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**HOW TO ACHIEVE A COMPANY'S VISION SUCCESSFULLY
THROUGH STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

Master's Thesis in
Strategic Business Development

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ABSTRACT

Globalization, fast market change, and rapid technology evolution have led organizations to situations where they need to be ready to answer to that change. Vision is the base for this change. Changing direction means the ability of the strategy to adjust to quick change, corresponding to new needs. The strategy is a plan that seeks to achieve the target pursued - vision. Furthermore, strategic actions direct everyday operational level acts. Vision is a fundamental factor that every strategic action should be based on. Research is still lacking themes such as how companies' personnel perceive vision and what kind of impact a vision has in personnel's everyday work tasks.

This study examines how personnel perceives vision, how the vision is affecting to employees and how the vision could be reached successfully through implementing strategies. Data is collected through interviews that present personnel's voice about the vision, how it has changed the way they work and how the vision could be developed through strategies to achieve the vision successfully.

The findings of this study show that vision is seen as an important issue but not concrete enough. The management teams and personnel's answers differed from each other. Surprisingly, vision as a concept was not seen that important for management team when contrarily employees perceived it as a starting point for the whole company. Communication ambiguity about an individual or team-specific milestones, high-level of vision and lack of resources, were all factors that seemed to hinder a company's journey towards the vision. Even though vision's fundamental aim is not to provide practical steps to success, yet most of the informants were willing to see more guidelines which direct everyday actions towards the vision. For example, team-specific strategies and individual targets are one example of those, while the management team and the co-founder were willing to give autonomy to employees to find out the way to the vision.

KEYWORDS: vision, strategy, strategy change, implementation, reaching vision through strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Markets are currently changing much faster than twenty years ago in every business domain. Ability to create a comprehensive understanding of the organizational vision and managing strategy implementation in constant change are competencies which lead to a successful strategy process and competitive advantage (Raps 2005; Hrebiniak 2006; Hill, Jones & Schilling 2014: 3). A vision should be a guideline that directs all actions of the company. As the Japanese proverb goes “Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”(Wiita & Leonard 2017).

Vision, strategy, and strategy implementation are all tied with each other. Without an understanding of the organization’s vision, the company does not know where they are aiming. Without a proper understanding of strategy, the company does not know what steps need to be taken to achieve the vision. Finally, without an understanding of successful strategy implementation, plans will only stay on powerpoint slides and wanted progress will never happen. Unfortunately often, a good strategic plan is believed to be sufficient itself and implementation will be neglected. It is not a surprise that implementation failure rates are this high if companies’ personnel even do not have a clue about the big picture and guidelines to align everyday work actions with the general level vision (Gottschalk 2008: 184, 193; Jooste and Fourie 2009; Speculand 2009).

If company personnel does not have a clue about the vision, how is the company supposed to be successful? Assuming that leaders initiate and drive change (Kotter, 1995), it is imperative that future research examines whether organizational vision has an impact on organizational readiness for change and how guiding the vision has been seen in an organization. (Kotter 1995.)

Debate on the strategy and its implementation is more polyphonic than ever before. Strategy and implementation are discussed broadly on various business and mainstream media. Media are wondering what is wrong with strategy implementation and why companies are failing time after time; ‘Only change will remain’ (Rokka 2017), ‘Business strategies are Hebrew, both for management and employees’ (Kauppalehti 2016), ‘There's one common trait in many business failures’ (Canwell & Wellins 2018). All they are trying to find the solution to challenges of vision and strategy implementation. Broad

quantitative researches pointed out how companies are struggling with implementing high-level concepts into action; PwC's strategy and the strategy consulting division researched 700 executives across a variety of industries and pointed out that only 8% of company leaders were said to excel at both strategy and execution. (Leinwand & Rotering 2017.) Studies have shown that 95% of companies' personnel have not understood or even do not know their company's strategy and 90% of frontline employees have no link to proper information about success or failure of strategy implementation. (Kaplan & Norton 2005: 72; Waterman, Peters & Phillips 1988.)

It is essential to understand that every new vision starts with managing change. Hrebiniak's (2006) research focused on 443 managers and what skills they appreciated the most in strategy work, pointed out that change management is the most crucial skill required to be succeeded in strategy work. Therefore, it can be said that change management is a base for the new vision leading to the functional strategy process. Active strategic leadership and change management have shown to be the most crucial core competencies to be successful in implementation. (Raps 2005; Hrebiniak 2006; Jooste & Fourie 2009)

The implementation process calls examination due to its uniqueness (Strohhecker 2016; Hu, Leopold-Wildburger & Strohhecker 2017). Researches main focus has always been on strategic planning. Nevertheless, there are several strategy implementation studies, like Helfat and Peteraf's (2015) research focusing on dynamic capabilities whereas Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst (2006) focus has been on process dynamics in strategy implementation. Rensburg, Davis and Venter's (2014) research focused on the crucial role of middle managers in strategy implementation, providing important aspects to study's "2.4.2 Leaders' contribution to successful strategy implementation" chapter.

Another meaningful aspect to this study are researches that focus on communication's crucial role in employee engagement and strategy success. For instance, Raupp and Hoffjann's (2012) publication in the *Journal of Communication Management* provided a new perspective on the relationship between communication management as an empowering bridge between strategic planning and execution. Moreover, Tayler (2010) has studied implementation involvement and evaluation which focus can be seen in the literature review. A number of failures in business target achievement can be attributed to strategy implementation failure, not the strategy formulation itself (Beer, Eisentat & Spector 1990). This practical gap creates a need to understand more deeply the factors influencing unsuccessful implementation of goals and strategies, to help organizations

overcome and prevent failures in implementing strategic initiatives to achieve the vision (Pella, Sumarwan, Daryanto & Kirbrandoko 2013). As said, the strategy is the tool to reach the vision. To fill these research gaps, this study is taking a practical perspective on strategy and how developing it, the company can achieve wanted future position - vision.

Focusing only on strategic planning without genuine intentions to implement those in practice will surely create challenges in maintaining priorities and reaching the long-term vision. It is alarming how implementation's potential has been overlooked as an important lever in the strategy process. From a resource-based perspective, a company with sufficient strategy implementation abilities will have a great potential source of competitive advantage over their competitors who do not pay attention to implementation. In other words, companies who are successful in strategy implementation are more likely to achieve their vision. Managing implementation means taking steps towards the vision step by step. (Barney & Zajac 1994; Pella et al. 2013; Hrebiniak 2013; Monauni 2017.)

Understanding the vision and how strategy implementation influences to an individual should be an initial point before any other action. Even though implementation challenges have been noticed years ago, the situation is still getting even more challenging. Globalization has and will modify every industry, bringing all stakeholders and competitors closer than a decade ago. Strategy and implementation's fundamental intention is to build a unique organization that differs from its competitors. (Jarzabkowski 2004.) As Porter (1991) stated, no company can attain competitive advantage if they cannot be unique with their strategy. A well-understood vision is the starting point for differentiation that will lead the company to a competitive advantage.

All in all, every company executes their vision in their own strategic way. Plenty of factors will affect the success of strategy implementation. Thus, every company is a unique sample having a new research opportunity to study how personnel understands the vision and how they execute it in their everyday work tasks. It is interesting to take one target company and examine how they understand their organizational vision and do their actions drive towards the company level target. As mentioned earlier, without a proper understanding of planned vision and how it is able to achieve through strategies, the company is not able to reach the vision. Thus, this research might help to understand more broadly what is working well at the moment and how strategy implementation helps companies to reach the vision.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of the thesis is to increase understanding of how a vision is perceived, how a vision influences the employees and how the vision could be reached through implementing strategies. The research questions are as follows:

1. How vision is perceived
2. How vision is affecting to employees?
3. How to reach vision successfully through strategies?

The empirical part of the thesis is the base on single case study research. This enables the research to deep-dive into a vision phenomenon more closely, leading to more analytical conclusions, than multiple case studies could provide. Important in this study is to understand is the vision seen as an important part of employees' work and how the vision will be achieved by the following strategies? Thesis empirical part is composed of target company's interviews and examination how target company's (Sievo Oy) personnel understood their vision "Being the global leader in procurement analytics" and how everyday actions are aligned to achieve it. The aim of the study is to examine how personnel perceives the vision, what kind of impact it has on employees and how to reach the vision through strategies. Figure 1. illustrates how achieving the vision is strongly linked to strategies and practical implementation.

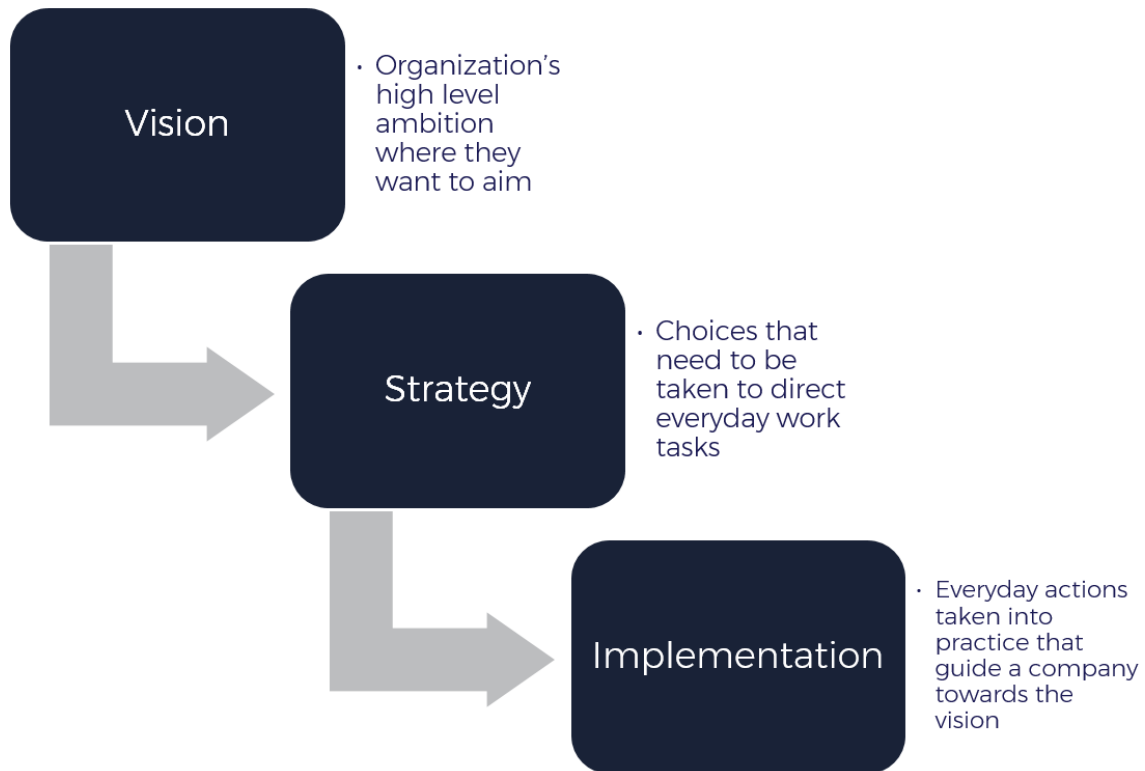


Figure 1. Cascading vision waterfall.

1.3 Structure of the study

The structure of the study is presented in figure 2. The first chapter of the study is the introduction, presenting the background of the study and prevailing situation, the aim, and the research questions and the structure of the study. The second chapter is the literature review, giving a theoretical perspective and going through central themes of the topic. It includes descriptions of vision, strategy and what is strategy change. Moreover, literature review depicts challenges of strategy implementation and finally proposes elements for successful strategy implementation. The third chapter focuses on the methodology and empirical approaches. It includes research philosophy and methods, data collection, data analysis and a review of the trustworthiness of the study. The fourth chapter presents the empirical findings. The fifth chapter discusses and compares the empirical findings to the main theoretical concepts. In the last section, the main findings are concluded and the theoretical and managerial implications are given. Finally, the study presents limitations and suggestions for further research.



Figure 2. Structure of the study

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a comprehensive framework for vision perceiving and how it influences strategy implementation. This theoretical framework provides a perspective for strategic management research's present state, creates the reference framework for this study, and helps the reader to interpret the results and dimensions of the research. The chapter starts with defining core terms - vision, and strategy. It also presents strategy change and its role in achieving the vision. Moreover, literature review points out what challenges changes cause inside a company and finally how these challenges can be solved to achieve the vision and what it calls from personnel of a company.

2.1 Core terms of the study

2.1.1 Vision

Before understanding how and why organizations are acting as they act, it is essential to understand the base driver where these activities are aiming. Every company needs the target where they want to be in the future. Without clear target individuals of the company do not know how they direct decision making, affecting stagnation of the company. That base driver and the ultimate goal are called vision.

Compared to strategy, the vision has a longer period, which they can use as supporting guide in a decision-making situation. In other words, vision is a picture of the future and strategy is decisions and the roadmap which leads towards the vision. Vision cannot be addressed standalone without strategy and implementation or vice versa. (Armenakis, Harris & Field 1999; James & Lahti 2011.) However, the strategy is the tool that leads the company toward a long-term vision. (Kamensky 2010: 17). In other words, vision without a proper strategy is not achieved, and strategy without a vision is an effort without knowing where to go.

The term organizational vision has been defined in many different ways in business literature. Tvorik and McGivern (1997) described vision as the essence of work, which encompasses all organization's actions and values. Vision emphasizes change and defines future's position. Compared to strategy, the vision has a longer period. (James & Lahti 2011) Typical for visions are high reaching goals that challenge existing norms,

conveying a company's expectations of superior performance, giving personnel confidence that they are attaining the wanted vision (Awamleh & Gardner 1999). In this study, the vision has been composed according to Kirkpatrick, Locke (1996), Kotter (1995), James & Lahti 2011) who describe vision as an idealized future goal where a company wants to be in the future.

