was not considered at all during the M&A.

> *The project was carried out entirely at the expense of the employees' well-being, relying on their high work morale; the management was not interested in acknowledging the exhaustion and ill-health of the employees. (V5)*
>
> *In short, task integration was considered important, but it was pretty much put on the employees' shoulders without preparing them for it in any way. (V2)*

The responses indicate that out of human and task integration, task integration was considered more important, however, many successful attempts to ensuring it were not made.

> *I think that task integration received less attention and not enough effort was put into it. (V1)*
>
> *I think the focus was on integrating tasks, or at least there were goals for them and the employees had to implement and complete them. People's well-being/adaptation was probably sought in general weekly team meetings for the entire accounts payable department, although they didn't really address the integration. However, there was little effort to address the resource shortage (some people even worked for free on weekends out of desperation). In short, task integration was considered important, but it was pretty much put on the employees' shoulders without preparing them for it in any way. (V2)*
>
> *The integration of tasks was clearly more important. (V3)*
>
> *The problem was that initially, no consideration had been given to how many employees were needed and what a realistic division of labor was. Not all people were allowed to be involved from the start. Along the way, it was realized that a few people could not handle all the transferred assignments, and that more employees were needed. It is difficult to understand why the company's management imagined that the same tasks could be handled with fewer resources in another country,*

when the opposite is true (language issues, cultural differences, slower communication...) (V4)

Little attention was paid to integrating people, tasks received all the attention. (V5)

I feel that both were on weak ground. During the project, meetings where there was an opportunity to ask questions were organized. However, when the employees did not have information about what needed to be done, it was difficult to formulate questions. People were integrated through various excursions, both for the Finnish team and the international team. However, I feel that these excursions did nothing because other problem situations were ignored. (V6)

Overall, most respondents recognize the need for proper task and human integration, as the lack of either is seen as a negative matter across the interview responses: The responses show lack of planning and interest towards employee needs. Essential information-sharing opportunities were only available to a selection of employees, which prevented some employees from acquiring knowledge about the integration and succeed in task integration. Still, the responsibility for acquiring knowledge was put on the employees' shoulders. Issues with team spirit-building attempts were also noticed, but issues with the work itself were not acknowledged.

4.4 Cross-culture perspective

The international environment, including linguistic and cultural differences, had an impact on the working conditions of the employees during the case company's PMI. Most respondents report that language barriers, misunderstandings, cultural differences, and different ways of working caused challenges during the PMI.

The language of the meetings changed to English, and sometimes it was difficult to understand what other employees meant. (V5)

Some respondents report having experienced the challenges as positive and motivational, although one of the respondents having a more positive outlook on the matter (V2) admits that language barrier made communication and working more difficult and different ways of working affected V2 in a burdening manner. Half of the respondents characterize the challenges brought by the cross-cultural environment as negative and an additional burden or demand. Continuous misunderstandings due to language barrier hindered and made work more demanding. V5 experienced this as very straining, as all invoices, documents and emails had to be translated which took time and energy. In addition, respondents list language barriers, as well as differences in communication/working culture, which caused strain on some employees:

> *The international operating environment is challenging but not an obstacle. Operating in a different language brings its own challenges and misunderstandings arise. There were some cultural differences. I feel that Finns are used to direct speech without small talk. (V1)*

> *Really stressful. All invoices, documents and emails had to be translated, which took a lot of time and energy, and still it was not always possible to figure out what was meant. The language of the meetings changed to English, and sometimes it was difficult to understand what other employees meant. The conversation culture between the countries was also very different, and you often had to wait a long time for answers to questions. (V5)*

> *I feel that the language was not a challenge for me, but the Swedish-speaking employees' English skills were weak, which made communication challenging. The Swedish work culture is also significantly different from the Finnish work culture, so it took a couple of years to adapt. (V6)*

For most respondents, working in an international setting added on to the demands at work. However, on the contrary, V3 views cross-cultural aspect as a positive factor at work. V3 does not bring up negative factors about either language barrier or culture.

> *I saw it as a positive thing. It brought variety and a new challenge to the work. (V3)*

V3 appears to view challenges and variety coming from linguistic and cultural differences as resources rather than demands.

4.5 Job resources and demands during the company's PMI processes

Interviewees were asked to share what kind of demands they faced during PMI. In their responses, most respondents identify excessive responsibility and workload as one of the main demands that negatively affected their well-being. Poor leadership, inadequate instructions and poor onboarding were mentioned by half of the respondents. V2 and V6 describe the demands in the following manner:

> *Management. I felt like I wasn't being listened to and my cries for help weren't being taken into account. Instead, more and more was expected of me. The workload was constantly increasing and it was too much. The workdays were getting longer and I couldn't do anything even in my free time. I was exhausted from the workload and the high expectations. (V2)*

> *During the project, the workload grew to an unacceptable level and I had to carry out most of the tasks alone without sufficient support. There was little or no orientation, which made carrying out the tasks particularly stressful. In addition, the entire organization was constantly in a hurry, and no one seemed to have time to advise or support me, even when the situation was challenging. This created a constant sense of pressure and uncertainty for me. I also feel that the management's indifference further weakened well-being, as there was no support from above, and the workload or concerns of the employees were not taken into sufficient account, even though they were brought up many times. (V6)*

Unlike most respondents, V3 does not report excessive workload, poor instructions or leadership as demands during PMI. V3 rather states that the feeling that nothing is ever finished took away the sense of accomplishment during PMI:

> *I felt that our department had too many interdependent projects on top of each other. This created constant "when x is finished, it will be easier" situations, which was sometimes burdensome and took away the feeling of accomplishment from the work, as nothing was ever "finished". (V3)*

Overall, the responses show that poor leadership and support, lack of instructions, as well as excessive workload and responsibility caused strain on employees. Indifferent attitude from the leaders caused deterioration in well-being, as they neglected the strain of the employees, despite many attempts to bring the problems up to their attention. The responses indicate that employees were left alone with job-related issues, and they did not know who could assist them when in need. Poor onboarding and the lack of instructions made existing workload increasingly more difficult to combat. Due to these issues along with having little support from key employees, respondents report having experienced pressure, stress, exhaustion, and uncertainty.

Regarding job resources, the interviewees were asked to share the resources at work that positively impacted their well-being during PMI. Most respondents realize team support as one of the key resources during PMI that positively impacted their well-being. V1, V2 and V6 describe the resources in the following manner:

> *Support and help from your teammates. With support and help, your well-being improves and stress decreases. (V1)*
>
> *Especially the support from my colleagues. I also became good friends with my colleagues. My colleagues supported me emotionally by comforting me or empathizing with me and helped me in the best possible way. Sharing information among the Finnish team was quite smooth and helped me with my work. (V2)*
>
> *Support and teamwork from colleagues. Even though everyone was busy, you could always count on a colleague to help you when things got tough. It made you feel like you weren't completely alone in the middle of it all, and this was also new to many others. In addition, having your own way of organizing and prioritizing tasks helped you keep your head together and reduce stress, as did, of course, seeing a psychologist. (V6)*

Unlike most respondents, V3 does not mention team support as job resources but reports having experienced new colleagues, responsibilities, and learning as matters that improved their well-being:

> *Learning new things, new tasks and responsibilities, and new coworkers were enjoyable. (V3)*

Overall, the responses show that support and help from colleagues helped decrease stress and improve well-being during PMI. Information sharing appears to have been effective within the Finnish team, and team support helped the employees cope and alleviate work-related issues and concerns. Hence, support from colleagues acted as a resource for practical matters and mental health. In addition to team support, one respondent (V6) adds that they created their own way of prioritizing tasks as well as taking care of their own mental health by regularly visiting the psychologist, which helped improve their mental well-being and reduce stress.

From the interview responses it is evident that a need for formal resources arranged by the case company, such as investing in supportive leadership, better communication, and tangible resources, existed throughout PMI. When being asked which factors supported or did not support their mental and psychological well-being during PMI, team support is again identified by most respondents as one of the key supportive factors that positively impacted their mental well-being throughout the PMI. Taking care of one's own health is also mentioned by some individuals. On the other hand, poor leadership is mentioned by most of the respondents as hindering factors, negatively impacting their mental well-being during the PMI. Uncertainty due to insufficient communication resulted in feeling a lack of control, which added on to mental strain. Moreover, the indifferent attitude caused the employees the feeling of not being heard, which added on to their mental burden. Excessive workload and long working days are listed frequently as hindering factors regarding mental well-being.