Understanding organizational vision plays a critical role in the success of the company. Researches have shown that articulation and communication of the vision are critical for an organization to cope with change and strategy implementation successfully. (Baum, Locke & Kirkpatrick 1998.) Vision creates core sentiments among organization's personnel that they can use as a guide in challenging decision making situations. It can be said that vision is an initiative force for the whole organizational change. (Armenakis, Harris & Feild 1999.)

Vision should be guiding philosophy which engages a set of organizational core values in an inspiring way (Collins and Porras 1991; Frese, Beigel & Schoenborn 2003). Grounding the vision to follow the core values of an organization helps leaders convince vision message receivers to pursue the future organizational position and encourage individuals to ultimate work performance. (Slack, Orife & Anderson 2010.) Vision should also inspire, motive and be a guiding force that defines which direction organizational change should be directed. (Parish, Cadwallander & Busch 2008; Whelan-Barry, Gordon & Hinings 2003.)

The well-implemented strategy is the enabler leading the company towards the long-term vision. The strategy should correctly allocate the use of resources to guide a company's individuals to commit actions that drive towards the bigger goal. (Kamensky 2010: 17.) If the vision that is not linked to strategic decision making and operational level tasks cannot be implemented in practice, vision is not be reached in the future. Operational excellence that follows the strategic plan is not likely to enjoy sustainable success from its operational improvements without linkage to the vision that guides a company in the long-term. Therefore, the vision is a situation that is achieved through the following strategies. Commonly companies fail at implementing vision in practice because they lack an overarching management system to integrate and align vision and strategy with each other. (Kaplan & Norton 2000.)

2.1.2 Strategy

The fundamental idea of strategy is to understand why other companies fail and others succeed and how a company can attain a competitive advantage (Porter 1991; Vuorinen 2014: 15). This strategy understanding encompasses all other questions related to an organization's success. It is bound up in questions why companies behave differently, how they choose their everyday actions and what is culture behind success or failure. (Porter 1991.) As a term strategy is sometimes confusing and admitting several interpretations. As can be seen from table 1. strategy is defined to be the guideline that leads a company towards competitive advantage. (Kamensky 2010.) The strategy is defined to be actions and decisions that individuals do (Jarzabkowski 2004; Hendry, Kiel & Nicholson 2010). Moreover, the strategy is a versatile term that can be used to analyze a company's external environment but also operations inside a company.

At the basic level, strategy means making quality decisions and adjusting behavior that leads towards the vision, to create consistency and stability within an organization (Harrell, O'Reilly, Tushman 2007; Mantere, Suominen & Vaara 2011: 22). As Davies (2000: 26) defines, the strategy is an arena where the organization's policies and procedures define objectives and goals. Strategy is not a goal itself, but it is an instrument for achieving defined objectives (Radosavljević, Radosavljević & Anđelković 2015: 24.). The strategy should work as a stairway that leads to the long-term goal, vision (Davies 2000: 26). When everyone in the company understands what an organization is willing to achieve, actions can be aligned comprehensively leading the company towards the vision (Myrna 2009). As can be seen above, a strategy term does not have an explicit definition. Depending on strategy researcher and time, definitions variate. Table 1. illustrates strategies ambiguity:

Table 1. Comparison of strategy definition.

Researcher	Year	Strategy Definition
Porter	1991	Strategy is the act of aligning a company to its environment.
Davies	2000	Strategy is an arena where the organization's policies and procedures define objectives and goals. Strategy should guide how the vision can be achieved, the operational units are used, and how these units are formed to reach the long-term goals.

Jarzabkowski	2004	Strategy is what organization's individuals "do", not something that organizations have or a position that they occupy (for example being the low-cost producer in a market).
Hendry, Kiel & Nicholson	2010	
Harreld, O'Reilly & Tushman	2007	Strategy means making quality decisions and changing behavior towards wanted goal in order to create consistency and stability within an organization.
Mantere, Suominen & Vaara	2011	
Kaplan, Norton	2009	Strategy is rhetoric but most importantly executed operations.
Myrna	2009	When everyone in the company knows what the organization tries to achieve, actions can be aligned comprehensively leading the company towards the vision.
Kamensky	2010	Strategy leads an organization in competitive market situations.
Einola & Kohtamäki	2015	Strategy is defined as a combination of decisions that an organization makes which will determine the future and directing organization towards the vision.
Radosavljević, Anđelković	2015	Strategy is not a goal itself, but it is an instrument for achieving the defined objectives.

Defining a strategy term is a hard task. It is bound up in questions like how companies aligning themselves with their environment (Porter 1991), how they use strategies to achieve the wanted position (Myrna 2009 & Radosavljević et al. 2015) and how a company tries to attain competitive advantage in practice (Davies 2000; Jarzabkowski 2004; Hendry, Kiel & Nicholson 2010). In a nutshell as Table 1. illustrated, strategy is something that tries to organize and align organizations to work explicitly towards something bigger. In this study, the strategy is defined to act as a guideline that aligns all company actions comprehensively to lead towards the vision.

Commonly strategy is seen as a written document which directs a company's actions. The written documentation of the strategy is only an initial point for the whole strategy

process, a more crucial and sensitive part of the process is strategy implementation and how it is executed in real life. Strategy is rhetoric but most importantly executed operations. (Kaplan & Norton 2009: 15, 19.) The strategy should be the act of aligning a company to its environment. Thus the main idea of the strategy is maintaining a dynamic, not stable balance. In the ideal situation, the strategy is understood throughout the company and personnel can devise their contribution independently. This kind of contribution management would be hard or even impossible to replicate by competitors. (Porter 1991.)

In this study, the strategy has been defined as aligning strategic actions comprehensively to achieve future's wanted position – vision. In this study, the term strategy has been defined in Myrna's (2009) way. Myrna's strategy definition emphasizes individuals' strategy knowledge and how they perceive the company's strategic steps whereas Porter (1991) highlights action alignment and Kamensky (2010) focuses on linking strategy to the environment. Myrna's definition fits well to be used in this study, due to his definition emphasize personnel's individual aspects.

2.2 Strategy change

Change is inevitable, according to respected strategy researches and mainstream media (Raps 2005; Hrebiniak 2006; Hill, Jones & Schilling 2014: 3; Kauppalehti 2016; Canwell & Wellins 2018). Environment changes directly correlate to companies, giving pressure to be adapt to the change. Companies' lifeblood is to adjust their actions to adopt new market trends. In practice adapting to market change means changing the strategy which leads a company towards the vision. Managing change has been seen important factor on a journey towards the vision. Sometimes it is even recommendable to spend more time changing the way the organization changes than the way how exact work is changed inside the organization. (Edgelow 2011: 18.)

Edgelow (2011: 19) describes the change like this: "Change is the act of making something different, the result of decisions organizations make to ensure it indeed goes in the right direction and fulfills its true nature." In other words, the change means an organization's internal reorientation or process where the organization will adapt to all changes and align their actions to strive towards a common vision (Edgelow 2011: 19; Hrebiniak 2006). When market changes happen regularly, change is an unavoidable norm (Drucker 1999). A new organizational vision always means organizational change. It is

not only the organization that must change but also individuals who are enablers of the change (Rokka 2017).

Before understanding the strategy, it is crucial to understand how strategy change is the starting point for everything. Mc Gahan (2004) stated: “If you understand the nature of change in your industry, you can determine which strategies are likely to succeed and which will backfire.” One needs to understand change first to be able to start planning strategy implementation in practice. Understanding the strategy change in practice is a demanding task. Even with notable investments into change, companies fail to succeed in it leading to failure in strategy implementation that finally means that the vision will not be achieved either (Kotter 1995, 1996; Weiner, Amick & Lee 2008). The successful strategy implementation has a strong dependency on strategy change and how the individuals react to the change (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis 2013). Several factors will lead to the failure of strategy change, but few are as critical as employees’ attitudes towards the change and how they perceive efforts to try to reach the vision (Jones, Jimmieson & Griffiths 2005: 362). Even a good change idea without motivated and eager employees will be useless, collapsing the whole process before it even had started.

According to Edgelow (2011: 18), there are strategic forces that every individual in an organization needs to internalize before the change can happen. Before the change can happen, every individual should feel a real sense of urgency, meaning clear spelling that everyone understands pressures which have driven the company to the situation where the change is necessary. The biggest challenge in making strategy change urgent is communication about change requirements as clearly as possible. Human nature is more likely to be motivated by a sense of urgency than being pulled only by an organizational vision. (Edgelow 2011.) Change should draft the way where the company wants to go and what it will call to reach the vision. Majority of the organizations are good at articulating their vision where they want to be in the future, but simultaneously they neglect the importance of creating a sense of real urgency. Moreover, they are neglecting communication about actions that need to change and why in order to succeed with the change. Without understanding why the change is happening, it most likely awakens doubts and personnel does not feel the commitment to change their actions leading to stagnation in the whole company. (Edgelow 2011: 18.)

The whole organization should pay attention to identifying operations that need to be changed to be successful in the strategy change. After identification of operations, individuals should understand components that change and what actions it demands on

an individual level to realign actions with the vision. A successful strategy change calls right knowledge on the high managerial level but especially understanding of how operational work and people will change. (Worster, Weirich & Andera 2011.)

Strategy change is a universal demanding phenomenon. To be successful with a vision there exists several challenges during strategy change. Most of the challenges concern people in leadership positions who are waited to be proactive towards change actions. They have demanding tasks to manage a company's way through the flood of strategy information, keep communication as clear as possible and duty of ensuring that an organization's personnel is committed to striving towards the wanted vision. Thus, it is essential to understand those big hindering issues, which can be avoided and so advance a company's efforts on the journey towards the vision.

2.3 Challenges in implementation

Implementing strategy and making vision visible means putting the strategic choices and objectives into practice; it is committing vision at an operational level. (Kaplan & Norton 2009.) The whole strategy process becomes tangible in strategy implementation. Implementation taking actions into practice that define will the company reach the vision or not (Hague, TitiAmayah & Liu 2016). Many researchers have stated strategy implementation to be even more crucial part than the strategy formulation. (Pella et al. 2013) According to many respected strategy researchers, strategy implementation has been said to be the most complicated and time-consuming part of the whole strategic management (Shah 2005). It is up to 90 % part of the strategy process when the perspective is considered to achieve strategic objectives.

Almost every company has some planned and feasible vision and strategy, but the implementation is still lacking; the strategic process has not progressed further from the general level, and strategies are not embedded into actions. (Sotarauta 1999; Sorsa, Pälli, Vaara & Peltola 2010: 7-8.) Creating fascinating plans and future ideas is a comparatively easy task but translating those long-term ideas into swallowable practical actions is a task where almost all companies seem to fail (Allio 2005).

Leaders are commonly people who design long-term visions. In the situations where the vision is planned in a small group, it demands leaders' ability to understand operational level actions and how these employees' everyday actions can be linked with an

organization's long-term vision (Allio 2005; Raps 2005; Seijts & Crim 2006). It is typical that strategy meetings culminate in revising vision and strategy statements objectives that a company wants to achieve in the far future. Those meetings commonly are full of wordmongering about vision and strategy. After the meeting a person who presented the vision exhorts people to go back and make strategic things happen, hoping that vision is achieved autonomously.

Without clear, executable plans or goals, strategic changes are extremely challenging to implement on a practical level and will undoubtedly stay only on planning level without real actions. Focus on important issues are not aligned throughout the company, and vision implementation does not progress consistently. Therefore, no strategy or its interpretation comes into existence before the staff understands how vision and especially strategy change effects in their everyday operations. (Raps 2005; Laine & Vaara 2012: 31.) Without guidelines, strategy execution can be only guessing where to canalize efforts and clear consensus about the direction of a company is hard or even impossible to attain. Individuals might do things that they think are important, often resulting in uncoordinated, divergent decisions that most likely fight against the organization level vision. An implementation process calls a logical approach with sufficient guiding. (Hrebiniak 2006.) Leaders' role is essential in canalizing and enabling employees' potential and professionalism in a way that it guides towards the organizational vision. Responsibilities include an enormous amount of responsibilities, and neglect of those will lead to vision implementation failure.

A big challenge that hinders the implementation process is top-level managers' belief that planned strategy and its implementation will happen autonomously "below them" (Hrebiniak 2006; Jooste & Fourie 2009). A management team commonly assumes that voluminous documentation of strategic plans and annual budgets are sufficient enough to ensure guidance for the implementation. In most cases, planners facilitate the annual strategic planning but take little or no role in supporting and guiding strategy implementation in practice. (Aaltonen & Ikävalko 2002: 417.) It is a dangerous mindset that higher-level managers' task is only planning of the strategy that lower-level employees execute. (Hrebiniak 2006.)

It is typical that leaders stand aside after the planning phase of the strategy is done and give freedom to "implementors". The mentality to leave implementing for somebody else and just hoping that things will go in the best direction is alarming. Implementation is crucial to maintain throughout the organization and not only unroll downwards in the

organization. Usually, middle-level leaders are actors who take implementation responsibility after planning. These leaders are assumed to translate plans and implement those on their own, without support from the top. It is common that only generalized guidelines are given but not specified milestones which can be followed to achieve organizational strategic goals, making strategy implementation hard to manage by team leaders. (Alamsjah 2011: 1448.)

The abovementioned mind-set directs a company towards the situation where the organization is divided into “planners” who work with cases that demand intelligence and ability to be innovative and into “doers” who follow planners’ rules and make the execution process possible. If implementation fails for some reason, the failure is placed squarely at the feet of the “doers”. It is natural that every company has a separation between “planners” and “doers” but a separation becomes dysfunctional when planners see themselves more capable than doers who are only committing what planners are saying. It is damaging to create a barrier between planning and implementation because the one who formulates strategy does not have an idea how to execute it and a person who executes the strategy has no view of the strategic concept and where it should lead. Thus, participating in implementation should also be a key responsibility of all managers, not something that “others” do or worry. (Hrebiniak 2006; Radosavljević et al. 2015.)

Problematic in strategy implementation is the strategy’s complexity, communication about strategy is inadequate, or the implementation process is lacking genuine motivation at an operational level. These challenges mainly depend on how the leaders see themselves as facilitators of strategy implementation. (Einola & Kohtamäki 2015.) Usually, fundamental failures will not occur by disregarding change management, but the implementation process lacks management efforts that direct implementation efforts in the right direction. (Worster, Weirich & Andera 2011.) Researches have pointed out the significance of active strategic leadership during implementation is one of the most crucial core challenges in the vision reaching process. (Raps 2005; Hrebiniak 2006; Jooste & Fourie 2009.)

As mentioned strategy planning is just an initial step on the journey towards the vision. Planned strategy and goal setting have its pros and cons. Planning systematically and making strict strategies are helpful guidelines that help employees to understand their part in the strategy process but at worst, systematic plans restrict employees’ creativity which might hinder employees motivation but also creativity. There is a great dilemma that organizations management needs to consider. Giving clear and swallowable guidelines

will surely help personnel to understand the roadmap towards the vision and what steps need to be taken. On the other hand, excessive guiding restricts personnel abilities to make own decisions and apply own strategies to achieve the vision. (Mintzberg 1978.)

The situation seems paradoxical. Employees have understood what is going on at operational level but only have insufficient possibilities to affect strategic planning to understand what leaders want them to do. Whereas, upper leaders are acting planners' role, unrolling practical implementation downwards to the organization but does not understand what it demands at the operational level. Information imbalance between planning managers and the rest of the company leads to the situation where employees do not have enough guidance on what to do to direct actions towards the planned vision. (Collis & Rukstad 2008; Laine & Vaara 2012: 30.) The main reason behind this absurd situation is insufficient communication inside the company.

Heide, Gronhaug and Johannessen's (2002: 224) research shows that about 70% of implementation challenges is caused because of poor communication. Strategic change begins from functional communication (Ocasio, Laamanen & Vaara 2018). Commonly leaders do not pay enough attention to communication about strategy with their employees but still assumes that strategy is implemented. Without sufficient communication, the organization will be driven into silos; different groups know different facts about strategy and vision and open information share that is essential for functional strategy implementation does not happen. (Smythe 1997; Beer & Eisenstat 2000: 35.) It is common that employees have heard something about the vision but genuinely does not understand how it relates to their work priorities or what guidelines they should follow to allow beneficial strategy implementation. It is unsurprisingly natural that employees feel confused due to unclear vision and targets. (Smythe 1997; Beer & Eisenstat 2000: 33)

Commonly employees are ones who recognize operational problems, bottlenecks, where strategy is not flowing as it should but are unwilling to tell about those to upper managers who have planned it. Everyday work tasks are perceived to be more important and strategic issues are neglected because instant results are not seen. The impact of long-term strategical decisions has been underestimated, and the link to everyday tasks is not present. (Aaltonen & Ikävalko 2002: 417.) Unwillingness to communicate about these challenges prevents possibilities to improve the strategy implementation. A top-down managing style where tasks will be pushed through the organization restricts honest vertical communication. (Beer & Eisenstat 2000: 32-33.) The success of communication depends mostly on what kind of role leaders will take in the strategy implementation

process. Are strategy planners willing to take feedback from subordinates, do they have genuine intention to create an open communication culture and do they see it valuable to make vision changes if needed?

The strategy is mostly planned and implemented in human interaction. Ramaseshan's (1998) findings pointed out that especially human-related actions, for example, communication and how personnel constructs the activities to achieve the company level vision are more challenging to carry out than "hard" implementation actions like strategy formulation. (Salminen 2008: 60-62.) Several leadership studies (Goodman & Truss 2004; Allio 2005; Raps 2005; Hrebiniak 2006; Speculand 2009) emphasize the importance of communication in strategy implementation. The long-term target, vision, is usually failed to reach due to lack of communication which allows feedback, creates readiness for change and creates a positive loop of continuous development. (Galvin, Waldman & Balthazard 2010.) Insufficient communication about the progress of strategy implementation usually decreases motivation to fight for the vision typically leading to cynicism and apathy towards the vision (Ledford, Wendenhof & Strahley 1995). Therefore engaging leadership actions and active communication that links employees' actions to the long-term vision are great enablers for successfully implemented strategies that lead the company step by step towards the vision (Bass 1985).

Even though strategy change is a hard task to handle, some actions improve the odds to be successful in implementation. Inspiring leadership mentality reminds how everyday work tasks are aligned with the bigger vision, and sufficient communication ensures consensus in an organization and unwanted confusion among employees is avoided. These actions allow leaders to engage different organizational layers of the company in committing vision on an operational level, making the vision more personal, giving the purpose for personnel to strive towards it.

2.4 Successful strategy implementation

Strategy implementation and how to be successful in it is an important topic, due to the implementation's universal presence in every single company. About the importance of implementation tells a lot the time sharing between planning and implementation. It is said that the proper planning/implementation share should be around 15 % to strategic planning and 85 % to implementation itself. (Speculand 2014; Speculand 2009; Hrebiniak 2006; Kaplan & Norton 2005: 72.) Analyses have shown that high performing teams

spend over 25% more time focusing implementation than lower-performing peers. Time is spent establishing financial and operational metrics, aligning goals with an overarching strategy, allocating resources, and reviewing key metrics. Moreover, those teams spend 14% more time checking their progress against strategic goals by reviewing key metrics and shifting resources accordingly. (Wiita & Leonard 2017.)

Implementation importance over strategic planning is dramatic. The poorly planned strategy can work in action if an organization knows how to implement it, but perfect strategy without proper execution will only stay on a plan level (Speculand 2009). It is always better to have a less effective strategy, which is well implemented than precisely planned strategy, which is never executed. (Cater & Pucko 2008; Speculand 2009.) Because of this, people who are working with strategic planning should avoid too excessive planning. The main purpose is not to build a strategic plan in leaders' strategy meetings; the focus must be on the development and implementation of a strategic plan in practice. (Myrna 2009.)

2.4.1 Communication's role in successful strategy implementation

"How the vision is communicated becomes as important as what is communicated"
(Westley & Mintzberg 1989.)

Communicating about vision and strategy implementation is a demanding task but essential to succeed with organizational change. A good plan does not automatically lead to right actions, commitment, and evaluation throughout the strategy process (Kaplan & Norton 2009; Kamensky 2010: 329). Communication is a factor that helps to translate the plans into actions (Goodman & Truss 2004). Effective and timely mannered communication fills information gaps between different organizational units and misconceptions are easier to avoid (Hrebiniak 2006; Raps 2005; Speculand 2009).

One main cornerstone of successful vision implementation is consensus within an organization, where strategic direction between individuals is shared (Noble 1999). The general perception is that the larger strategic consensus, the better the performance of the organization is. Strategic consensus means that there is the same perception about the strategy at all organizational levels. (Noble 1999; Rapert, Velliquette & Garretson 2002.) All members of the organization should have an equal understanding of the selected business strategy, knowledge what business areas company will follow, what are strategic turning points and how the organization will compete. Without harmonized strategic

understanding, the change is difficult to manage. Active communication enhances the corporation's strategic consensus. Researches have shown that organizations that can evoke strong intraorganizational communication linkages will also benefit through functional and organizational performance. (Rapert et al. 2002.)

To create a vision consensus (Noble 1999) among individuals, the organization should be able to create clear plans, specified responsibilities, and guidelines regarding implementation activities. Clearness is achieved by active communication where individuals throughout the organization can give their effort in developing the strategy. (Allio 2005; Raps 2005.) Employees' background determines how strategy is understood, making implementation process demanding. Everyone should be included in strategy work in a way that it benefits the organization in the best way possible. Therefore, the strategy should be communicated by using various communication methods depending on different target groups, although the strategy and the vision itself is not changing. Commonly strategy is communicated in a formal way, and personnel has difficulties to understand what strategy means in practice.

Organizational members should be felt to be treated fairly. When people feel that they are treated fairly, they are more willing to attain consensus to strategy implementation, even in situations where decisions affect them negatively. (Cool 1998.) First, an employee should know and understand how strategy change affects to everyday work tasks practically. The strategy is assimilated when an employee understands how it vision contributes to work tasks (Seijts & Crim 2006; Aula & Mantere 2012: 48). Engagement will lead to better job-relevant behavior having a direct positive impact on customer satisfaction and the organization's revenue growth.

Informal discussions with senior managers have seen an effective way to communicate about strategy, leading to better understanding among subordinates compared to formal meetings. New strategical directions and innovative plans are clearer to present in daily communication, enabling mutual understanding of implementation and decision making. (Dutton, Ashford, Wierba, O'Neil & Hayes 1997.) Also, channels where to communicate about strategy effect to its comprehension. According to Hague, TitiAmayah and Liu (2016) vision will be more convincing when communicated through multiple channels.

Successful implementation calls that everyone in an organization understands strategy and how their job is linked to the vision. The vision should clearly define what to do differently compared to past and what steps should be taken to achieve the vision. Linking

strategic objectives with day-to-day objectives is essential when building comprehension among personnel that everyday work tasks will step by step bring the company closer to the vision. Commonly personnel knows something about the new strategy, but only a few can precisely describe how this change will affect their everyday work. (Allio 2005; Hammond, Dempsey, Szigeti & Davis 2007; Isoraite 2008.)

Edgelow (2011: 20) suggests two or three strategic priorities at any given time. Using only a few priorities ensures the organization's movement in the same direction. Simultaneously employees can be focused and engaged on a few specific tasks. A diffuse array of activities confuses decision-making and hampers unifying and engaging to an organizational vision. (Speculand 2014.) One useful way is to outline the most current factors that are related to vision and strategy to one-page brief notes. Secondly, short and frequent dialogues between managers and employees throughout an organization engage everyone with the changes. (Edgelow 2011.) Keeping guidance clear, allows personnel to concentrate on the most critical factors at the time.

According to Wiita and Leonard (2017), high-performing organizations spend 28% more time engaging the organization in an ongoing dialogue about cultural enablers and barriers to execution, including forums for employees to have an actual dialogue. (Beer & Eisenstat 2000: 35.) Right timed communication increases transparency of implementation, prevents problems and increases trust between upper managers who have planned the strategy and employees who execute strategy on an operational level (Beer & Eisenstat 2000: 39). In an ideal situation, decisions are taken into practice as quickly as possible ensuring transparency of implementation (Smythe 1997). Responsibility to enable this right timed communication lies on leaders' shoulders. Leaders are empowering force making decisions and sharing necessary information. Their responsibility is to ensure a simple and feasible strategy message communication.

Right timed, and continuous communication allows that information flow can be continuously improved (Smythe 1997). To avoid these situations where personnel are not willing to talk, leaders should create opportunities for candid discussions between upper managers and operational level specialist where personnel could tell their suggestions for improvements. In open and straightforward discussions, personnel can adduce challenges, which leaders may not have been noticed. When challenges are acknowledged at the beginning of the implementation process, it is easier to start tackling them. (Beer & Eisenstat 2000: 32-33.)

Communication about strategy is demanding task and usually awakes cynicism among organizations' personnel. Balogun and Johnson (2005) suggest that managers do not always have to try to communicate the strategy by themselves, especially when the topic is not managers' core specialty. In this kind of cases, it is easier to utilize peer employees to communicate the vision, acting as a positive strategy talk evangelist. By using peer employees to communicate about strategy, it enhances mutual trust and brings strategy more personal to employees. (Balogun & Johnson 2005.)

The strategy should be communicated both vertically and horizontally throughout an organization. It is not enough to say visionary targets without concrete action steps. Communicating strategy downwards suffers from the same problems than communicating it upwards; the new vision is not fully internalized, two-way communication is not working and reserved time is insufficient. Also, some enterprises have delusional background assumption that the implementation of the vision is the same thing as the communication about vision. Communication about vision is indeed critical regarding implementation, but alone it is not enough for anything. (Kamensky 2010: 329-330.) It is an initiatory action to all actions happening in an organization. Information sharing increases the flexibility vertically and horizontally improving an organization's ability to respond to implementation-related challenges. (Hambrick & Cannella 1989: 283-284; Hrebiniak 2006; Kamensky 2010: 330.)

Communication between managers and other employees should work like a dialogue. Instead of pushing information from top-down, dialogue reduced stress effect among employees giving employees more opportunities to participate in a decision-making process. Opportunities to have a contribution to vision also increases trust inside an organization. Responsibility increasing means giving more ownership to manage implementation, leading to increased willingness to develop strategy process proactively. (Seijts & Crim 2006.) Dialogical communication has a positive two-way effect. Employees can check the practices from the perspective of the manager, and the manager can examine the strategy from the perspective of the employee. (Aula & Mantere 2012: 45.)

The creation of this kind of dialogue rarely succeeds, and essential information is hard to transmit in practice due to neither parties have different background information about implementation. Every individual should understand why the change is necessary if not, the change has a high probability to fail. Clear, detailed and guiding information, do not underestimate employees' abilities to construct strategy independently but allows

personnel to carry out a strategic plan and apply it in his or her everyday work tasks. (Kaplan & Norton 2000.)

Open communication allows personnel to attend to strategy change and implementation process (Ocasio et al. 2018). Social interaction and communication inside an organization provide an expansive understanding of strategic change on a deeper level; not only management's powerpoint slides but something that runs through everyday task on a practical level (Laamanen & Wallin 2009). Especially leaders who commonly plan the strategy should use communication as a tool of engagement. An organization should have a genuine desire to be successful in implementation which demands to engage every individual throughout the organization (Okumus 2003). Communication is an effective instrument to exchange necessary information about the progress of vision implementation. It engages personnel with new vision and strategy. Without proper understanding about the strategical direction, personnel is not aware of what leaders are demanding from them and implementation will fail. (Edgelow 2011:19; Jooste & Fourie 2009.) Knowledge of strategy implementation and participation should not be limited only to organizations' upper leaders. Still, leaders have a critical impact on how well the implementation process will progress. Therefore, the next chapter focuses on leaders' contribution to strategy implementation and responsibilities they have on the journey towards the vision.