4.6 Ensuring M&A success and employee well-being

The respondents were asked to describe the operations that were carried out to ensure a balance between M&A success and employee well-being. To enable a balanced relationship between achieving successful M&A and employee well-being, most respondents state the company showed some effort to improve team spirit and community outside of working hours. There were also some efforts to manage the workload of employees according to half of the respondents. V1, V2, V3, and V4 describe the operations as follows:

-Shared activities outside of work. (Not a lot, though)
-Summer employees. (V1)

They tried to balance out the tasks between the employees, but a problem appeared when it was realized that there were too many tasks in relation to the employees. So, the redistribution was left unfinished and was never completed. The employees were also reduced even further. We did have team days and parties, though. (V2)

I don't know about all the actions, but some of them were related to normal work, and were therefore not specifically targeted for the integration. At least there were attempts to equalize the workload among the employees on a few occasions, the salary of those participating in the integration increased, and, as I recall, more than one refreshment event was organized for us. (V3)

I think that the company's management was not interested in the well-being of the employees in any way. All change situations are challenging for people and require special change management skills. The project held regular meetings and also refreshment evenings, but in my opinion the most important thing, the right resources and listening to the employees, were completely missing. (V4)

Although most respondents identify attempts made by the company to ensure a balance between achieving successful M&A and employee well-being, the responses show that the attempts were not successful as they were not targeted to address the essential issues. Management was not interested in employee well-being, according to V4 and V5. V5 and V6 claim that nothing was done to ensure a balance:

In my opinion, there was no balance at all during the entire project. Help and additional resources were requested throughout the project, but nothing was received. The project was carried out completely at the expense of the employees' well-being and relying on their high work morale, the management was not interested in the workload and ill-health of the employees. Excuses were always made up to get the employees committed to completing the work, e.g., useless promises that "it will get easier when...", and that never happened. (V5)

Nothing. (V6)

Overall, a need for properly aligned organizational attempts to ensure a balance between achieving a successful M&A and employee well-being existed during the case company's PMI: The case company appears to have made efforts to ensure both M&A success and employee well-being. However, the responses show a lack of interest towards resolving the essential issues reported by the respondents, which manifested through misaligned attempts.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The following paragraphs include a discussion of the findings to identify success and failure factors of the case company's M&A and employee well-being, and to connect the identified factors to the established theoretical framework of the thesis and to provide a conclusion.

5.1 Discussion of the findings

As a reminder, the aim of the research is to gain understanding about how successful cross-border PMI should be carried out to ensure the well-being of employees. The main research question is:

> *''How can the multinational case company undertake cross-border PMI to ensure the well-being of its employees?''*

Support questions to help answering the main question are :

1. *How do the demands affect the well-being of employees during cross-border PMI?*
2. *How are the resources arranged to ensure the well-being of employees during cross-border PMI?*

The thesis aims to answer the research questions using the theoretical framework (Figure 5, 6), combining Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) integration matrix, Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) JD-R Model as well as the human and task integration theory by Birkinshaw et al. (2002), which has now been updated to include the findings of this thesis (Figure 6).

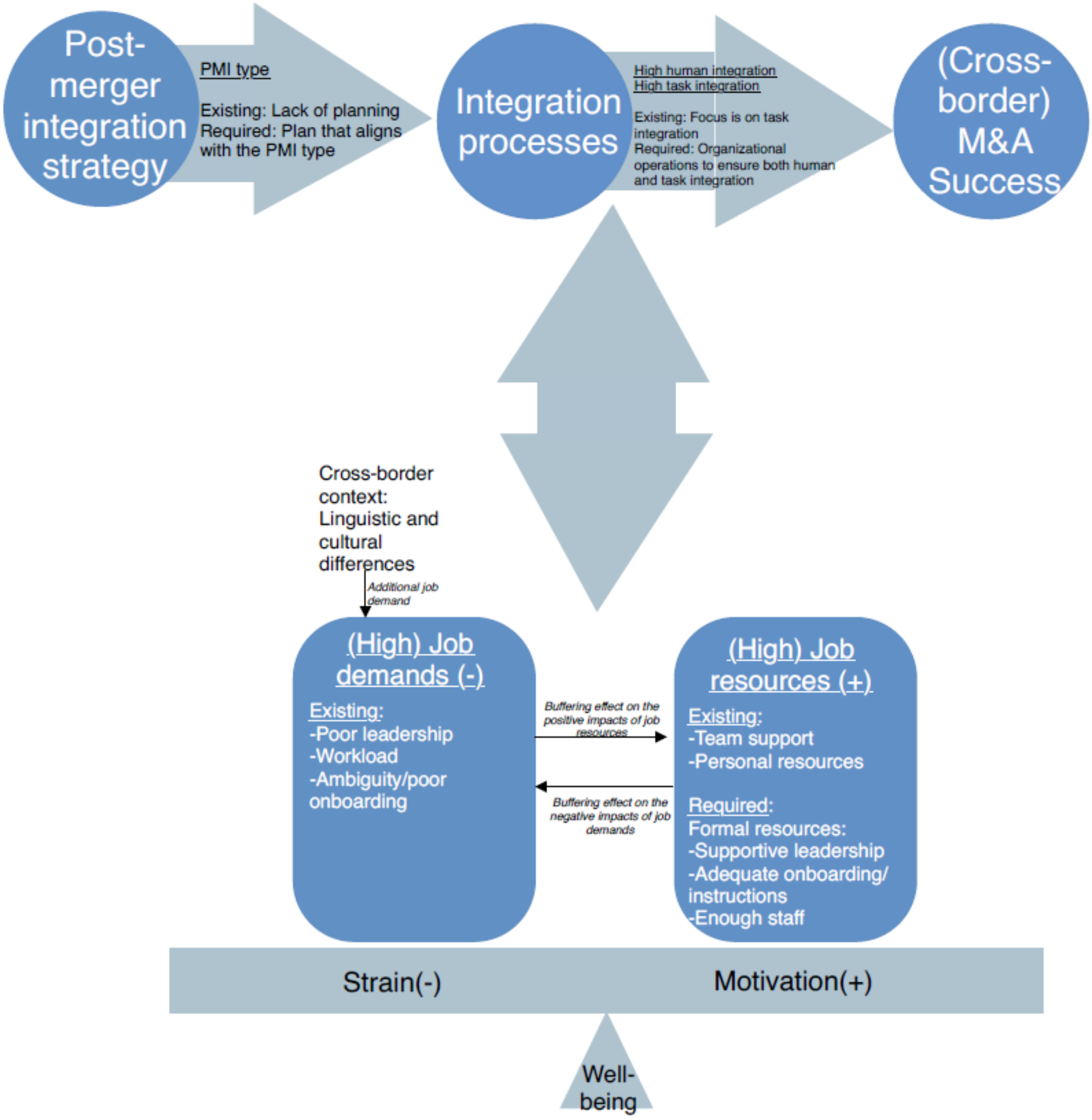

Figure 6. Updated theoretical framework

Overall, the findings indicate that there was a tension between technical project success and employee well-being during PMI. Project goals were prioritized and met, with the cost of employee well-being, through poor leadership and lack of job resources, resulting in psychological strain for most employees. The following paragraphs discuss the findings to identify success/failure factors and to connect the identified factors to the established theoretical framework of the thesis.

In terms of human and task integration, a clear imbalance between the two aspects is discovered across the collected data. Task integration appears to have received more attention during the case company's PMI processes, although some attempts for enhancing human integration were acknowledged. However, the results are characterized by the experience that human integration was largely overlooked by the management and supervisors. The organizational efforts to enhance human integration were either lacking or insufficient. Most respondents recognized the organizational efforts to enhance human integration, but they were either not directly related to work, nor did they solve PMI-related issues.

Task integration may have received more attention compared to human integration – however, ultimately, the findings suggest that the responsibility for task integration was given to employees. Not many successful or properly targeted efforts were made by the management to ensure task integration. The employees were provided with inadequate information sharing opportunities, as well as instructions. Additionally, a lack of know-how in the source country impacted knowledge-sharing in a negative manner and transferred the responsibility for gathering information and learning to the Finnish AP team members. Surprisingly, despite these factors, task integration was successfully carried out. Most respondents report having experienced excessive responsibility or workload during PMI. Hence, it seems that the employees worked conscientiously towards the common goals, which ultimately ensured successful task integration of the PMI. When these findings are applied to Birkinshaw et al. (2002) matrix, the case company's PMI was a mixed success (Figure 7), where operational goals were achieved at the expense of employees.

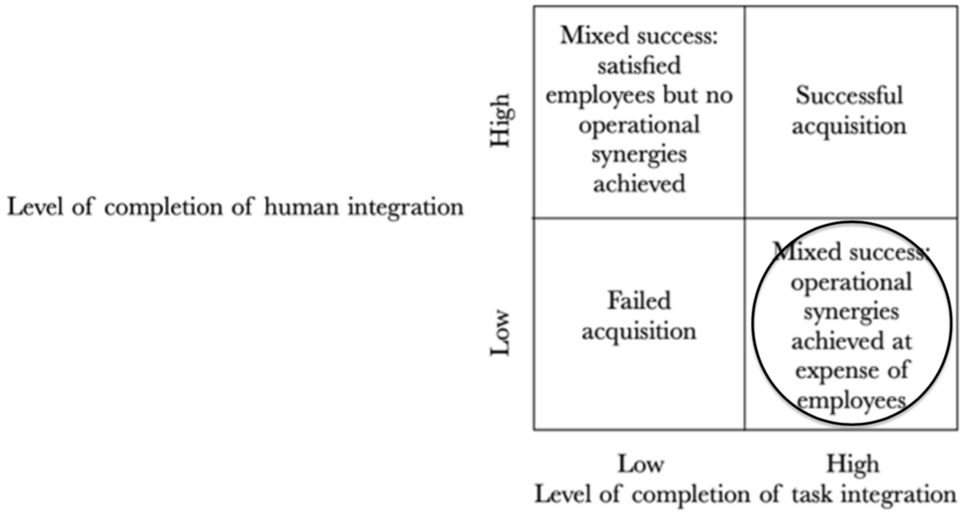

Figure 7. Impact of task and human integration processes on acquisition outcome by Birkinshaw et al. (2002, p. 399), edited

As discussed in the theoretical section, both task and human integration should be treated with equal importance to achieve a successful acquisition (Birkinshaw et al., 2002). Organizational attempts are required to ensure high task and human integration that is achieved through a balance between job resources and demands. Findings regarding job resources and demands are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

The findings indicate that there was an imbalance between job demands and resources during the case company's PMI processes, as job demands outweigh job resources. In terms of job resources, team support emerged as the most consistent protective element buffering negative effects of demands (Figure 8). Within the case company, the members of the Finnish AP team provided mental support and aid with assignments to one another, which helped with coping and alleviated stress. However, team support is dependent on the group dynamics between the individuals, and it has much to do with personal resources of the employees, which were, based on the findings, noted to have been among the most essential job resources.