2.4.2 Leaders' contribution to successful strategy implementation

“Leaders who master both strategy and execution start by building a bold but executable strategy. Next, they ensure that the company is investing in the change. And last, they make sure the entire organization is motivated to go the journey.” (Leinwand & Rotering 2017.)

The strategic implementation contains risks, without no guarantees of success, stable environment or high level of personnel commitment (Lowy 2015). To manage this uncertainty, leaders have critical role keeping strategy change on the right path that leads towards the vision. According to Allio (2005), Raps (2005) and Seijts & Crim (2006), the best leaders can link up employees' job with organization's success and lead the change by example (Edgelow 2011: 18). Leaders who organize strategy implementation must reinforce execution efforts, remind how strategy change will affect strategy implementation and cheer up individuals to achieve the outcome (Hrebiniak 2006).

Leaders' task is to wake up personnel's human potential as acting the role of facilitators who enable strategy implementation in practice (Coetzee, Visagie & Ukpere 2012; Berta, Cranley, Dearing, Dogherty, Squires & Estabrooks 2015). Besides waking up personnel's potential, one of the most important tasks in a leader's role is to develop an open-minded culture where employees are encouraged to think about new strategic opportunities. In other words, a leader needs to be able to provide an environment where trying something new is allowed without being scared to be penalized. (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006.)

Acting an enabler and a guide for individuals, leaders' task is also defining key focus areas and activities in an organization and effectively participate to those in implementation (Olson, Slater & Hult 2005: 47). In some cases change may have unwanted reception among organizational members, hindering strategy implementation efforts. Thus, integration everyone to strategy implementation already in the initial part of the process is critical to awaken personal contribution among employees making it more personalized, not just something that the management is pushing down. (Beer & Eisenstat 1996.) Usually, subordinates have the best knowledge about how work should be done on an operational level. Guiding personnel to right direction requires that concrete, specific everyday actions are explained and supported sufficiently. Leaders need to allow independent action planning but also precise guiding to achieve the desired outcome. (Speculand 2011.) When roles and responsibilities are defined, it is easier to understand what an individual has to do to help the company to achieve the vision.

Besides keeping control in leaders' own hands, they need to pay more attention to modifying operational actions to align those with high-level organizational requirements (Rensburg, Davis & Venter 2014). To direct personnel's actions, managers should notice the organization's early adopters, individuals who have a positive attitude towards the vision. Those should be encouraged to follow new strategic direction, showing the example to other individuals to join them to strive towards the same direction. (Hrebiniak 2006; Raps 2005; Speculand 2009.) Showing strategical direction means a leader's responsibility to tie employees' everyday work tasks with the vision of the organization (Rensburg, Davis & Venter 2014).

Leaders need to be capable of translating vision into short-term objectives and action plans. Short-term thinking is sustainable when tied to long-term strategic thinking. Moreover, everyday actions linked to long-term vision are easier to understand making those more motivating. (Hrebiniak 2006.) Goal setting will be easier when the

organizational level vision is divided into team specified strategies and further to individual-level objectives. Long-term visions are easier to understand when a couple of milestones are set before vision implementation begins. (Kaplan & Norton 2005: 72; Hrebiniak 2006.)

Usually, these early adopters (Hrebiniak 2006; Raps 2005; Speculand 2009) are leaders who work between upper executives and operational level employees. They have an important role in strategy implementation, acting as a bridge between vision planners and operational level strategy implementers. As strategies are bridges between vision and everyday actions, middle-level leaders are bridges between planning and actual execution. Leaders working on the top of the organization can control the strategic schemes only in a limited way that compels managers to allocate more implementation responsibilities to leaders below. In many cases, especially in larger companies, lack of straight communication between upper executives and leaders below them is the greatest challenge in the way of successful strategy implementation. (Johnson & Balogun 2004.) Darkow's (2014) research pointed out that these leaders between different organizational layers typically struggle with focusing on long-term thinking because of operational issues are taking all time. Leaders' responsibility who work on the top of the organization is to support middle managers in operational tasks to create more time to focus on long-term strategic thinking but most importantly emphasizing the importance of forward-looking strategy mentality and how these everyday actions are tied to the bigger vision (Darkow 2014).

Leaders on an operational level of organization are seldom involved in strategy formulation even though they have important knowledge about operational functionalities that have a contribution to the success of implementation. When these leaders are involved in the strategic planning, also an implementation process has been seen to increase substantially. Practical issues are taken into consideration at the beginning of the implementation process, and everyday work tasks are easier to align with the planned vision. (Raps 2005.)

Leaders between the top management and operational level specialists are bridges that translate vision into practical actions. They facilitate the change but also create a sense of continuity. (Rensburg, Davis & Venter 2014.) In other words, efficient strategy implementation requires functional managing also at the operational level. The main responsibilities base on team leading, developing and coordinating key strategic initiatives across functions, business units, and geographic borders. Giving more

responsibilities to these middle leaders has been noticed to have a positive impact on confidence to work with implementation efforts. Leaders' task is to define the roles of their operational level specialists. They need to make contact with specialists and ensure that everyone knows how he or she can individually contribute to achieving the vision. (Beer & Eisenstat 2000: 39.)

Engaging individuals in the strategy process throughout the organization is pointed out to act a remarkable role. Leaders' challenge is to design a strategy process in a way that people are willing to devote their full potential. Engaging is a challenging task but necessary to achieve positive implementation outcome. (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006.) Engaging every individual to work towards the organizational vision, personnel need to be familiar with the vision of the organization, how they commit it in their everyday work and where the company wants to aim. The base principles and organization values provide guidelines to personnel especially in situations when people do not know precisely how to act in front of challenges. (Speculand 2014.)

The strategy process usually fails to appreciate having a feasible, clear vision statement that everyone in an organization could implement and use as a guideline when making difficult decisions. (Collis & Rukstad 2008.) Organization's vision needs to clearly define the new strategic direction, common goal and direction of the change (Okumus 2003). According to the research of Myrna (2009), companies can follow-up and manage not more than five strategic goals a year. The biggest question is not that how many good ideas are identified in a planning meeting, is how many of the organization can implement during the year (Myrna 2009). To be successful with strategy implementation, leaders' need to have the ability to clarify and sometimes simplify strategical choices to make the strategy easier to follow. The simplifying process calls especially sufficient communication skills throughout the organization.

2.5 Literature review summary

Figure 3. summarizes the theoretical framework. Three research questions 1-3 are placed in a picture, 1. How vision is perceived, 2. How vision is affecting to employees, 3. How to reach vision through strategies successfully. Numbers illustrate questions and which theoretical section they are clarifying in this study. The gap is how to progress from the current situation to the vision. External market pressure forces a company to adapt to changes, leading to strategy change. Strategical actions are implemented in practice that

directs a company towards the vision. Picture's strategies illustrate operations that a company executes and implements in everyday work. As can be seen, strategies and implementation are bridges between the current situation and the wanted position.

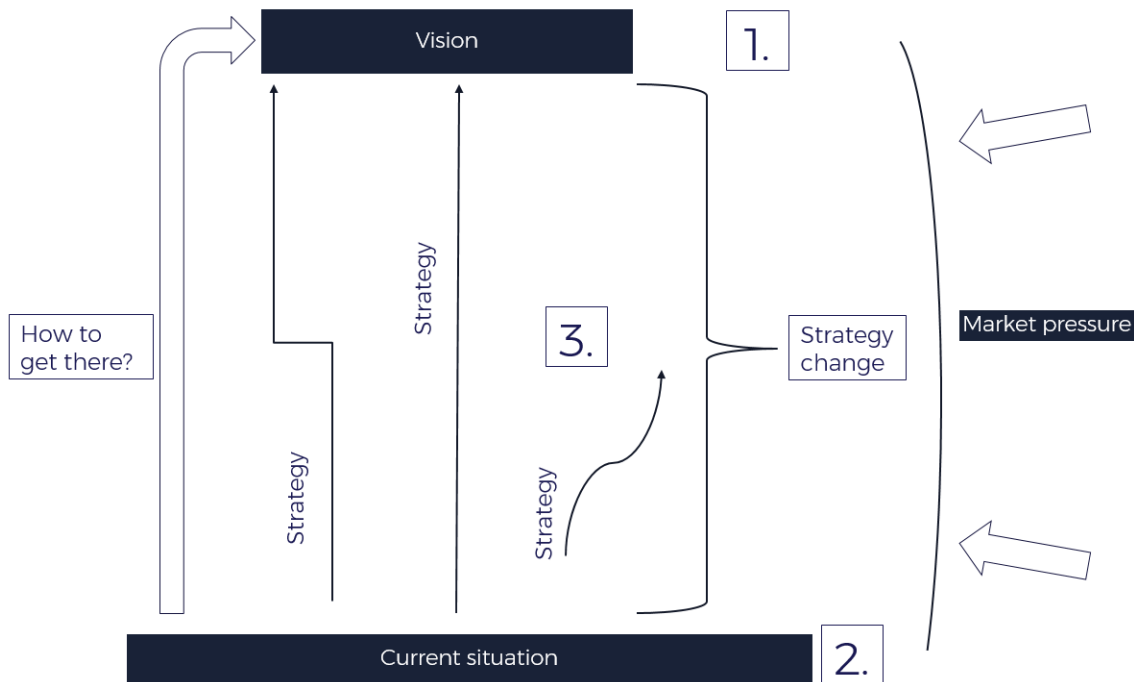


Figure 3. Theoretical framework.

The literature review chapter has presented a comprehensive framework for the term vision, strategic change, and strategy implementation. The chapter's presented the most relevant researches about vision, strategy and strategy implementation. These theoretical insights are used in comparison with empirical data that will be presented in chapter 4. Findings. Even though the current topic has been researched widely, a notable gap remains between the vision setting and practical implementation. Still, numerous strategy implementation processes fail due to the unclear vision and lack of focus on making the strategy tangible for every individual. Usually, the strategy is seen upper managers' wordmongering, and operational actions do not change at all. Therefore, the study specifically examines how personnel perceives the new vision and strategy change. The focus is also on how the new vision has changed operational tasks in practice and if not, what have been those restricting issues and how those could be avoided in the future. Findings chapter presents interviews' results including analyzing how personnel

perceives the vision, challenges during the implementation process and suggestions for better strategy implementation.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research methodology chapter clarifies how the research questions and objectives are designed, achieved and finally answered (Yin 2009; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2014). This chapter presents the execution of the research, describes the research process and focuses on the methodological approaches of the research. Chapter 3.1 describes the research philosophy and methods that have been used in the study. Chapter 3.2 focuses on how data is collected through interviews. Chapter 3.3 presents how data is analyzed, and chapter 3.4 finalizes the methodology part by examining the trustworthiness of this research.

3.1 Research philosophy and methods

The ontology in a business study can be defined to explain “the science or study of being” and answers to the questions “What constitutes reality and how can we understand existence”. Ontology reflects an individual’s interpretation of what constitutes a fact. The ontology answers the question of whether social entities should be perceived as *subjective* or *objective*. This study’s ontological perspective is subjective meaning that social phenomena are created perceptions and actions of social actors concerned with their existence. Truths are as many as interpreters; the truths of this study are the opinions of the informants and the perceptions of vision implementation process that emerges from this research material. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 14; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009: 18, 22.)

Another way to view research philosophy is epistemology. It is a way of thinking opposite to ontology. Epistemology answers to the questions “What constitutes reality and how can we understand existence?” Epistemology can be roughly divided into two parts positivism and interpretivism. Interpretivism considers knowledge as a social development emphasizing individual meanings and subjectivism. Whereas positivism explains observable facts and takes realism point of view. The study considers the subjective meaning and non-quantifiable data as knowledge. So it can be said that the research follows the interpretivism research philosophy. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009: 106-116.)

This study's approach is semi-deductive meaning that the emphasis is generally on causality. The term deductive means reasoning from the particular to the general. The deductive approach gives the opportunity to generalize research findings to a certain extent. Therefore a deductive approach is a more suitable point of view for this study compared to an inductive approach that does not deal with earlier set hypotheses nor theories. Contrary to the deductive approach inductive approach aims to generate theory whereas deductive approach reflects results to theory. (Saunders et al. 2009: 124-125.)

The exploratory research seeks to find causal relationships between variables. On the other hand, explanatory research aims to clarify cause-and-effect relationships. The way the research question is asked will define if the thesis will be exploratory or explanatory. An exploratory study aims to find out what is happening and seeks new insights trying to understand phenomena in a new light. This study aims to understand "how" and "what" happens inside the target company. In other words, it explains one's understanding of a particular issue. Thus the exploratory way to approach the research objectives is required. (Saunders et al. 2014: 139, 141.)

There are several ways to categorize research strategies. Yin (2003) classifies research strategy into five categories such as experiment, case study, history, archival analysis, and survey. On the other hand, Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara (2009: 132-135, 192) state that traditionally research strategies are categorized into case studies, surveys and experimental studies. Because the main intention of this study is to increase understanding about a particular phenomenon, the use of a single case study is justified in this research. Case studies' typical feature is that those are usually conducted in the close communication of informants (Gibbert, Ruigrok & Wicki 2008).

Commonly case studies are chosen to situations where flexibility is needed, and complex evolving relationships and interactions are wanted to be studied. (Dubois & Araujo, 2004.) Thus, in this study, the best way to understand individual experiences inside the organization is to use a qualitative single case study (Yin 2013, 2014). Moreover, Hirsjärvi's et al. (2009: 132–135, 192) traditional categorization shows the single case study to be the best option to conduct the study, where the aim is to collect information and create understanding on how the company level vision is perceived on an individual level. A single case study is also suitable in situations where a phenomenon was not accessible previously to scientific examination or research, for example in the target company's situation (Yin 2003; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 116).

Case studies are mainly about human affairs, making interviews one of the most important sources of case study evidence (Yin 2013). Interviews are like ‘guided conversation’ following own line of inquiry as reflected in own case study protocol (Yin 2003: 89, 90). Commonly in-depth interviews are used as a primary source of empirical data in business case studies that justifies the use of interview in this study. In-depth interviews are also utilized, where the primary sources of the data are representatives of the company. Interviews enable collecting information that is not available in an already published form, studying experiences of individuals from their perspective. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 78– 81.) The thesis aims to understand how the target company’s employees perceive the vision and do they perceive it guiding and instructional to achieve the vision. Thus, interviews as a data collection method are justified in understanding strategic comprehension of the target company (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006: 35).

As mentioned before the study is qualitative research, fitting perfectly to research humans and their actions, in this context, co-Founder, leaders, and specialists of the organization. It is said that the reality is understood as subjective admitting several interpretations. Moreover, qualitative research pursues interpretation, understanding of subjective perspectives and contextual explanations of how individuals experience inside the target company. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006: 22; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008:13-14; Bansal & Corley 2012.) These individual-level experiences are different depending on perceptions and differing from each other (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 13–14).

The study has been conducted by using primary data collection, meaning that the empirical data have been collected by the researcher. Typically data sources are observations or interviews like in this thesis. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 77–78, Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 186; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006: 34–37). The qualitative study is conducted in the globally operating company by interviewing personnel comprehensively throughout the company to ensure diversity of how individuals perceive the vision of the company. The research material is collected in interviews in October 2018. Instead of trying to generalize findings, research aims to create a comprehensive picture of how the target company’s personnel perceive vision. (Eskola & Suoranta 1999: 61- 62; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam 2003: 79; Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2010: 182.)

According to Yin (2003), there exist six sources of how data could be collected for the case study: participant observations, archival records, physical artifacts, direct observations documents, and interviews. Interview studies are generally divided into three different categories: open, structured interviews and semi-structured interviews.

Open interviews are opposite to structured interviews where questions are developed from the research hypotheses, and the answer options are same and predetermined to all informants. (Maylor & Blackmon 2005: 230-231.) A semi-structured interview contains features from structured and open interviews, allowing the interviewer to ask more precise additional questions on the subject to get a deeper understanding but also keeping an interview in an organized frame that does not get too distracted from the theme. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2006: 47–48; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008; Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 208; Saunders et al. 2014: 320.) This study's all interviews have been audio-recorded to ensure repeatability (Saunders et al. 2014).

3.2 Data collection

This research employs ten semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. As Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2009: 75) suggest, the themes of the interview were chosen based on the prior theory and the theoretical framework of this study. Informants have been chosen to research appropriately with the aim of achieving the richest material as possible (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2010: 164). Although according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 3), qualitative research primarily focuses on contextuality, this study seeks some form of representativeness when selecting ten different informants all from the target company. As said, the aim of the study is not to generalize results, but take a look how the vision is perceived at the moment and how efforts can be improved further to achieve it in some point. Moreover, generalization is impossible within this kind of research, since qualitative research is always dependent on a researcher who creates and builds the reality that he studies. (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 3; Patton 2002: 570.)

To achieve coherent and heterogeneous data collection, the researcher attempted to select informants of people whose backgrounds and positions were different. This selection was intended to ensure the coverage and versatility of the material. (Ritchie et al. 2003: 79.) The interviewees are named as informants in this study as the interviewees have been working as counselors and information providers in addition to being investigated. Hence, the term studied does not depict the true contribution of informants to the process.

The interviews were conducted in the beginning of October 2018. In qualitative research, the extra focus is on the selection of informants. Those interviews represented individuals who had relevant knowledge about the theme and experience of the vision and strategy

phenomenon in the target company. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 85–86.) The informants and their interview details are summarized in the following table.

Table 2. Interview details.

Informant	Title	Date	Length of the interview (min)
Person 1	Co-Founder	3.10.2018	34 min
Person 2	Project Manager	3.10.2018	40 min
Person 3	Team Lead	8.10.2018	45 min
Person 4	Presales Specialist	8.10.2018	51 min
Person 5	Key Account Manager	8.10.2018	29 min
Person 6	Customer Development Manager	9.10.2018	42 min
Person 7	Product Manager	9.10.2018	52 min
Person 8	Senior Product Owner	9.10.2018	45 min
Person 9	Data Service Manager	10.10.2018	36 min
Person 10	VP (People team)	11.10.2018	39 min

To understand how new strategy is perceived, respondents of the interviews were individuals who had worked in the company before the strategy implementation started in fall 2017. Understanding strategy comprehensively, the interviews included informants from different organizational levels, from the co-founder to specialists whose responsibility were planning but also executing vision at an operational level. Interviews were guided by six different themes: ‘defining the new vision’, ‘work-related questions’, ‘support in implementation/strategy process’, ‘how you see the vision’, ‘challenges’ and ‘development suggestions’ to reach the vision. All interviews were conducted in English in face-to-face meetings at the target company’s headquarter in Helsinki. The duration of interviews varied between 29 minutes to 51 minutes with an average of 41 minutes. Face-to-face interviews were carried out in the target company’s negotiation facilities where the researcher and the informant were able to interview without disturbances, making the interviews easy to record. All interviews were recorded to ensure detailed and accurate data. Before the interview sessions, the questions were sent to the informants, to give sufficient time to prepare for the interview. The question set can be found as Appendix 1.

The degree of consistency of interviews varied somewhat. All themes were not treated as comprehensively with all informants (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013: 75; Eskola & Vastamäki

2015: 36). As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2009) suggested, questions were formulated and emphasized differently for different informants to obtain comprehensive research material. Ensuring flexibility, interviews of the study were able to achieve a relaxed, conversational situation where the discussion progressed with their weight gradually overcoming the themes. After discussions, the interviews were written in a verbatim form, ignoring the sounds and pauses of the interview material.

3.3 Data analysis

According to Yin (2003: 109), there are four different general strategies to conduct data analysis; relying on a theoretical proposition, using quantitative and qualitative data, developing a case description and examining rival explanations. This study based on a theoretical proposition which links the case study with the theoretical proposition and research objective which have examined at the beginning of the study. (Yin 2009.) After the collection of data, the data analysis can be seen as one of the most crucial phases of the research (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 221). The analysis compares empirical data and reflects it with the prior theory. The focus is on comparing studied phenomenon with research questions. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006.)

The analysis of the material has already begun during transcribing the interviews and has continued until the return date of the thesis. The analysis has been carried out using the funnel technique, focusing first on identifying large lines and identifying key themes. After identifying the most important themes, the research has continued into a more systematic content analysis, where new perspectives and perceptions of new material are compared to previous literature and already identified themes. (Kiviniemi 2001: 77-78; Erickson 2012: 1460; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013: 68) This data analysis links qualitative empirical data to theory-bonded content analysis. The target is to objectively describe and study phenomenon happening inside the case study company and produce a description of it. According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2009: 103-108, 112), content analysis aims to analyze the transcribed data to seek correlations and links between the research findings and wider research context with findings from previous studies (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006). One intention of content analysis is to clarify data to produce clear and reliable conclusions about the studied phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 108).

As mentioned before content analysis has worked in this study as a tool for theming and categorization, which has identified research-relevant entities and has given examples to

support the analysis. (Spencer, Ritchie & O'Connor 2003: 200; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013: 91, 106; Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen & Kyngäs 2014: 1-2) After the grouping of the material, the material was reduced. At this point, the research material aimed to identify research-relevant themes, to pick up quotations describing research units, and compile core ideas and key themes. Particular attention was paid to the themes directly referenced in the research material or the relevance of which was directly emphasized by informants. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013: 108-109.) All of these categories assist in reaching the aim of the analysis in answering the research questions and objectives of the thesis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 101). In other words, categories help to understand how a company's employees understand the current vision and do they see it achievable and guiding.

3.4 The trustworthiness of the study

The trustworthiness of the research is usually measured by using concepts of reliability and validity. The validity of research means the ability of recorded observations accuracy to measure precisely what they are meant to measure. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 231–232; Satyaprasad & Krishnaswami 2010). Moreover, validity refers to the conclusions, are they accurate, do they give an explanation of the issue and is those correct. Validity is divided into two categories, internal validity which refers to the data analysis and is the researcher able to find convincing results and external validity that aims to the generalization of the findings (Massis & Kotlar 2014).

In interview situations there is always a risk that an informant understand the questions differently than what the researcher has thought or an informant hesitates to answer truthfully, influencing the validity of the study negatively. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 231-232.) In this certain study, the informants were informed beforehand about the topics and the goals of the interviews. Moreover, the interview questions were sent to the informants approximately one week before the interview, to increase the validity of the answers. Informants were not requested to prepare themselves, but the beforehand sent question set gave them an opportunity to be more prepared at a mental level to answer to the questions. Thus, errors occurring from confusion about the topics of the interview questions were minimized.

It is noteworthy that the researcher is a rather inexperienced interviewer and therefore may have been able to unknowingly guide the conversation in the direction that serves

study's goal with expressions and encouragement. On the other hand, inexperience can be seen as a strength. It is claimed that interviewees dare to talk more openly and more directly to a novice researcher who is not the nearest colleague or superior. Nevertheless, when conducting qualitative research, it cannot be ignored that the truths produced based on this study might be different when the researcher changes or data collection and analysis differs from this study's methods. The truth is always multifaceted in interpersonal researches, so making the researcher's interpretations visible is extremely important for reliability and quality of the study. (Eskola & Suoranta 1999: 213, 216; Kiviniemi 2001: 79-81; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 72.)

Reliability refers to ensure that if the same research is conducted later with the same procedures as earlier research, the later research should end up with the same conclusions than the first one. In other words, reliability refers ability of the study to be repeatable. The main intention is to minimize biases and errors in a study and highlight the degree of consistency. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: 292; Yin 2009; Saunders et al. 2014.) The situational changes make research almost impossible to repeat in the same circumstances where it previously occurred. (Marshall & Rossmann 1999.) To ensure the best reliability as possible, research biases were tried to avoid. Interviews were always recorded in the same way, and the transcription was started immediately after all interviews were recorded, to ensure the best possible transparency. Interview situations were neutral and relaxed where the informants were able to ask complementary questions if needed. Anyhow it is essential to remember due to constructivist ontology issues such as validity and reliability are not used in a traditional sense, as the views of individuals matter, and there is no need for getting similar results from another study.

According to Saunders et al. (2014), the subject or participant error happens when the informant is influenced by external factors, for instance, time pressure of the day. Avoid this error, interview times were proposed to the informants beforehand. The informants were able to customize the interview schedule to have the best possible time window as possible. Also, all interviews were carried out at Helsinki headquarters, where informants worked daily. Thus, the access to the interview site was easy. (Saunders et al. 2014.)

To increase qualitative research reliability, it is important to have a detailed description of every phase of the study. Achieve high-reliability rate in the study, it includes a description of the circumstance in which the data was gathered, time that had been used in every interview or disruptive issues which might have side effects to the result of the study. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 232.) According to Marshall & Rossmann (1999), the

weakness with qualitative research is that the situational changes do not allow the same research to be repeated in exactly in the similar circumstances than it had been done on the first time. In this study, the reliability is increased by recording all interviews and transcribing all interviews instantly after the interviews. Moreover, questions were asked in the way to avoid leading the conversation to a certain direction. Discussions were held as neutral as possible to avoid question biases. (Maylor & Blackmon 2005.)

In addition to the coverage of the data, the reliability of the survey is measured by the logic of analysis; how the material has been analyzed and how the interpretations have been justified. Logic also refers to the fact that the interpretations are consistent and illustrates the whole research material. (Eskola & Suoranta 1999: 216) A wide range of citations has been highlighted in to support the argumentation of the study. These citations verified the interpretations how informants perceive the vision and its implementation importance.

This chapter aimed to evaluate the reliability, validity, and logicalness of the study, justifying the choices made. The chapter above also presented how transparency of the research has been carried out and how the reliability of the research could be maintained on a high level. Next, the study continues by presenting the most important results of the study.

4. FINDINGS

One of the targets of the interviews was to understand how the target company's personnel perceive new vision of the company to '*be a leader in procurement analytics*'. The picture below illustrates the situation that was prevailing in fall 2017. The target company's target was to transform their current status as being a recognized player in a spend analysis domain to a recognized leader in spend analysis.



Figure 4. How Sievo wants to be perceived in the future.

The interviews' results are gone through in this chapter. The interviews aimed to investigate how the vision is perceived among personnel, how the vision has affected employees and how the vision is suggested to be reached through developed strategies. This chapter presents a brief introduction to the case company. Secondly, it represents the findings and analyses of the findings. The findings of the case study will be considered and linked by previous research on the phenomenon of vision, strategy implementation, and strategy change. This chapter presents informants, how the vision is perceived and how they executed it in their everyday work.

4.1 Introduction to the case company

Sievo is founded in 2003 and is based in Helsinki, Finland. It has a branch office in Chicago, US. Sievo specializes in transforming complex procurement data from any source to a business value that hits the bottom line. Sievo's proprietary data extraction, classification, and enrichment software provide total spend visibility for some of the world's largest and most complex procurement organizations. Sievo develops and distributes a standalone spend analytics platform that specializes in supporting closed-loop spend/savings planning and control, including the ability to include market price indexes and budgeting and forecasting tools to project savings opportunities and to track spend against contract data. Unique features include a supplier web upload service that allows line item-level data to be collected from key suppliers where only header or total data is available. (SpendMatters 2018.)