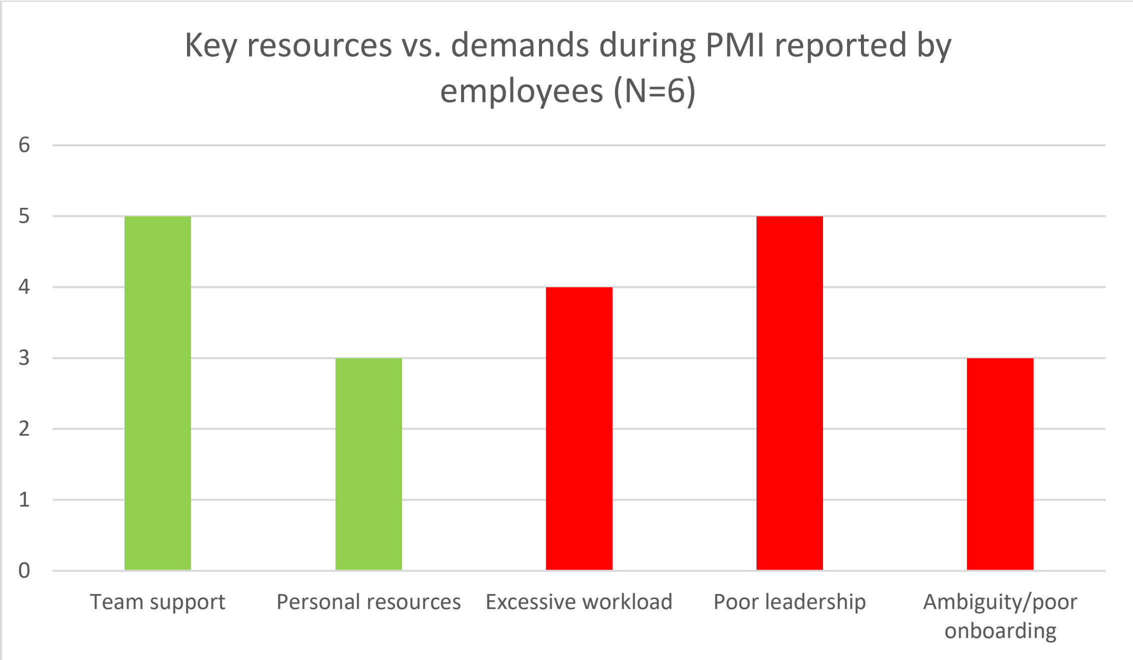

Figure 8. Key resources vs. demands during PMI reported by employees

Representing job demands, leadership, on the contrary, appeared to be the most consistent harmful factor, negatively impacting employee well-being. Poor leadership was seen as lack of support and indifferent attitude towards employees. In the Finnish AP team, leadership was both a demand, as well as a missing critical resource during PMI. Poor leadership not only has a burdening impact on the well-being of employees, but it also removes a crucial buffer that could help employees cope with demands. Lack of mental support and the feeling of not being heard by the manager is a reoccurring theme throughout the interview responses. This dynamic is concerning specifically in M&A context, where uncertainty is already high (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993) and poor communication in change processes can lead to psychological strain (Bordia et al., 2004). Moreover, lack of resources, which is mentioned as one of the failure factors of the case M&A by the interviewees, directly translates to excessive responsibilities and workload in the interview responses. Most respondents characterize workload as one of the main job demands during the case company's PMI, having risked the well-being of respondents through strain, stress, and anxiety. Several respondents also described ambiguity as one of the main demands that increased the responsibilities and workload of employees.

Ambiguity not only contributed to stress through heightened uncertainty, but it also increased the employees' workload. This was particularly burdensome given the already excessive demands, the scarcity of resources, and the high managerial expectations for task integration—expectations that were not sufficiently supported by organizational efforts. Overall, the interview results represent an imbalance between job demands and resources, as well as a lack of key job resources, whose absence has turned them into job demands, such as onboarding, communication, and support from managers/management.

From cross-border PMI perspective, while cultural and linguistic differences are not listed as the key demands by the respondents, most of them still categorize the impact of language barriers and cultural differences as strain-enhancing or even mentally draining. This indicates that working in an international environment without adequate support, cross-cultural context becomes an additional job demand, hindering and making work more draining, as described by the respondents. This is in line with Weber et al. (1996) whose study found high acculturative stress to be a significant obstacle in integration during M&As, hindering and disrupting the process.

Most of the participants report having experienced strain or exhaustion during the case company's PMI processes. This pattern of high demands, few resources and increased strain or exhaustion aligns with the assumptions of the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), according to which excessive demands are likely to lead to strain and exhaustion when they are not balanced with enough job resources. Across the interview responses, respondents consistently mentioned excessive workload, poor leadership, ambiguity, and lack of onboarding as main challenges, which created high risk for burnout, as they were not met with adequate resources, but rather the absence of them. Coping through personal resources, such as self-care and seeking therapy, indicates that several employees had unmet organizational support needs.

Overall, to achieve PMI success, formal resources are required to discover a balance between job resources and demands, considering the clear imbalance found between job resources and demands, along with personal resources as the primary buffer alleviating the negative impacts of job demands.

One respondent (V3) stands out with a more positive outlook on the entire process. V3 describes the experience in a positive manner, including challenges, task variety and international experience. V3 categorizes the project as successful on a general level and has a more task-related approach to evaluating the overall success. In addition, V3 lists multiple resources, such as learning, new tasks and responsibilities, onboarding, positive feedback as well as the feeling of being helpful to others as factors that positively impacted their well-being during the project, which differs from the most responses. For example, V6 and V2 report contrary experiences regarding feedback and recognition. Moreover, multiple respondents report ambiguity related to poor onboarding and instructions as job demands, which differs from the thoughts of V3.

The different experiences can be due to different reasons which cannot be identified in this thesis with accuracy; however, the personal resources of individuals can impact on how they experience different situations. Moreover, different roles and responsibilities, as well as workload and personal relationships at work may impact the experience. For example, V3 does not report excess workload or poor leadership, which could in part explain the more positive overall experience. In addition, they report support from the local team as one of the most important factors in task integration, which is an opposite experience compared to most respondents, potentially indicating that V3 had a better relationship with the local (Swedish and Danish) team members.

5.2 Conclusion

5.2.1 Theoretical and managerial contributions

Theoretical contributions of the thesis highlight the importance of strategic planning according to the company's PMI type (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991) and finding a balance between job resources and demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), as well as human and task integration (Birkinhaw et al., 2002). Complete success was not achieved through the case company's PMI, based on the assumptions about successful PMI in the theoretical framework of the thesis.

According to Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991), ideal operating method during PMI is found through balancing the strategic need for capability transfer between the merging firms and the organizational needs of the target company. The findings of this research prove the importance of strategic planning according to the identified PMI type, as Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) suggest. The case company's strategic need for capability transfer and the target company's needs were either misevaluated in the PMI planning process or completely ignored, as the ideal operating method for the PMI was not found during the process, which ultimately resulted in mixed success.

Regarding the integration phase, the findings highlight the importance of balancing demands and resources as well as task and human integration during PMI, which is in line with what JD-R Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and task and human integration theory by Birkinshaw et al. (2002) suggest. The case company's PMI processes were characterized by high job demands, including excessive workload, ambiguity, and poor leadership, as well as a scarcity of formal resources. Team support appeared to be the primary buffer for eliminating the negative effects of job demands. Although a partial success was achieved through task integration, the case company's M&A was not successful in terms of achieving a balance between job resources and job demands to create motivation among employees and to ensure their well-being. The case company M&A resulted in mixed success, with focus on operational goals that were achieved at the expense of employees.

In terms of managerial contributions, in the following paragraphs, the thesis provides leaders practical suggestions on how to conduct successful M&A, based on the findings of the research and the theoretical framework of the thesis.

Regarding pre-integration phase, the case company's PMI represents the preservation type, as the main goal was to merely integrate the financial management operations of the subsidiaries into the parent company's operations. To achieve complete success in a high-demand environment such as this in the future, the company should carefully assess the PMI type and plan the optimal operations for the specific integration type to ensure success. As discussed in the theoretical section of the thesis, according to Angwin (2020), the purpose of preservation is to ensure that the existing operations of the acquired company are protected to maintain the continuity of operations and to learn from the acquired company, which may in some cases become difficult due to different cultures and organizational structures. To ensure learning from the acquired company, which was crucial in this process, different cultures and organizational structures should receive more attention during the company's PMI.

Regarding the PMI phase, more resources are needed to promote the well-being of employees to balance out high job demands and expectations to meet the goals of the PMI. Implementing PMI-specific leadership training before integration begins could contribute to discovering a balance between the elements. By focusing on providing better leadership for the company's employees, including investing in better onboarding and communication, recognizing and addressing workload and emotional strain, as well as developing leadership practices that are emotionally supportive and responsive, the company could transfer leadership from job demands to job resources and ensure a balance between human and task integration. Hence, employees are not required to solely lean on personal resources and the support provided by other strained team members.

Moreover, providing supportive leadership alleviates the feelings of ambiguity related to the international environment, for example, as the employees may turn to their manager in times of uncertainty or unclarity, which promotes human integration and well-being during PMI. To ensure better task integration and enhance employee well-being through balance between job demands and resources, workload should be acknowledged and balanced with hiring enough employees to match the number of assignments.

5.2.2 Suggestions for future research

As cross-border M&As have increased in number during the last decades along with concerns towards employee well-being, employee well-being has become a universal matter of concern and a subject of many studies through its increasing presence in modern business world, the topic should be studied more in depth all over the world and in different organizations. This thesis only gathered data from six respondents working in the same financial management unit, participating in one PMI project. Hence, the results only represent the experiences of a small group of employees working in the same company. More research is required to better understand employee well-being during cross-border M&As.

References

The American Institute of Stress. (2025). *Workplace Stress.* Retrieved May 3, 2025, from https://www.stress.org/workplace-stress/

Angwin, D. N., & Meadows, M. (2009). The Choice of Insider or Outsider Top Executives in Acquired Companies. *Long Range Planning, 42*(3), 359–389. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2009.05.005

Angwin, D. N. (2020, January 20). *Success and Failure in Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A): A Research Review for Midagon*. Deduktia. Retrieved December 30, 2024, from https://www.datocms-assets.com/99437/1645600015-success-and-failure-in-mergers-and-acquisitions-ma-a-research-review-for-midagon_2022-2.pdf

Armenakis, A. A., & Bedeian, A. G. (1999). Organizational Change: A Review of Theory and Research in the 1990s. *Journal of Management, 25*(3), 293–315. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639902500303

Asdar, M. (2023). Strategies for Managing Employees during Mergers and Acquisitions. *Advances in Human Resource Management Research, 1*(3), 114–125. https://doi.org/10.60079/ahrmr.v1i3.200

Atabey, U. (2023, January 16). *Motivations that Triggers M&A Transactions.* Rödl & Partner. Retrieved September 21, 2024, from https://www.roedl.com.tr/tr/tema/yazilar/motivations-that-triggers-ma-transactions-1

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2016). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 22*(3), 273–285. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), 309–328. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115

Barkema, H. G., Bell, J. H. J., & Pennings, J. M. (1996). Foreign entry, cultural barriers, and learning. *Strategic Management Journal, 17*(2), 151-166.

Birkinshaw, J., Bresman, H., & Håkanson, L. (2002). Managing the Post-acquisition integration process: How the human lntegration and Task integration processes interact to foster value creation. *Journal of Management Studies, 37*(3), 395–425. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00186

Bodner, J., & Capron, L. (2018). Post-merger integration. *Journal of Organization Design 7*(3). https://doi.org/10.1186/s41469-018-0027-4

Bordia, P., Hunt, E., Paulsen, N., Tourish, D., & DiFonzo, N. (2004). Uncertainty During Organizational Change: Is it all about control? *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 13*(3), 345–365. https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320444000128

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Burnes, B. (2017). Kurt Lewin and the Harwood Studies: The Foundations of OD. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 43*(2), 213–231. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886306297004

Buono, A. F., & Bowditch, J. L. (2003). *The human side of mergers and acquisitions: Managing collisions between people, cultures, and organizations.* Beardbooks. ISBN: 978-1-58798-176-0

Canaff, A. L., & Wright, W. (2004). High anxiety: Counseling the job-insecure client. *Journal of Employement Counseling, 41*(1), 2–10. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1920.2004.tb00872.x

Cartwright, S., & Cooper, C. L. (1996). *Managing Mergers, Acquisitions, and Strategic Alliances: Integrating People and Cultures* (2nd edition). Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, Boston. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-7506-2341-4.50003-5

Cartwright, S., & Cooper, C. L. (1993). The psychological impact of merger and acquisition on the individual: A Study of building society managers. *Human Relations, 46*(3), 327–347. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679304600302

Chen, C., & Findlay, C. (2022). A Review of Cross-border Mergers & Acquisitions in APEC: A report prepared by the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) for the APEC Investment Experts Group (IEG). Retrieved May 3, 2025 from https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/publications/2002/7/a-review-of-crossborder-mergers-and-acquisitions-in-apec-2002/02_cti_ieg_ma.pdf

Chou, P. (2015). The Effects of Workplace Social Support on Employee's Subjective Well-Being. *European Journal of Business and Management 7*(6). Retrieved January 6, 2025, from https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/EJBM/article/view/20294?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Coleman, P. T., & Ferguson, R. (2014). Making Conflict Work: Harnessing the Power of Disagreement. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. ISBN: 978-0544148390

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th edition). SAGE Publications. ISBN: 978-1-5063-3020-4

Davis, T. (2024, May 21). *What Is Well-Being? Definition, Types, and Well-Being Skills.* Psychology Today. Retrieved May 3, 2025, from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/click-here-for-happiness/201901/what-is-well-being-definition-types-and-well-being-skills

Day, A., & Randell, K. D. (2014). Building a foundation for psychologically healthy workplaces and well-being. In A. Day, E. K. Kelloway, & J. J. Hurrell (Eds.), *Workplace Well-being: How to Build Psychologically Healthy Workplaces* (pp. 3–26). Wiley Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118469392.ch1

Degbey, W. (2016). *Customer retention in a cross-border acquisition: A single case study of a knowledge-intensive firm* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Turku]. Retrieved May 3, 2025, from https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/125792/AnnalesE7Degbey.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

Dewe, P., & Cooper, C. (2012). *Well-being and Work: Towards a Balanced Agenda*. Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN: 978-0230243521

El Zuhairy, H., Taher, A., & Shafei I. (2015). Post-Mergers and Acquisitions: The Motives, Success Factors and Key Success Indicators. *Eurasian Journal of Business and Management, 3*(2), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.15604/ejbm.2015.03.02.001

Fannin, A., Hooley, C., & Nelson, E. J. (2024). Greater Emotional and Psychological Well-being Are Associated With Reduced Employee Self-report Illness-Related Absenteeism: A Multi-Industry, Cross-sectional Study Conducted During COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 66*(4), 310–315. https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000003042

Forgeard, M. J. C., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M. & Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 1*(1), 79–106. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v1i1.15

Giddy, I. (2009). *Mergers & Acquisitions: Definitions and Motivations.* New York University Stern School of Business. Retrieved September 21, 2024, from https://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~igiddy/articles/mergers_and_acquisitions.html

Grawitch, M. J., Trares, S., & Kohler, J. M. (2007). Healthy workplace practices and employee outcomes. *International Journal of Stress Management, 14*(3), 275–293. https://doi.org/10.1037/1072-5245.14.3.275

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis*. Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*(2), 268–279. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.2.268

Haspeslagh, P.C., & Farquhar, A.B. (1994). The Acquisition Integration Process: A Contingent Framework. In G. von Krogh, A. Sinatra, H. Singh (Eds.), *The Management of Corporate Acquisitions* (pp. 414–447). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-13016-0_16

Haspeslagh, P.C., & Jemison, D.B. (1991). *Managing Acquisitions: Creating Value through Corporate Renewal* (1st edition). Free Press. ISBN: 978-0029141656

Hati, L., & Pradhan, R. K. (2021). Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Well-Being: A Theoretical Framework. In R. K. Pradhan, & U. Kumar (Eds.), *Emotion, Well-Being, and Resilience* (pp. 379–394). Apple Academic Press. Retrieved January 1, 2025, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353149856_Antecedents_and_Consequences_of_Employee_Well-Being_A_Theoretical_Framework_CHAPTER_25

Hone, L. C., Jarden, A., Duncan, S., & Schofield, G. M. (2015). Flourishing in New Zealand Workers: Associations With Lifestyle Behaviors, Physical Health, Psychosocial, and Work-Related Indicators. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 57*(9), 973–983. https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000000508

Huang, C., & Wright, T. (2012). The many benefits of employee well-being in organizational research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 33*(8), 1188–1192. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1828

Hughes, R. H., Kleinschmidt, S., & Sheng, A.Y. (2020). Using structured interviews to reduce bias in emergency medicine residency recruitment: Worth a second look. *AEM Education and Training, 5*(S1), S130-S134. https://doi.org/10.1002/aet2.10562

IMAA. (2021). *Mergers & Acquisitions Worldwide.* Retrieved September 20, 2024, from https://imaa-institute.org/mergers-and-acquisitions-statistics/

Jackson, S. E., Luo, Y., & Schuler, R. S. (2003). *Managing Human Resources in Cross-Border Alliances* (1st edition). Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203451236