Sievo procurement analytics solutions are mainly targeted to enterprises whose revenue is over one billion dollars. The company operates internationally in many different countries focusing geographically mainly on Europe and US. At the moment Sievo's growth is fast with almost 50% revenue growth from 2016 to 2017. Employee rate is approximately 140 individuals, 130 in Helsinki and 10 in Chicago. According to the largest online procurement research company, Sievo is a recognized procurement analyst vendor in 2017. Sievo serves a diverse global client base including enterprises like Carlsberg, Deutsche Telekom and ISS World Services.

4.2 The vision is perceived as the topic of the company

This chapter deep dives into how Sievonians (a nickname used to define the target company's individuals) perceive the vision that was articulated in fall 2017. The chapter includes concluded thoughts how employees perceive the vision, do they see it functional and do they perceive it achievable in real life or is it just management team's wordmongering but nothing concrete that would motivate to strive towards better results. Moreover, the chapter gives an insight into the vision's uniqueness and do employees see the vision guiding, instructional and inspiring. The chapter also examines, does the vision help employees to direct their efforts and can they use the vision as a tool to ease everyday work tasks. Findings begin with introducing how employees perceive the vision and then goes deeper to practicalities, including changes that have happened in the company.

Finally, the findings chapter gives detailed suggestions based on informants' assumptions about how to improve the strategy process to achieve the vision step by step.

4.2.1 “Vision – the meaning behind what you’re doing”

It is important to understand how a company's personnel perceive the vision because all actions need to be linked to strive towards the vision. If the vision is perceived in a wrong way or it does not motivate individuals at all and action alignment does not strive towards the vision. Before understanding everyday strategic decision making, it is essential to understand where these choices are trying to lead and how the vision is perceived among personnel.

In the target company, the vision was generally perceived as a guideline that was not present on a daily basis. Anyhow the informants stated it as an important issue for the business, giving the purpose for the company. Informants perceived the vision to be something on the background that guides the actions and transformations. They described the vision to be as evidence that Sievo wants to aim high and gives purpose for the future.

“It's important to have the vision of the company to know why you are working and what is the meaning behind you're doing [...]”

Informants invariably mentioned that they perceive the vision as a tool that helps individuals to understand where the company wants to go in the future. Without vision, a company does not know where it is going and will not move to the wanted direction. It is good to have a less effective strategy that is implemented than a precisely planned strategy that is never executed in practice.

“It's better to have a lousy vision than no vision.”

“Even though it's not something that you think on a daily basis it is good that you have some kind of spot on the horizon that you are going towards”

Some of the informants mentioned that the vision is the most important issue of the whole company. They described the vision to be something that defines intermediate goals, the whole existence of business and was seen as a desired situation that enables competitive advantage. Without the vision, business is not going anywhere and aligning single actions would be impossible.

“[Vision] should be the first priority in everything”

“[Vision] speeds up the growth in the way that everyone is pulling in the same direction.”

Majority of the individuals considered the vision to act a crucial part of the company, future goals, and the company’s ambitions. Understanding the company’s vision was not uniform when asked about the importance of the vision. A couple of informants perceived that the vision was not essential but more restricting and affecting negatively to operational efficiency.

“[...] I sometimes feel that we spend perhaps even a bit too much on this high-level concept of the vision or thinking about the purpose of the company instead of thinking about collectively what are the next actions and next milestones and who are the customers that we are going forward.”

All in all, informants perceived the vision to be important issue acting the backbone of the company. It was also seen as a topic of the company that should align all company actions. What came to vision’s inspirational and unique aspect, there were more differences compared to this chapter.

4.2.2 “I don't think it is inspiring and individual it is just the industry that is not inspiring making its corporations richer”

All informants knew the vision slogan of the company ‘Being a global leader in procurement analytics’, and were able to say it correctly. One of the key targets of this study was to clarify, do employees know the vision of the company. It can be said that employees of Sievo are very aware of the vision at least on a high level. Although Sievo employees are aware of the importance of the vision, they still not feel that Sievo’s vision is guiding enough. Most of the informants saw the current vision as something that directs only Sievo’s business actions and does not include employees’ intentions. One informant considered that the vision is a very motivating topic for the company but not for an individual who works for Sievo.

“For the whole company it [vision] is more than one sentence. But for one human being, it is not important.”- An employee

The vision was usually seen as an abstract and challenging concept to understand in practice. It was something absurd, and linkage between everyday actions and the vision

was vague. Informants were not certain about will Sievo achieve the vision or is it more just a topic for everything that is not even supposed to be reached.

“The vision is somewhere there, but you don't connect two dots necessarily.”

One dominant opinion was that Sievo's vision definition was seen very generic among personnel. An informant claimed that to be the leader is very generic vision definition that does not differentiate the company at all. Anyhow, the same person added that procurement analytics side of the vision was very niche and thought the direction to be right in that sense. Some of the informants wondered that the vision is just unique because the term procurement analytics is self-made and no competitor still does not use that term yet.

“I think there is nothing original with the vision. Except the fact to claiming to be the leader in a market that doesn't exist. “

All informants did not agree with the vision's inspiring aspect. They pointed out how the vision only emphasizes the organization's “hard” targets like being the *global leader in procurement analytics*. Many informants mentioned that the vision did not take into account individuals and “soft” side of the vision could not be seen.

“I don't think it is inspiring and individual it is just the industry that is not inspiring making its corporations richer.” – An employee

Contrast to the majority of informants, leaders perceived the vision as a concept that should be independently achieved by employees. Strategic steps and guidelines were seen restricting. Almost every strategic publication emphasizes the importance of giving freedom and autonomy to employees to commit the strategy in their way. Leaders are giving exactly this autonomy for the employees. Still, employees were willing to see more individual targets that could be linked with everyday work tasks, helping an individual to understand how little steps are progressing the company towards the vision.

“[...] [Vision] is there, but it is up to each person to achieve it or not. So we don't really have a goal for each person. What is your goal every morning when you wake up, what is your goal every day you go to work.” – An employee

In addition than just being a punchline or a topic of the company, individuals perceived the vision to be important in defining the domain where the company is acting and simultaneously borders individuals to focus on issues that are important for success. All informants were able to mention vision's two main components that construct the cornerstones of the vision. Firstly '*being the global leader*' and secondly doing it in the '*procurement analytics*' domain. Approximately half of the informants mentioned that the vision is hard to define because procurement analytics domain does not exist yet but Sievo is trying to create it first.

" [...] it limits us to working with procurement. [...] second aspects, so we want to be the global leader."

Being the dominant player in the certain business domain, it demands to be unique and different in some way. Companies who follow already known patterns without differentiating from other players will end up in the same place without attaining a competitive advantage. The unique vision was perceived to be this the starting point to be different compared to competitors, finally giving an opportunity to attain a competitive advantage.

"I think that the vision is trying to provide that competitive edge that we have something more and we can also compete successfully in the future."

It was noteworthy that persons who took part in the creation process of the vision were more able to explain vision uniqueness in a more multisided way than people who just heard about it and tried to execute it. People who planned it described the vision to be unique because of the unique business domain. The domain, *procurement analytics*, was not existing yet and creating it as a part of the vision was seen fascinating. The company's vision aimed to broaden the business domain from spend analytics to procurement analytics, meaning that customer organizations' procurement data would be used more advantageously way than just classifying it to spend categories. According to the co-founder of the company, the selection of this niche was not completely unique but still, there were not many players yet. At the moment in procurement analytics field, Sievo is the largest company, mostly due to the new domain definition that was articulated by Sievo.

Besides being unique on the certain business domain, one informant stated that it feels inspiring and important that the vision emphasized an issue to be the best company in a

certain business domain. The vision itself was not seen that inspiring but being the best in something was seen to be a motivating aspect.

“Many people in a company, one of the parts of the motivation is being the best, not being the budget option.”

Besides articulating the vision in an attractive way, most of the informants were willing to see more guidance and steps to follow. Giving guidelines and autonomy simultaneously has seen paradoxical. As the target company’s management team states, freedom is essential to maintain motivation and creativity among personnel. However, according to informants, more practical guidance is needed as can be noticed from the chapter below.

4.2.3 “Ideally it would be something, what do we need to make a trade-off in everyday work”

The vision was perceived to act as a skeleton behind the business, giving the framework to align everyday actions. A functional vision was perceived to be something that genuinely helps employees to understand where their everyday work actions are leading. It should be implicated into practice for every individual in the company, not just something that is the management team’s wordmongering. One informant mentioned that he expects the vision to help him in a decision-making situation where he needs to consider trade-offs, not just something that the management team discusses and communicates.

“I suppose that easily it is something on the PowerPoint that management talk about. But ideally it would be something, what do we need to make a trade-off in everyday work then it could guide trade-offs.”

An informant mentioned that a functional vision is something that is able to align strategic actions which will be executed in every day. The vision is something that gathers individuals to work towards the same goal uniformly. It is something that unites people to act explicitly for something bigger.

“[...] and then of course vision creates and brings everyone together. We have the goal that we all should reach together.”

“People need to know why they are working. It’s something that unites people. Especially when the company grows. It needs something that knits all these people to work together towards the goal.”

An informant described the vision to be something that one can reflect actions and think, are these actions right to lead the company in the right direction. The vision is not near on a daily basis but should be the destination sign that is tried to reach. The most important purpose of the vision is showing the way towards the ultimate target that is wanted to achieve. In that sense, the vision should be guiding but also inspiring to push employees to give their best for the common good. So if the vision is just the punchline, it does not benefit anyone. It should be linked to actions by using strategies. Informants perceived the vision to be functional and relevant just when it is implemented into practice.

“I guess the vision as such doesn't really come from anything unless it really happens in real life. [...] Vision is only there to guide us in our everyday decision making.”

Even though the vision has a more extended period than a strategy which deep dives more into the practical level. Still, the majority of the informants perceived that the vision should be executed more at a practical level, avoiding stagnation into high-level jargon that does seem to lead nowhere. Making vision practicable was one of the most interest awaking topics of the interviews. According to interviewed employees, the vision was wanted to be modified to be something practical and tangible that could be translated into actions. The vision would become guiding and inspiring only when it is committed in practice.

To commit the vision at a practical level, it is important that everyone in the company perceive the vision in the same way because if not, there will be conflicts. This confusion leads to the situation where everyone is pulling organization to his or her own direction causing stagnation where the company is not moving towards the wanted position. Differences in how much vision gives guidance would variate depending on which person the question was asked. For example, asking about vision’s inspiration from the co-founder of the company, the guidance that the vision provided was seen sufficient from his perspective.

“I find it positive way challenging and inspiring sort of stuff. We are there for the full globe, so that's our playground.” – The co-founder

On the other hand, when asking how guiding the vision is from other informants, they felt the vision to be an inspiring high-level topic that is guiding the company but is not linked to everyday actions well enough to feel it important in daily tasks. It was expected that many informants had a desire to commit the vision at an operational level and see how their work is linked to the vision.

“I think the vision is good and inspiring, however, how it is tied to everyday work is not necessarily clear. How is the everyday work what I do or others do, how does it help us to achieve the vision or the goal?” - An employee

Many informants highlighted that they would like to feel that the vision gives instructions that can be committed in practice. They did not feel the vision guiding because it does not deep-dive into practicalities which would help them to align own work with the organizational vision. When asking about how guiding the vision was, the informants majorly claimed the vision to be a too general level punchline. The interviews also showed that informants did not know what role the vision played and did the vision even have to include detailed definitions and everyday instructions. On the other hand, one informant admitted that fundamentally vision’s intention is not to be a short-term guideline but a long-term aspect where actions can be reflected and the vision aims to ignite inspiration. All in all instructive role of the vision was not comprehensively clear for informants.

“[Vision] more inspiring than guiding and instructional. It doesn't take, I'm not sure even the vision ever takes that into account, but sort of technologies that should be used or should we go to the cloud or build our own infrastructure and so on. Questions like this really weren't tackled.” - An employee

“Not that instructing, but more inspirational kind of vision. And I think that's also what visions usually are.” – An employee

Even though findings were multi-dimensional, still all informants had were a unanimous opinion about the basic meaning of the vision. The vision was perceived to act as a skeleton behind the business, something that aligns all actions of the organization. A couple of informants stated the vision guiding and unique because the vision definition restricts Sievo to focus only on procurement analytics. On the other hand, some informants claimed that the vision is not instructing at all because it does not link high-level concept with practicalities. Interviews pointed out that the vision is good and understood well among employees, but a roadmap how to reach the vision was totally

missing. Some informants perceived the vision just motivating organization but not a single individual at all; it is a good topic for the company but does not guide or inspire an employee. Informants were not sure will Sievo really achieve the vision or is it more just a topic and the backbone for everything that is not supposed to be reached.

4.3 Vision's impact on personnel

The chapter below describes interviews' results about how informants argue the impact that the vision has had on them. As mentioned in the literature review chapter, the vision change or redirection always have some kind of direct or indirect impact on operational level actions. According to the informants, the vision was not a new issue that would have affected everyday work tasks notably. In fall 2017 it was first articulated, but still, informants felt that the vision had been in the background even before it was said aloud. Rearticulating the vision in fall 2017 just defined the scope where Sievo wants to be in the future. In other words, the radical organizational change did not happen. The specialists, the co-founder and the management team members all agreed that the articulation did not change Sievo's way of work.

"I think the vision was always there it was maybe phrased differently it wasn't written down anywhere, but it has always been on the minds of the founders."

"I don't think it was sort of change of direction, it was more sort of articulating what we are in. "

Even though mentioned strategy change had not happened by purpose, still Sievo's vision is aiming towards as fast growth as possible. This growth pace brings challenges, unavoidable changes in working routines and new responsibilities. These themes will be discussed in the next chapter where informants' experiences are presented.

4.3.1 Changes and responsibilities that the vision affected in the target company

From the first interviews, it became clear that the company's co-founder and management team members did not want to give too strict strategy plans or roles to employees. They perceived that the designed strategy steps restrict and underestimate employees' abilities to commit strategy in their way. The employees are smart enough to find the best way to build the pattern towards the vision. Management team perceived that they do not have

the same capabilities to provide compared to employees who are professionals in their own domain.