Juniper, B. (2011). Defining employee wellbeing. *Occupational Health, 63*(10), 25. Retrieved May 3, 2025, from https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/defining-employee-wellbeing/docview/901519086/se-2?accountid=14797

Keeman, A., Näswall, K., Malinen, S., & Kuntz, J. (2017). Employee Wellbeing: Evaluating a Wellbeing Intervention in Two Settings. *Front. Psychol., 8*(505), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00505

Khatri, P., & Gupta, P. (2019). Development and validation of employee wellbeing scale – a formative measurement model. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management, 12*(5), 352-368. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJWHM-12-2018-0161

Komildjanovna, N. M. (2024). THE POWER OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTION AND ITS CRUCIAL ROLE IN DISCOVERING UNANTICIPATED ANSWERS, GATHERING ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND IMPORTANT INSIGHTS. *Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research*, *2*(10), 33–45. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://webofjournals.com/index.php/1/article/view/1881

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading Change.* Harvard Business School Press. ISBN: 9780875847474

Kummer, C. (2008). Motivation and retention of key people in mergers and acquisitions. *Strategic HR Review, 7*(6), 5–10. https://doi.org/10.1108/14754390810906373

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (3rd edition). SAGE Publications. ISBN: 978-1-4522-7572-7

Malik, A., Sinha, P., Budhwar, P., & Pereira, V. (2023). Managing legitimacy in a cross-border post-merger integration context: the role of language strategies. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 34*(21), 4144–4174. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2023.2237878

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2008). Early predictors of job burnout and engagement. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 93*(3), 498–512. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.93.3.498

Murtin, F., Arnaud, B., Le Thi, C., & Parten-Thirion, A. (2022). The relationship between quality of the working environment, workers' health and well-being: Evidence from 28 OECD countries. *OECD Papers on Well-being and Inequalities*, 4. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/c3be1162-en

Nor Rashidi, M., Ara Begum, R., Mokhtar, M., & Pereira, J. J., (2014). The Conduct of Structured Interviews as Research Implementation Method. *Journal of Advanced Research Design 1*(1), 28-34. Retrieved April 21, 2025, from https://www.akademiabaru.com/doc/ARDV1_N1_P28_34.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Parzefall, M., & Huhtala, H. (2007). A Review of Employee Well-being and Innovativeness: An Opportunity for a Mutual Benefit. *Creativity and Innovation Management, 16*(3), 299-306. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8691.2007.00442.x

Rao, R.S. (2021). Impact of Mergers and Acquisitions on the Mental Health and Overall Wellbeing of the Employees Involved – A Literature Review. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development, 12*(4), 329–334. https://doi.org/10.37506/ijphrd.v12i4.16565

Reus, T. H., & Lamont, B. T. (2009). The double-edged sword of cultural distance in international acquisitions. *Journal of International Business Studies, 40*(8), 1298-1316. https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2009.25

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motication, social development, and well-Being. *American Psychologist 55*(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Senior, B., & Fleming, J. (2006). *Organizational change* (3rd edition). FT Prentice Hall. ISBN: 978-0273695981

Shimizu, K., Hitt, M. A., Vaidyanath, D., & Pisano, V. (2004). Theoretical foundations of cross-border mergers and acquisitions: A review of current research and recommendations for the future. *Journal of International Management, 10*(3), 307–353. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2004.05.005

Statista. (2023). *Number of cross-border M&A deals worldwide 1985-2022*. Retrieved May 4, 2025, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/955594/worldwide-number-of-cross-border-merger-and-acquisition-deals/

Vakola, M., & Nikolaou, I. (2005). Attitudes toward organizational change: What is the role of employees' stress and commitment? *Employee Relations, 27*(2), 160–174. https://doi.org/10.1108/01425450510572685

van Dick, R., Ullrich, J., & Tissington, P. A. (2006). Working Under a Black Cloud: How to Sustain Organizational Identification after a Merger. *British Journal of Management, 17*(S1), S69–S79. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2006.00479.x

Warr, P. (1994). A conceptual framework for the study of work and mental health. *Work & Stress, 8*(2), 84-97. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678379408259982

Weber, Y., Shenkar, O., & Raveh, A. (1996). National and Corporate Cultural Fit in Mergers/Acquisitions: An Exploratory Study. *Management Science, 42*(8), 1215–1227. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.42.8.1215

Weick, K. E., & Quinn, R. E. (1999). Organizational change and development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50,* 361–386. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.50.1.361

Whitaker, S. C. (2012). *Mergers & Acquisitions Integration Handbook: Helping Companies Realize The Full Value of Acquisitions*. John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 978-1-118-00437-1

Zahoor, N., Khan, Z., & Sinkovics, R. R. (2022). The Role of Emotions in Cross-Border Mergers & Acquisitions: A Systematic Review of the Inter-Disciplinary Literature and Future Research Agenda. *Journal of International Management, 28*(4). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2022.100958

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview for employees of the case company

Post-merger integration (PMI):

1. Could you please describe your experience of the PMI?

2. Would you characterize the M&A as successful? Could you elaborate a bit more on this issue, e.g., in terms of what forms the basis for such an assessment?

3. Human and task integration:
   a) Were there any strategies used to manage employee adaptation *(human integration*) to the new situation and environment? If so, what kind?
   b) Were there any strategies used to manage the transfer of capabilities and resource sharing *(task integration*) between the companies? If so, what kind?
   c) Were human and task integration in balance with one another or do you feel as if one of them was considered more important?

4. What kind of an impact did the international environment (e.g., linguistic, cultural differences) have on your working conditions?

Demands during PMI:

5. During the PMI, what job demands (e.g., activities, events, practices, etc.) negatively affected your well-being as an employee in doing your job? And how?

Resources during PMI:

6. During the PMI, what job resources (e.g., activities, events, practices, etc.) positively affected your well-being as an employee in doing your job? And how?

Employee well-being following the M&A:

7. While working in this company during the PMI, what factors supported (or did not support) your physical, mental, and psychological well-being?

8. What was done to enable a balance (i.e., what actions, resources, etc.) to achieve successful M&A and employee well-being?

Appendix 2. Coded interview responses

Question 1: Could you please describe your experience of the PMI?
Codes:
Mental strain / exhaustion: V2, V4, V5, V6
Bad experience: V1
Inadequate onboarding / support: V1, V2, V5, V6
Positive experience / developmental: V3
Ambiguity / confusion: V1, V5
Challenging / learning experience: V2, V3, V6
Too few resources: V6

Question 2: Would you characterize the M&A as successful? Could you elaborate a bit more on this issue, e.g., in terms of what forms the basis for such an assessment?
Codes:
Project goals were achieved at the expense of personnel: V2, V5
The project was poorly planned / unsuccessful: V1, V4, V6
Successful (operations were transferred): V3
Explanations:
Poor leadership: V1, V4, V6
Too few resources: V1, V2, V5, V6
Focus on technical implementation and delivery: V6

Human and task integration:

Question 3: Were there any strategies used to manage employee adaptation (human integration) to the new situation and environment? If so, what kind?
Codes:

No support / no methods used: V1, V2, V3, V5, V6
Remote work made it more difficult / pandemic: V4
Team spirit boosting training: V4
Shared activities / information sharing only for official project members (more actual participants): V1, V2

Question 4: Were there any strategies used to manage the transfer of capabilities and resource sharing (task integration) between the companies? If so, what kind?
Codes:
Teams (meetings) / email as methods to share information: V1, V2, V5, V6
Inadequate information sharing / instructions (had to figure it out oneself): V2, V4, V5
Short training sessions: V3
Lack of know-how also in the departure country: V4

Question 5: Were human and task integration in balance with one another or do you feel as if one of them was considered more important?
Codes:
Tasks received more attention: V2, V3, V5
Integration of people was not considered: V2, V4, V5
Tasks received less attention: V1
Failed resourcing: V1, V2, V4
Both human and task integration were weakly managed, team-building attempts were made but real issues were ignored so it didn't work: V6

Question 6: What kind of an impact did the international environment (e.g., linguistic, cultural differences) have on your working conditions?
Codes:
Language barriers / misunderstandings caused challenges: V1, V2, V4, V5

Cultural differences / differences in working styles caused challenges: V1, V2, V4, V5
Positive challenge / motivation from international environment: V2, V3 →Note: Language barrier made communication and working more difficult and different ways of working had a burdening impact: V2
Burdensome / negative effect: V4, V5, V6 → Continuous misunderstandings due to language barrier hindered and made work more demanding: V4 →Straining experience: all invoices, documents and emails had to be translated which took time and energy: V5 →Differences in communication culture, which took a toll on Finnish employees as they both state that often Swedish colleagues did not either reply to emails or took a long time to reply: V2, V5 →Adapting to the different work culture took a couple of years: V6

Demands during PMI:

Question 7: During the PMI, what job demands (e.g., activities, events, practices, etc.) negatively affected your well-being as an employee in doing your job? And how?
Codes:
Excessive responsibility / workload: V1, V2, V5, V6 How? → Stress and anxiety increased: V1 →Long working days, no energy during free-time, exhaustion, and strain from high expectations: V2 →Had to work alone with bad onboarding and poor instructions and when I sent a question via email I had to wait and the workload would only increase meanwhile: V5
Poor leadership: V2, V4, V6 How? →Workload was increased despite attempts to inform the leader it is too much which lead to exhaustion: V2