“[...] I do believe that we can't top-down manage and create those goals or steps and so forth that they [employees] need to find for themselves, how they can in a best possible way, constructive work to achieving the vision and so forth. I am not going to impose those goals to individual teams and people.” – The co-founder

During interviews, the general assumption was that responsibility to achieve the vision was not strictly defined. The co-founder and the management team emphasized the importance of freedom to commit strategy in an individual way to end up with the result that benefits the organization the most. Responsibility to figure out the way to the vision should lie on employees' shoulders because in another case, the management team feels that they restrict creative thinking and underestimate employees' abilities to find the best way to achieve the vision. The dichotomical division into two different components, complete autonomy, and strict strategic step planning could not be made, and that is why the balance between guidance and autonomy was a hard task to manage.

“Carefully managed the balance between how much guidance we want to give and how much we want to leave it for the people to figure it out.” – The co-founder

As the co-founder emphasized there is nothing wrong with setting guidelines, those actually provide security of what needs to be done. At the same time, he emphasized the aspect that nobody knows what will happen in the future, so complex strategic steps are totally worthless because the future cannot be planned or forecasted precisely beforehand. It is sure that an organization without guidelines will fail but what is the correct amount of guidance that does not kill creativity? As the co-founder commented, leaders' responsibility should be more on communicating about what is happening and how the vision is affecting the company, not giving strict rules to follow.

“I don't believe in detailed action plans. I don't think that we have never been a vision lead company, more inside-out passion led company. Then at the same time the more people we have people have to see I need to feel that I know where I'm going, There is uncertainty it is paradoxical because in whether I feel yes, leadership must come in and say this is the future. The more we provide the people that this is the future and this is the 55 steps that we are executing and this is your job process it creates security 'yes I know where I'm going' I have a map, and I'm going there.” – The co-founder

Nevertheless, the management team did not want to give clear steps to follow, it did not mean that they neglected the vision and only watching from the sidelines what is

happening. The importance of the vision could be seen especially in its active communication. Interviews pointed out that especially manager level employees were willing to communicate about the vision internally but especially externally to other stakeholders.

“[...] articulation of vision, I have taken a more vocal role in communicating that Sievonians [individual who work for Sievo] side.” – The co-founder

Leaders' responsibility in that sense is not setting restricting guidelines for subordinates but instead keeping the business on track and enabling subordinates potential to strive towards the vision in the given framework. As the quote below cleverly compresses the idea of common success that comes from enabling others to be the best possible employee than they could be. Leaders described themselves customer servers whose customers were their team members.

“[...] enabler. Our successful come after other people success. I think at the moment 99% mentality or my workday on my team management.” – A team leader

Leaders' one of the greatest responsibility was to be an enabler who enables their team professionals to give their best. In the target company, this responsibility meant creating working practices, methods and enabling chances for people to grow so they can shine in their works.

“Development of working practices, [...] creating methodologies. So I think that's sort of supporting individual persons in developing their expertise and they are developing organizational expertise and working towards the goal.” – A team leader

“[...] now as a key account manager, of course, I need to support people in my team so that our customers are happy and then it is easier to sell more and win market share. That's the case. And then I need to coach and support them [...].”

Aligning individuals' actions to strive towards the common goals is necessary to be succeeded with the vision. Thus leaders who have their team, also have a responsibility to create long-term goals which are aligned with the vision but most importantly bring these long-term goals into everyday work practice. The leaders are bridges between long-term targets and operational level execution. Capability to link these two aspects ensures that short-term goals will transform into the long-term vision and vice versa.

“Figure out how the product vision comes from the company vision. [...] even if I don't have the product vision in place. I should have a product that is aligned with the vision and even if I don't have the product roadmap. [...] I'm not too happy about having the sorts of roadmap that are customized like where we divide like okay in the upcoming for years these are the features that we're going to do this three this year and these three on next year and so on.”

Creating bridges and linking people to work, provides the best working environment than possible, where the big picture is broken down in more understandable pieces. Because intermediate targets are not set by design from the management team, team leaders have an important responsibility to create short-term strategies and goals that will be linked with the vision in the end. In the target case, this linking also meant geographically linking Sievo's offices in different continents and manage these offices' collaboration. This is a concrete example of how leaders should connect different departments and create a communal feeling building bridges vertically between individuals but also horizontally between long-term vision and short-term strategies.

“For example creating Helsinki-Chicago bridge is one of the areas that I feel like playing a role and reminding people in Helsinki that there is Sievonians also in Chicago as well and trying to help people link to Chicago.” – The co-founder

Strategic changes can be seen targeted to serve aggressive growth which is one part of the vision. Inside some of the teams, they had own roadmaps and task assignment list which are planned to take right steps towards the better product development to answer to constant change in markets. These task lists are part of strategies which are directed to lead the company step by step closer the vision.

“So has my work tasks changed since fall 2017? Yes and maybe. There's one change that has happened since fall 2017. In practice, we are all responsible for day-to-day task assignments in my product team.”

Sievo is in the fast growth situation where growth is so fast that it needs to standardize some processes and roles to answer to the growth pace. In practice, this means more unified customer facing, more professional marketing efforts and internal adjustments inside Sievo.

“Focus to really sort of focusing more on how do we do the [software] implementations and what's that generic best way of doing it sort of not tailoring it too much to client specific need but doing more standardized approach.”

“We also changed the organization of the company. Dedicated product teams that we didn't use to have.”

Even though after vision articulation, big changes had not been planned or phrased, still a lot had happened. The main issue behind these strategic changes can be traced back to the vision. Vision's one main element is to grow to be a global leader in the business domain that does not exist yet. This impels the target company to make strategic changes. Changes and fast growth has also brought some challenges that will be gone through in the next chapter.

4.3.2 Challenges in strategy implementation

In the case study, every single informant was able to articulate the vision in the correct way and did know that Sievo has the vision. In other words, they knew the key point to be *the leader* globally and also what means to be the leader in *procurement analytics*. Most of the informants were good at describing what it means in practice to be the leader in procurement analytics, but simultaneously informants were uncertain how to achieve the wanted position during the coming years. It can be said that communication in this sense has been sufficient.

“Every management team presentation start with that [vision] title line.”

Some informants also mentioned that the punchline itself was communicated sufficiently or in some cases in the too excessive way, but practicality lacked.

“I think on the high-level it is even over communicated so I think that we need to find a path of coming from that one sentence global leader in procurement analytics more into action about the level and what does that mean in practice.” - A team leader

It seems that the vision is communicated quite actively to external stakeholders and internally where the company wants to be in the future. Many interviews pointed out that the vision is articulated even excessively, but in practice, vision is not taken into account as can be seen from the comment below. Communication about the vision seems to be one-sided vision articulation, but real meaning on a practical level is still vague because vision is not really used to direct everyday actions.

“Vision is communicated quite actively. I don't think that I use it in my daily communication I'm not sure even if I'm outside of meetings of management [...]” – A team leader

Getting siloed itself is not a hindering issue, but if communication between silos stops working, challenges will appear. Communication is said to be one of the most crucial factors in the success of strategy implementation that leads the company towards the vision. Informants also mentioned the same challenge in their company. They, for instance, mentioned that they are aware that there are knowledge silos that prevent easy information flow. Moreover, dysfunctional knowledge had had a negative impact where individuals comprehensively do not know who is doing what and how their works are linked together. Generally speaking, Sievonians knew well where Sievo focuses on but for all informants that were not clear. This uncertainty about focus areas restricted an informant's efforts to align work tasks with others and with the vision. An informant gave an example that she did not know in which way Sievo wants to grow. Either being a niche player that focuses on carefully served customers or is Sievo more willing to scrape all customers that they could have and do pay less attention to customer service.

“Biggest market share or second path would be, has the coolest and the most recognized product, so it can be two ways in that. I don't know what direction Sievo will go to. Are we aiming to as many clients as possible and then be well organized with marketing and has the biggest market segmentation or will we be the niche or top-notch product company? I don't know which direction we're going to.” – A team leader

Lack of communication leads to a situation where parts of the organization assume that Sievo is going to the right direction, but other half is claiming that everyone is pulling business to different directions affecting stagnation where Sievo is not moving forward. This can be seen for example when comparing leaders' assumptions to specialists' assumptions. These two informants' comments tell a lot about the alignment of the company and how contradictory they are to each other.

“I mentioned earlier we are pretty well internally aligned.” - A person who perceives that the company is internally aligned.

And

“I think that we have very little influence on that. 140, individuals pulling to different directions. And we are just going to different directions. If we are able to all pointing to being a global leader in procurement analytics of course, then that would drive it.” – A person who does not perceive Sievo to be well internally aligned.

A person who thought that actions and responsibility areas are not aligned well enough to strive towards the organizational vision, moreover thought that responsibilities were not a clear hindering commitment of work tasks. This confusion dragged attention somewhere else than to the vision. Moreover, an informant mentioned that the vision is guiding only the organization and was willing to have more individual guiding that would motivate him as an individual. Informants also mentioned that the vision is not sufficiently providing a purpose for its individuals. They are willing to see that vision also gives something that they can be excited and motivated.

“For the whole company, it is more than one sentence. But for one human being, it is not important. [...] it’s guiding the company not individuals.” – An employee

“Was quite clear that most people in Sievo are not pretty passionate about procurement or towards analytics. One thing which maybe this vision is not successful, not providing like strong enough purpose to Sievonians. It provides a goal, and it's something bold to achieve and motivates but then the why is a little bit missing. I think that we could have probably internal vision. That's a good external vision to communicate to customers and other companies to analysts to journalists, but I think Sievo lacks internal vision which should be a bit different which would give some purpose to develop.” – A team leader

According to informants, the current vision is good enough, as a topic that sets the bar high. Although the basic idea of the vision is perceived to be a high-level concept, still informants want to get more practical instructions that would help their efforts alignment towards the vision. Employees perceive that the vision is broad and does not give much direction. Even though the vision was at high-level, informants were satisfied that it limits the company’s working environment to work with procurement analytics and striving towards being the global leader in that sector.

“I think the problem where people fail is the correct level of practicality [...]”

“We are missing the steps and milestones, the plan for how to achieve the vision. Somehow we are lacking roadmap to the vision I suppose vision and some sort of more concrete things not only abstractive. Okay, we want to be the global leader but somehow the steps that's okay we want to do this because this will make us unique.” – An employee

There was seen a bit frustration among some informants. The frustration was rooted from the fact that employees would like to see real actions in practice rather than just listening vision articulation. Concrete decisions that would help to progress with the vision.

Informants also were willing to see something meaningful that resonates with individuals' belief and set of values.

“More discussion and concrete decisions made in a certain direction that we could go. Something has been said out loud, but they don't progress from that point.” – A team leader

Informants were not sure to which way the company really wants to go. For example, an informant was not sure where the company needs to focus on to move towards the right direction that helps in achieving the vision. For example, one informant hesitated to which way to develop the product but also knowing how Sievo wants to position themselves as a company and how they are going to differentiate from competitors.

“But then again are we trust and analytics company or do we build the product where procurement also does something else than analysis. And that I have been struggling with. And I think that I need to raise it at some point within the company that where do we focus.” – A team leader

Noteworthy was to see that leaders' who had bigger responsibilities over long-term planning and strategy alignment were more satisfied with current guidance. They emphasized autonomy and independence in decision making and were reluctant to give strategic steps towards the vision. They trust in employees that they are professionals and they have better knowledge about how this business should be developed to reach the wanted vision.

The target company is a medium-sized company that is growing fast, 30-50% revenue increase pace per year. One of the biggest challenges concerns the growth management. Growth is one field of the vision so it cannot be neglected. At the same time, when fast growth is wanted, it also brings hiccups and growing pains that have an impact on strategy implementation.

“Big challenges are since the company trying to grow at the same time become leading professional, or having the best professional acknowledge at the same time. Recruit people, but then you know having the best professionals in the area means that you need to have the experience. So those are in the way conflicting with each other.”

One important aspect of Sievo's vision is the growth. Fast growth was majorly perceived to be a positive issue but also factor that concerned employees. For example, many informants pointed out, how startup mentality that has been strong from the beginning of

Sievo can be maintained when the company becomes a bigger company and colleagues are not bound up with each other that closely anymore. Individuals who have worked for Sievo for a long time were feared that positive community spirit might suffer when collaboration between individuals would not be as fluent as before. This issue was mentioned on all levels of the company. Another issue is that growth has been seen as a negative issue that brings more work but not extra resourcing. According to one informant, earlier new sales were celebrated but at the moment growth and new deals mean more work without extra support.

Fast growth had led to the situation where the target company was forced to be organized into more structured teams that eased management efforts. At the same time, grouping into teams had created silos where horizontal communication was more challenging to carry out than before.

“We are growing fast pace, so it is quite natural that we become more siloed than before. We have been split more on to teams that work on individual products [...]”

Sievo is a fast-growing company, and one of the biggest challenges that every informant brought out was that how Sievo does ensures that they have enough resources to enable fast growth. Questions like how Sievo is able to accommodate growth before they get resources, need of external funding and preventing burnouts were themes that informants highlighted. Frustration about resource sparseness was able to notice. An informant stated that if the vision aims to fast growth, why resourcing is not correlating with it. Growth was wanted, but support still lacked.

“RESOURCING! Are there enough people working on it? Is the Vision important for the management, [...] resourcing and priorities do not reflect with the vision.” – An employee

Informants do know that Sievo is a self-financed company, but many wondered why. If external funding was available to get, why owners were not willing to take it to fill up the resource shortage. They did not understand why it is wanted to keep self-financed in the situation where resourcing is one of the most challenging issues. In many cases, external funding was considered to be the best possible solution to ease resource shortage simultaneously boosting Sievo’s growth efforts to be the global leader in procurement analytics.