→It felt like our manager/leaders did not listen to our worries and provided no support, felt like I was alone with problems: V4 →Indifferent attitude from the leaders caused increased deterioration in well-being, as they deglected the strain of the employees although they were brought up multiple times: V6
Ambiguity / poor onboarding: V4, V5, V6 How? →No instructions or principles, alone with problems. Also often did not know who to ask: V4 →Inadequate instructions, no response from people that should know about matters: V5 →Big workload with poor onboarding and adequate support. Poor onboarding made it even more exhausting. Constant pressure and uncertainty: V6
Multiple overlapping, interdependent projects: V3 How? → Killed motivation and was exhausting

Resources during PMI:
Question 8: During the PMI, what job resources (e.g., activities, events, practices, etc.) positively affected your well-being as an employee in doing your job? And how?
Codes:
Team support: V1, V2, V4, V5, V6 How? →The support and help from colleagues helped decrease stress and improve well-being: V1 →Colleagues became friends. They provided mental support and help with tasks. Information sharing was effective within the Finnish team: V2 →Support and discussing with the team members helped to push through. They also helped with work-related situations and tasks that were new to me: V4

→Team spirit within the Finnish team: One could always count on one's colleagues even when they were busy, which created the feeling of not being alone with tasks: V6
Own way of prioritizing tasks: V6 How? → Helped mental well-being and reduced stress
Psychologist: V6 How? →Helped mental well-being and reduced stress
New challenges / responsibilities / learning / new colleagues: V3

Employee well-being following the M&A:

Question 9: While working in this company during the PMI, what factors supported (or did not support) your physical, mental, and psychological well-being?
Codes:
Supportive factors:
Team support: V1, V2, V4, V5, V6
Sense of achievement: V3
Positive feedback: V3
Received onboarding: V3
Possibility for remote work (flexibility): V6
Appropriate tools at work: V5
Taking care of own health: V4, V5, V6
Hindering factors:
Long working days: V2, V6
Constant changes: V1
Poor leadership: V1, V2, V4, V5, V6 →refusing additional tasks resulted in negative feedback from the manager, and the tasks still ended up being forcibly assigned to them: V2

→Lack of mental support from manager, feeling of not being heard: V4
Uncertainty: V6 →Feeling lack of control, which added on to mental strain
Lack of (positive) recognition: V6 →Decreased motivation and well-being
Excessive responsibility / workload: V2, V4 →No work-life balance: V2
Inability to impact shortcomings: V3

Question 10: What was done to enable a balance (i.e., what actions, resources, etc.) to achieve successful M&A and employee well-being?
Codes:
Efforts to manage employees' workload: V1, V2, V3 →Not effective and also more employees were reduced: V2
Actions to improve team spirit and community: V1, V2, V3, V4
Management was not interested in employee well-being: V4, V5
Imbalance between tasks and number of employees was accepted by management: V5, V6
Salaries were increased for those partaking in the PMI: V3

Appendix 3. Original interview responses

1. Voisitko kuvailla kokemustasi transitioprojektissa?

6 vastausta

Todella huono kokemus. Omat tuntemukseni projektissa oli hyvin sekavat. Jos asioita ei osattu tehdä palvelukeskuksessa niin niitä ei myöskään ollut osattu tehdä alkuperäisessä tiimissä.

Kokemukseni oli henkisesti todella raskas. Työ ajoi minut uupumuksen partaalle kertaalleen jonka jälkeen on ollut vaikeaa palata enää samankaltaisiin töihin. Esihenkilö varmasti teki parhaansa mutta ei pystynyt olemaan läsnä minulle tai pyrkinyt ymmärtämään ongelmia. Koin että myös hän oli kuormittunut. Olen kuitenkin kiitollinen kokemuksesta. Projektissa pääsin haastamaan mm. ongelmanratkaisutaitojani, paineensietokykyäni sekä kielitaitoani.

Projekti oli itselle mieluinen: haastava, toi työhön monipuolisuutta ja itselle aiempaa enemmän vastuuta. Lisäksi projekti ja sen jälkeinen aika antoi kokemusta kansainvälisessä ympäristössä työskentelystä.

Projekti on ollut haastava ja henkisesti raskas.

Hyppäsin transitioprojektiin vähän kuin lennosta. Projekti oli jo hyvää vauhtia käynnissä, kun itse siirryin Suomen laskujen tekemisestä Ruotsin ja Tanskan laskujen pariin. Ylipäätään koko projekti osaltani sisälsi hyvin vähän perehdytystä ja tietoa, pyydettiin lähinnä itse opiskelemaan kaikki tarpeellinen tiedostojen ja teams-tallenteiden nojalla. Ohjeet olivat niukat ja vasta tekovaiheessa, ja kaikki englanniksi tai ruotsiksi. Projekti oli kuormittava ja stressaava, kun oletettiin että osaat minimaalisen perehdytyksen jälkeen kaiken tarpeellisen muiden maiden laskujen tiliöinnistä ja uuden organisaation kaikki avainhenkilöt, joille laskut tuli reitittää.

Uutena työntekijänä alkuun erittäin innostava, mutta projektin edetessä se muuttui melko hektiseksi ja henkisesti raskaaksi. Projekti antoi paljon arvokasta työkokemusta kansainvälisellä tasolla, mutta kulutti myös omaa henkistä hyvinvointia. Työ- ja resurssimäärä eivät kohdanneet, vaan itse ainakin olin suurimmaksi osaksi jatkuvasti kuormittunut. En saanut esihenkilöltä tukea vaikeaan tilanteeseen.

2. Luokittelisitko projektin kokonaisuudessaan onnistuneeksi? Millä perusteilla päädyit tähän vastaukseen?

6 vastausta

En koe projektin onnistuneen. Perustelut: Ohjaus esimies tasolta huonoa jolloin työntekijöillä on suuri vastuu. Ohjaus myös alkuperäisen tiimin puolelta heikkoa. Tekijöitä oli otettu liian vähän, joka ohjasi jo hankalaa tilannetta vielä hankalammaksi. Asioiden vihdoin mentyä paremmaksi, kun työt alkoivat sujua asiantuntijoiden kesken mallikkaasti kaikki parhaimmat osaajat tiputettiin tiimistä ja otettiin uusia halvempia tekijöitä tilalle.

Kokonaisuudessaan luokittelisin projektin onnistuneeksi, mutta tämä tapahtui henkilöstön hyvinvoinnin kustannuksella. Projektin tavoitteet saavutettiin asioiden osalta (shared service center saatiin siirrettyä Suomeen), mutta resursseja oli liian vähän ja ohjeita oli vaikea saada/niiden hankkiminen oli monen mutkan päässä ja aikaavievää.

Projekti oli yleisellä tasolla onnistunut. Toiminnot saatiin siirrettyä onnistuneesti lähtömaista kohdemaahan. Oletettavasti myös taloudellisesti onnistunut, kun henkilöstön määrä laski ja lisäksi henkilöstö keskittyi alemman palkkatason maahan.

Kaikissa projekteissa on haasteensa, eikä kaikkeen voida varautua. Tässä projektissa koskien omaa työtäni oli jo alun alkaen se iso haaste, että Ruotsissa oli juuri otettu käyttöön uudet ohjelmistot (ne joita Suomessa käytettiin, mutta osittain eri variaatioita), eikä Ruotsissa kukaan vielä hallinnut näitä ja uusia prosesseja. Tuotannolle/ostoille järjestelmät olivat uusia ja myös taloushallinnon ihmisille ja muille järjestelmiä käyttäville. Näin projektissa ei ollut kyse asioiden siirtämisestä toiseen maahan, vaan samalla kertaa uusien asioiden ja käytänteiden opettelemisesta molemmissa maissa.

Mielestäni projektiin on lähdetty jo alun alkaen ilman järkevää suunnitelmaa. Tämä projekti ja sen toteuttaminen kertoo minulle sen, ettei yrityksen johdolla ole mitään ymmärrystä siitä, mitä tämä työ oikeasti käytännössä vaatii.

Kaiketi tavoitteessa onnistuttiin, eli siirrettiin Ruotsin ja Tanskan taloushallinto Seinäjoelle hoidettavaksi, mutta se tapahtui pitkälti työntekijöiden hyvinvoinnin kustannuksella riittämättömillä resursseilla.

En. Vaikka projektin tavoitteet täyttyivät ajallaan, projektin aikana oli silti hirveästi epäkohtia jotka vaikuttivat vastaukseen. Projektin aikana painotettiin ehkä enemmän vain sen läpi vientiin ja tekniseen toteutukseen, mutta kaikki muu tuntui olleen jätetty puolitiehen. Ei perehdytystä kuin harvalle porukalle, ei tukea esihenkilöltä, liian vähäinen resurssimäärä työtehtäviin nähden. Projektin ajaksi olisi esimerkiksi voinut rekrytoida useamman määräaikaisen projektityöntekijän, jotka olisivat auttaneet suoriutumaan päivittäisistä työtehtävistä.

3. Käytettiinkö työntekijöiden uuteen tilanteeseen ja ympäristöön sopeutumiseen mitään keinoja? Jos kyllä, minkälaisia?

6 vastausta

Ei juurikaan. Yhteistä toimintaa oli jonkun verran johon sai osallistua vain virallisesti projektissa olevat. (Vaikka tekijöitä oli paljon enemmän kys. Projektissa)

Omalta osaltani en saanut hirveästi minkäänlaista tukea liittyen uuteen ympäristöön ja tilanteeseen. Minut vain laitettiin tekemään ja opettelemaan suhteellisen itsenäisesti asioita (näytettiin kerran/pari). En päässyt edes mukaan transitiota koskeviin palavereihin joissa tärkeistä asioista luultavasti keskusteltiin. Tuntui että olin välillä aika ulkopuolinen. Tuntui siltä, että minulta odotettiin paljon ja minun oletettiin aina joustavan.

En muista. Ei ainakaan mitään merkittäviä keinoja. Saimme kuulla projektin olleen ensimmäinen laatuaan yrityksessä, minkä oli kai tarkoitus antaa tunne suuresta saavutuksesta.

Omalta osaltani tulin uutena työntekijänä taloon juuri transition alla, ja myös minulle olivat kaikki ohjelmat ja käytänteet uusia. Korona myös vaikeutti tilannetta, kun piti työskennellä etänä. Minulle opetettiin (työharjoittelijat) ohjelmat muutamalla lauseella. Ulkopuolinen konsultti piti meille yhden hengennostatuskoulutuksen, jossa tutustuimme hieman toisiimme. Monet transitioprojektiin osallistuneista olivat kokonaan uusia yrityksen työntekijöitä.

En kyllä muista, että tähän olisi mitään keinoja juurikaan käytetty. Yhteisiä palavereita muiden maiden välillä pidettiin, mutta itseäni ne eivät ainakaan auttaneet sopeutumaan.

Ei

4. Käytettiinkö tietotaidon siirtämiseen ja jakamiseen mitään keinoja (eri maiden) yritysten välillä? Jos kyllä, minkälaisia?

6 vastausta

Teamsin ja sähköpostin välityksellä osittain jaettiin tietotaitoa.

Varmaankin juuri niitä transitioon liittyviä palavereita, joihin en koskaan päässyt mukaan enkä tiennyt niiden olemassaolosta hyvin pitkään aikaan. Lisäksi neuvoa sain sähköpostitse ruotsalaisilta kollegoilta ja suomalaisilta tiimikavereilta jotka tekivät osittain samoja juttuja.

Opetustilanteet paikanpäällä ja etänä varsinaisen projektin aikana. Lisäksi saimme lyhyet koulutukset eri maiden alv-käytännöistä. Merkittävin keino oli paikallisten talouden henkilöstön jatkuva tuki projektin aikana ja sen jälkeen.

Esihenkilö käski minun järjestää Teams palavereita ruotsalaisten kanssa omiin työtehtäviin liittyen. Tässä oli lähinnä se ongelma, että heillä oli melkein vähemmän tietoa ohjelmista ja ostotilauslaskujen kohdistamisesta kuin minulla. Tietotaidon siirtämiseksi pieni joukko henkilöitä kävi Ruotsissa muutaman päivän katsomassa mitä he tekevät ja tämän perusteella tuli tehdä itselle työohjeet. Eli valmiita työohjeita ei ollut asioille, vaan meidän tuli tehdä ne itse.

Tietoa jaettiin palavereissa ja teamsin kautta tiedostoina, joka on mielestäni todella heikko suoritus.

Muutama työntekijä eri tiimeistä vieraili muutaman päivän Ruotsissa, jossa heitä perehdytettiin ja sessiot tallennettiin teams-palavereina. Vierailun jälkeen oli säännöllisiä palavereita, joissa käytiin läpi projektin etenemistä ja oli mahdollisuus kysyä askarruttavista asioista.

5. Olivatko ihmisten ja tehtävien integroiminen tasapainossa keskenään, vai koitko, että toinen niistä sai enemmän huomiota?

6 vastausta

Mielestäni tehtävien integroituminen sai vähemmän huomiota eikä siihen oltu panostettu tarpeeksi.

Mielestäni tehtävien integroimiseen keskityttiin tai ainakin niille oli tavoitteet ja työntekijöiden piti toteuttaa ja suorittaa. Ihmisten hyvinvointiin/sopeutumiseen pyrittiin varmaankin yleisillä viikottaisilla koko ostoreskontran tiimipalavereilla, vaikka ne eivät juuri käsitelleet transitiota sen kummemmin. Kuitenkaan resurssipulaan ei juurikaan pyritty vastaamaan (jotkut tekivät myös viikonloppuina ilmaiseksi töitä epätoivossa).

Tiivistettynä tehtävien integroimista pidettiin tärkeänä mutta se laitettiin aika pitkälti työntekijöiden harteille ilman että työntekijöitä valmisteltiin siihen millään tavalla.

Tehtävien integrointi oli selvästi merkittävämmässä asemassa.

Ongelma oli se, että alunperin ei oltu mietitty, kuinka paljon työntekijöitä tarvitaan ja mikä on realistinen työnjako. Kaikki henkilöt eivät saaneet olla mukana alusta saakka. Matkan varrella vasta huomattiin, että muutama henkilö ei voi hoitaa kaikkia siirtyviä töitä, vaan tarvitaan enemmän työntekijöitä. On vaikea ymmärtää, miksi yrityksen johto kuvitteli, että toisessa maassa voidaan selvitä samoista työtehtävistä pienemmillä resursseilla, kun asia on päinvastoin (kieli kysymykset, kulttuurierot, hitaampi kommunikointi...)

Ihmisten integroimiseen ei kiinnitetty juurikaan huomiota, tehtävät saivat kaiken huomion.

Koen, että molemmat olivat heikolla pohjalla. Projektin aikana järjestettiin palavereita, joissa oli mahdollisuus kysyä. Kuitenkin, kun työntekijöillä ei ollu tietoa mitä täytyy tehdä, niin oli vaikea muodostaa kysymyksiä. Ihmisiä integroitiin erilaisten huviretkien myötä sekä pelkästään suomitiimin osalta että myös kansainvälisesti yhdessä. Koen kuitenkin, että nämä retket eivät tehneet mitään, sillä muut ongelmatilanteet jäivät huomiotta.

6. Minkälainen vaikutus kansainvälisellä toimintaympäristöllä (esim. kieli-, kulttuurierot) oli työskentelyolosuhteisiisi?

6 vastausta

Kansainvälinen toimintaymäristö on haastava muttei se ole este. Eri kielellä toimiminen tuo omat haasteensa ja väärinymmärryksiä syntyy. Kulttuurieroja löytyi jonkin verran. Koen että suomalaiset ovat tottuneet suoraan puheeseen ilman small talkia.

Tykkäsin kansainvälisestä ympäristöstä (nosti motivaatiota) mutta kyllähän se aiheutti omia juttujaan. Kielimuuri haastoi ja vaikeutti kommunikointia ja työntekoa. Myös erilaiset työskentelytavat (kulttuurit?) vaikuttivat työskentelyyn kuormittavalla tavalla. Jotkut ruotsalaiset kollegat eivät vastanneet useiden yritystenkn jälkeen sähköposteihin ja vaikeat asiat jäivät meidän harteillemme.

Koin asian positiivisena. Toi vaihtelua ja uutta haastetta työhön.

Vaikea sanoa kuinka paljon kulttuurierot vaikuttivat, vai oliko kyse vain persoona eroista. Joka tapauksessa kommunikointi pääsääntöisesti sähköpostin välityksellä ja molempien osapuolten kommunikointi ei omalla äidinkielellä aiheutti jatkuvasti väärinkäsityksiä. Se hidasti ja vaikeutti huomattavasti työskentelyä. Esim. jotkut henkilöt, joiden kanssa asioitiin lähes päivittäin, sanoivat heti aluksi, että eivät valitettavasti osaa englantia.

Todella kuormittava. Kaikki laskut, dokumentit ja sähköpostit joutui kääntämään, joka vei paljon aikaa ja energiaa, eikä siltikään aina saanut selville mitä tarkoitettiin. Palavereiden kieli muuttui englanniksi, ja välillä oli vaikea saada selkoa, mitä muut työntekijät tarkoittivat. Keskustelukulttuuri maiden välillä oli myös hyvin erilaista, ja vastauksia kysymyksiin sai monesti odottaa pitkäänkin.

Negatiivinen. Koen, että kieli ei itselleni ollut haaste, mutta ruotsinkielisten työntekijöiden englannin osaaminen oli heikkoa, jolloin kommunikaatiossa oli haasteita. Ruotsalainen työntekokulttuuri eroaa suomalaisesta työntekokulttuurista myös huomattavasti, joten siihen sopeutuminen vei aikaa pari vuotta.

7. Mitkä työn vaatimukset (esim. tehtävät, tapahtumat, käytännöt jne.) vaikuttivat kielteisesti hyvinvointiisi työntekijänä transitioprojektin aikana? Millä tavoin?

6 vastausta

Liian suuren vastuun ottaminen rivityöntekijänä. Tämä vaikuttaa omaan hyvinvointiin kielteisesti stressin ja ahdistuksen lisäännyttyä.

Johtaminen. Tuntui että minua ei kuunneltu eikä avunhuutojani otettu huomioon. Sen sijaan minulta odotettiin aina vain enemmän. Työkuormaa lisättiin jatkuvasti ja sitä oli liikaa. Työpäivät venyivät enkä jaksanut vapaa-ajallakaan enää tehdä mitään. Uuvuin työkuormasta ja korkeista odotuksista. Monet työtehtävät olivat myös aikapaineellisia ja hyvin erilaisia keskenään. Tuntui että jouduin hyppimään jatkuvasti asiasta toiseen, mikä esti kunnon flowtilan ja lisäsi virheiden mahdollisuuden määrää. Tilannetta pahensi vielä se että saimme negatiivia sähköposteja ruotsalaisilta kollegoilta joissa meitä syyllistettiin ja kysyttiin että miksi emme ole hoitaneet joitakin asioita. Itse aloin ahdistumaan jo sähköpostin merkkiäänestä…

Vaikka mielestäni mikään ei ole ikinä täysin valmista, vaan asioita voi aina kehittää, niin koin että osastollamme oli liian monta toisistaan riippuvaista projektia päällekkäin. Tämä loi jatkuvia "sitten kun x on valmis, niin helpottaa" tilanteita, mikä oli paikoin kuormittavaa ja poisti onnistumisen tunteet työstä, kun mistään ei tullut ikinä "valmista".

Epäselvyys, kun mitään valmiita ohjeita tai toimintatapoja ei ollut eikä oikein selvyyttä kenen kanssa asioita tulisi selvittää. Esihenkilöltä/johdolta ei saanut tukea, vaan päinvastoin tuntui, ettei edes kuunnella huolia. Ongelmien kanssa oli aluksi täysin yksin, kun oltiin etätöissä.

Työn määrä, joka piti yksin saada hoidetuksi, huono perehdytys, se että kysyessä ei monesti saanut minkäänlaista vastausta ja odotellessa työmäärä kasvoi kasvamistaan, puutteelliset ohjeet

Projektin aikana työmäärä kasvoi kohtuuttomaksi ja jouduin hoitamaan tehtäviä suurimmaksi osaksi yksin ilman riittävää tukea. Perehdytys oli puutteellinen tai sitä ei ollut lainkaan, mikä teki tehtävien hoitamisesta erityisen kuormittavaa. Lisäksi koko organisaatiossa vallitsi jatkuva kiire, eikä kenelläkään tuntunut olevan aikaa neuvoa tai tukea, vaikka tilanne olisi ollut haastava. Tämä loi jatkuvan paineen ja epävarmuuden tunteen itselleni. Koen myös, että johdon välinpitämättömyys heikensi hyvinvointia entisestään, sillä tukea ei tullut ylhäältä päin, eikä työntekijöiden kuormitusta tai huolia otettu riittävästi huomioon, vaikka niitä tuotiin useasti esiin.

8. Mitkä työn resurssit (esim. tehtävät, tapahtumat, käytännöt jne.) vaikuttivat myönteisesti hyvinvointiisi työntekijänä transitioprojektin aikana? Millä tavoin?

6 vastausta

Omien tiimikavereiden tuki ja apu. Tuen ja avun avulla oma hyvinvointi paranee sekä stressi vähenee.

Erityisesti työkavereiden tuki. Työkavereista sain myös hyviä ystäviä. Työkaverit tukivat henkisesti lohduttamalla tai samaistumalla sekä auttoivat parhalla mahdollisella tavalla. Tiedon jakaminen oli Suomen tiimin kesken aika sujuvaa ja auttoi tekemisessä.

Uuden oppiminen, uudet tehtävät ja vastuut, sekä uudet työkaverit olivat mieluisia.

Omasta tiimistä saatu työtovereiden tuki ja keskustelu auttoivat jaksamaan. Myös se, että tiimissä oli henkilöitä, joilta sai apua ja neuvoja tilanteisiin, joissa ei itse ollut täysin varma, kuinka pitäisi toimia.

Oman tiimin tuki.

Kollegoiden tuki ja yhteishenki. Vaikka kaikilla oli kiire, pystyi aina luottamaan siihen, että joku kollega auttaa siinä vaiheessa, kun tilanne meni mahdottomaksi. Se loi tunnetta siitä, ettei ollut täysin yksin kaiken keskellä, vaan tämä oli myös uutta monelle muullekin. Lisäksi oma tapa organisoida työtehtäviä ja priorisoida auttoi pitämään pään jollain tapaa kasassa ja vähentämään stressiä, sekä tottakai kääntyminen psykologin vastaanotolle.

9. Työskennellessäsi yrityksessä projektin aikana, mitkä tekijät tukivat (tai eivät tukeneet) fyysistä, henkistä ja psykologista hyvinvointiasi?

6 vastausta

Tukevat tekijät: Tiimikaverit Ei tukevat tekijät: Johto Liialliset muutokset lyhyen ajan sisällä

Minun hyvinvointiani tukivat työkaverit, joista tuli pian ainoa syyni ilmaantua työpaikalle. Onnistumisien tunteet myös tukivat hyvinvointiani sekä motivaatiotani. Minua hyvinvointiani sen sijaan ei tukenut esihenkilö (päinvastoin, lisätyötehtävistä kieltäytyminen aiheutti syyllistystä sekä puhutteluja ja tehtävät silti päätyivät väkisin minun tehtävikseni). Lisäksi työn ja vapaa-ajan tasapainoa ei ollut. Tein jatkuvasti ylitöitä.

Plussaa: Opin uutta, sain opastusta, kehuja onnistumisista ja erityisesti koin auttaneeni ja tukeneeni muita kykyjeni mukaan. Miinusta: en voinut vaikuttaa epäkohtiin haluamallani tavalla.

Henkistä hyvinvointia tukivat hyvät työtoverit ja huumori heidän kanssaan. Lisäksi tasapaino omassa elämässä ja hyvä terveys auttoivat jaksamaan. Kielteisiä asioita olivat henkisen tuen puute esihenkilöiltä ja se, ettei tullut kuulluksi. Lisäksi työmäärä oli välillä kohtuuton.

Hyvät työvälineet, oman tiimin tuki, psykologikäynnit. Huono johtaminen ei tukenut mitään näistä.

Lähtökohtaisesti kumppanin, työkavereiden ja työpsykologin tuki ja keskusteluapu. Myös mahdollisuus etätyöhön, jolloin pystyi vapaasti säännellä omia taukoja ja käydä vaikka kaupungilla, kävelyllä tai nukkua, mikä auttoi jaksamiseen. Toisaalta pitkittynyt istumatyö, pitkät päivät ja epäsäännöllinen rytmi vaikuttivat negatiivisesti vireystilaan ja palautumiseen. Jatkuva epävarmuus, huono viestintä ja johdon etäisyys heikensivät kokemusta hallinnantunteesta, mikä lisäsi henkistä kuormitusta. Myös tunne siitä, että oma työpanos jäi usein näkymättömäksi, söi motivaatiota ja hyvinvointia.

10. Mitä tehtiin **tasapainon** mahdollistamiseksi (eli toimenpiteet, resurssit jne.) transitioprojektin onnistumisen ja työntekijöiden hyvinvoinnin saavuttamiseksi?

6 vastausta

-Yhteistoimintaa työn ulkopuolella. (Aika vähän tosin) -Kesätyöntekijät

Työtehtäviä yritettiin tasoittaa työntekijöiden välillä mutta ongelma tuli siitä kun huomattiin, että työtehtäviä on liikaa suhteessa työntekijöihin. Uudelleenjako jäi siis kesken eikä sitä tehty koskaan loppuun. Henkilöstöäkin vähennettiin entisestään. Meillä oli myös tykypäiviä ja juhlia.

En tiedä kaikista toimista, mutta osa niistä liittyi normaaliin työssäkäyntiin, eivätkä siis olleet mitenkään erityisesti kohdennettu transitiota varten. Ainakin työmäärää yritettiin tasata henkilöstön kesken muutamaan otteeseen, palkka nousi transitioon osallistuvilla, sekä meille järjestättiin muistaakseni useampi kuin yksi tykytapahtuma.

Mielestäni yrityksen johdon tasolta työntekijöiden hyvinvoinnista ei oltu millään tavalla kiinnostuneita. Kaikki muutostilanteet ovat ihmisille haastavia, ja vaativat erityistä muutosjohtamisen osaamista. Projektissa pidettiin säännöllisesti palavereita ja myös virkistymisiltoja, mutta mielestäni se tärkein eli oikeat resurssit ja työntekijöiden kuunteleminen puuttuivat kokonaan.

Tasapainoa ei mielestäni koko projektin aikana ollut ollenkaan. Apua ja lisäresursseja pyydettiin koko projektin ajan lisää, mitään kuitenkaan saamatta. Projekti vietiin läpi täysin työntekijöiden hyvinvoinnin kustannuksella ja heidän korkeaan työmoraaliinsa nojaten, esihenkilöstö ei kiinnostunut henkilöstön kuormituksesta ja huonovointisuudesta. Aina keksittiin tekosyitä, joilla saatiin henkilöstö sitoutettua töiden suorittamiseen, esim. turha lupailu siitä, että "sitten helpottaa kun...", eikä sitä koskaan tapahtunut.

Ei mielestäni mitään.