Resource shortage had an impact on employee headcount. A couple of informants mentioned that all time goes to operational tasks and because of that strategical discussions and alignments are done in hurry. Strategic thinking was seen as valuable, but it was something that is taking time form “real work” because strategic results cannot be seen in the short time window. Even though strategical decisions were seen as important, still operational execution was seen even more crucial. According to informants, this is not a sustainable way to execute business, and that is why resources are needed to release more time to focus more on long-term strategic thinking. Strategic discussions were done in a hurry when operational tasks were taking most of the time.

“My responsibility is taking the vision and running with it so we would have a product vision. We had these product roadmap presentations last fall and those who are part of the vision, but I felt that it was a bit hurried discussion. I had just started in this position, and I think that we are still lacking quite significantly on product vision.” – A team leader

Growth pains are especially human-related where most worries concern how growth can be managed in harmony without losing Sievo’s special internal culture and good working vibes. When growth is fast, a company cannot have high people turnover people. Luckily Sievo has been good at keeping professional inside the house, but lately, the brain drain has worried a couple of informants. With people comes culture so high employee turnover will also challenge maintaining good internal vibes.

“If I was comparing two years ago it really was startup feeling now we have over 60 customers and every time we get more and more from sales we are like are we able to handle this. So not feel like we are majoring and we need someone to support this growth. It’s definitely challenging. We are not any more service organization who serve client’s needs, but we are kind of more sales organization.”

“More I’m worried about sort of, keeping the good internal vibes and movement that we have.”

Especially in a company that is growing as fast as Sievo, above mentioned challenges are common. These challenges cannot be avoided totally, but there are suggestions and improvement ideas that help companies to deal with these issues ensuring better opportunities to reach the vision. Next chapter will present the suggestions that emerged in this study’s interviews.

4.4 Suggestions for better strategy implementation

The management team gives opportunities and responsibility to employees to find their way to the vision of applying their professionalism. Anyhow, giving freedom does not mean leaving alone without guidance. The management team needs to be the initiator who has kick-start force to start the journey towards the vision. They should inspire and motivate people to create own work habit that helps on the journey. If not, the individual gets stuck in executing operational tasks without linking it with the bigger picture. Leaders are willing to give freedom and opportunities but do they give sufficient guidance and instruction about where personnel should canalize their efforts?

According to informants, more guidance is needed. Employees feel that freedom is good, they perceive that the overall vision is fair enough, but the roadmap which would help to canalize their efforts is unclear. Informants assumed that making roadmaps, the potential of employees could be canalized in a more efficient way having a positive impact on organization's profitability but also to individuals' motivation to create own best practices to strive towards the vision.

Leaders' role as a Kickstarter has a big role. It seemed that operational level employees did not have courage, motivation or time to start a strategic change at the operational level. As said, strategic change requires patience and results does not realize in one day or week. Employees are commonly committing their work tasks, and strategic long-term thinking and planning is something that is wasting time to do "real work". The strategy is something extra that is not tried to avoid but something that is not actively tried to foster. Due to that the management team should be the Kickstarter, engaging power that encourages employees to align own work with the vision; create an atmosphere where strategy work is seen as important as operational tasks. This open dialogue between management and employees would ensure freedom to plan own work tasks in the way that it would be a most efficient way for the company in strategic mindset but also creates an opportunity to set personalized individual targets that genuinely would motivate an employee.

"Help the overall march towards that vision let's say communicating and explaining what it means." – The co-founder

The co-founder emphasized the importance of crisp communication and articulation of the vision. He also emphasized his role to be active evangelist inside the company but

also externally repeating the message and elaborate what it really means for the company to be a global leader. The co-founder has a big responsibility to trivialize the high-level picture into a form where management team members can start their operational actions in their teams. According to informants, employees are waiting that the co-founder is the bellwether where everything should start. Some of the employees also perceived that the vision is the management team's tool and practical implementation should start from that group.

“[Co-Founder] is someone who is expected to pitch in about how we get there” – An employee

Employees are waiting for co-founders' actions to lead the way and actually show the way where the company is wanted to take. At the same time when employees are willing to see the Kickstarter action from the management team, a member from management group mentioned that it is not only management's job to define milestones and roadmaps but it should more be like a collective discussion. Seems like operational level specialists are not sure what actions to take to go in the right direction.

“We can utilize the talent and knowledge and whole capacity of each Sievonian. I don't think that is only the management that defines that hey now you are going to do this or management creates like plan and tells everyone else to follow that line, I strongly feel that sort of vision goal whatever you call it to target that is still a bit far away it can come from management but I think it could also be more collective.” – A team leader

This awakens thought that is there enough discussion between the management team and operational level. The management team is assuming independent actions from employees, but still, specialists do not have a clue who is going to take the charge and lead the way, giving the framework to which way to allocate resources and efforts. The management team is wanted to be the kickstarters. Even though Sievo is a flat organization, still team leaders play a big role in translating vision into the operational task by collaborating inside their teams. A team leader has a responsibility to organize his or her team in a way that operational actions are rolling as smoothly as possible.

Markets are complex and changing all the time, so it is obvious that vision cannot be carved in stone. Informants perceived the good vision to be something that can be modified on the fly. Informants mentioned that applying best practices on the fly to modify the vision is one of the biggest challenges but simultaneously a significant opportunity to adjust the business to changing markets. Vision is suggested to be checked

every now and then with the whole company. Actions could be realigned, and vision could be modified if needed.

“We are going to probably modify the vision. I’m not sure if it should be part of the vision that we are nimble and agile or fast. That is one challenge is that is this vision going to stay the same. That’s the biggest obstacle,” – A team leader

“I just feel that we need a strategy process. I think we need to constantly think if our vision is still validity in the direction that we want to head.” – The co-founder

As said, there should be a carefully managed balance between how much guidance is enough. This sufficiency of guidance is always an individual related issue that highlights the fact that communication between vision planners and operational level implementers needs to work seamlessly to clarify dialogue where individual needs have been found out. An informant concluded communications importance: *“What we see is that what is communicated to us.”* Another way around, without communication, a company is going somewhere without knowing where it is going to. Sufficient communication links high-level vision to everyday actions, bringing more concrete to strategy work. It also means something more than just articulating about the vision. It should be somehow applied to practice. Sievonians know the vision but do not know how to commit it in action. According to most of informants communication about the vision is suggested to be more practical.

As mentioned before, external communication that happens with stakeholders outside of the Sievo is essential due to Sievo’s willingness to create a whole new business domain - procurement analytics. Without active external communication, the domain will not exist, and the vision cannot be achieved. In that sense, external communication really plays an essential role in ensuring vision achieving.

“Now in my position to build roadmaps with the customer and try to sell them the vision and dream where they want to go as procurement function and then try to sell much more.” – A team leader

External communication about the vision seemed to work seamlessly. Sievo’s term *Procurement Analytics* had been already used in the procurement domain, and customers were getting familiar with the vision. However, effective strategy execution that leads towards the vision required communicating organizational level strategy and translating it into plans of the various units and departments. In other words, executing strategic initiatives to deliver the vision aligning employees’ professionalism and their personal

goals and incentives, with strategic objectives. The same kind of activity that is done externally should be done also internally. Not just articulating the vision but making it tangible and concrete.

As mentioned, there was hesitation among employees about which way the company wants to go and where the focus should be directed. Many of informants mentioned that they lack clear roadmaps, milestones and concrete vision that would motivate in short-term. Informants were mostly willing to see something concrete what they can achieve in their work and not just high-level dreams which are hard to link to everyday work. They suggested that strategical roadmaps could be used to illustrate what are common goals and what kind of impact one individual has in that. This also sets a couple of cornerstones which are easier to understand on the journey towards sometimes even absurd vision.

“You need to break it [vision] down to people operational level to understand do you have a sense of purpose. The company has a purpose but individuals need to have it too. As a person I'm not going to be a global leader in procurement analytics, it's a company. But how I can contribute to that? I would like to that management at least would think about that.” – An employee

Seems like the management team presumes that teams proactively creates those metrics and goals, while specific teams and individuals presume that the targets should be created with the management team. Challenge in strategy implementation was that concrete implementation plans which would have linked individuals' actions with organization's vision were missing. Anyhow, the vision was assumed to be a good header for the company. It was seen ambitious, clear enough that limited the domain sufficiently to have a focus on the certain business field. Guidance and strategic support in the practical level were still missing. More guidance was needed to clarify the focus and cornerstones that need to be in condition to achieve the vision. An informant suggested that he would break the vision to more swallowable pieces to provide more guidance. An idea would be different team specific strategies that would jointly construct the vision.

“I think it's breaking the strategy down a little bit. General vision is good, and that can be sort of header we are presenting. Breaking down what does that mean for the different parts of the company. So people can really tie it more to their everyday work. [...] bringing more practice. Breaking down the strategy into small easily swallowable pieces.” – A team leader

“If we think about the vision maybe it could be more concretely explain [...] What are those key building blocks to become the global leader in procurement analytics. Somehow emphasizing that one.” – An employee

Informants also mentioned several times that they do not know how to handle prioritizing. They did not have clear priorities where to focus to progress to be the leader in the procurement analytics. That hindered decision-making process, simultaneously leading strategic execution away from the vision when informants did not know what those most important actions which lead towards the vision are. Knowing priorities inside the team would ease decision making. Teams would be more capable to focus on most valuable actions and knowledge. Clarity about actions that are yielding most value would be clearer and focus could be directed to those. For example, informants were not sure how the global leader status would be achieved in practice. Is the priority number one to have enormous market share growth as fast as possible or is it more important that existing clients enjoy using Sievo's software and will stay Sievo's customers in the future too? Vision should be the guideline that directs employees' actions when facing this kind of questions. To make this prioritizing easier, it is suggested to clarify the way that Sievo wants to grow. Active communication helps personnel to understand those focus points where the growth comes.

An informant stated that he is pretty sure that the management team had well-planned instructions for each team but had not given that information to employees because they did not want to restrict teams on purpose. The informant felt that it would be a good idea to share those ideas that everyone can collaborate towards the defined team goals and indirectly strive towards the vision. He did not feel guidelines restricting but more helping.

“There should be some instructional for individual teams. Of course, they know in the management team what they want us to do. I'm pretty sure that they have more detailed vision somewhere. We have great service, but it is more like a guessing and giving own impression about something and going with that. I think it is enough, but if the company wants everyone to do the same thing they have to give us more detailed instructions how about their vision. I think that is possible.” – A person outside from the management team

Another crucial aspect is an alignment of the strategies that determine how well a company succeeds in their vision. Action alignment creates focus and coordination across complex organizations, making it easier to direct units' task comprehensively to strive towards the vision. It is a challenging task to be successful in alignment. In many cases, team-specific goals and strategies only had rhetorical links with the organization's bigger picture vision. In order to succeed in this, roadmaps were suggested to build bridges

between operational level tasks and high-level vision. As several informants mentioned, creating roadmaps which would be aligned with the vision, could make vision more understandable to link with everyday actions.

“It is possible that everyone is just pulling the organization to a different direction and then the organization won’t move at all and then the vision is not met. So in that sense, there need to be several guidelines and if not that’s clearly something that prevents the vision being implemented.” – A team leader

Nevertheless, the management team does not want to give detailed guidelines. Still, most of the informants were willing to have concrete roadmaps and intermediate targets. Meanwhile, the management team was reluctant to give these targets or steps by design. When milestones are needed but not given from top-down, one opportunity that was mentioned was to create milestones inside every team. Individuals inside the team would understand more accurately what they are wanted to achieve when the vision is broken down into pieces. This team specific target would be aligned in the way that it also serves the organization’s bigger picture ‘being a global leader in procurement analytics’. It became clear that the organization level vision being a procurement analytics leader does not itself motivate most of the informants. Nevertheless, more personalized team and even individual specific targets would bring concrete to an individual. The vision would be achieved simultaneously when an individual would be able to execute his or her passion. Naturally, there comes a challenge, how to create targets that also inspires an individual but are simultaneously aligned with vision.

“We need to have each department vision. The department vision should give each team a vision, what is your team’s vision what is your goal this month and goal for this year. [...] It’s like a waterfall the company vision is to become the leader in procurement analytics and each of every department has their own goal and then together we reach the same ultimate goal.” – A team leader

“It [vision] could be broken down because different departments of the company are focusing in the different areas. The vision could be broken down into smaller pieces. People can really say that what their area and focus point in the vision is.” – A team leader

In one team, roadmapping is done in their way of creating a daily task list. They get a new list for projects every day that need to be done to be successful in a project. An informant felt that this is a good way to her to manage her own work simultaneously seeing concrete direction about is she succeeding or not. Setting a goal for every single person on the project helps an individual to reflect against those goals is he or she going

to right direction. This kind of methodology also demands metrics that can be followed to know are individuals committing right actions at the right tempo. This is one suggestion that could be applied to a practical level. However, it needs to be remembered that this kind of task list method only works for a certain kind of persons and only for partly used in work tasks. It is crucial to creating personalized target systems and indicators that help an individual to do their best simultaneously helping a company move towards the vision. In the worst case scenario, just like these tasks list are issues that the co-founder warned. Task lists just direct employees to commit different tasks, not thinking outside of the box. Committing task list assignments should only be a small part of the work. Sticking only with executing tasks on the list does not lead Sievo towards being something different and also kills internal motivation to create something new. Anyhow tasks lists would work as skeletons to see that necessary actions will be done.

“Define us in such a way or measure us in such a way that we know that we are going to right direction. That would be one key part that I would have way measure whether or not a product is meeting the needs that we have with the vision and also helping me a guide to the team in the right direction. [...] I feel that it is very important that there is not disconnected that management just have this wonderful slide that they show every time but it is active in daily operations.” – A team leader

The concrete example of breaking down the vision came from the informant from the product team. He suggested having an own product vision tied to the bigger vision. In his suggestion, the team-specific strategy would be committed in a way that future scenario could be planned with the team and after that actions would be aligned in the way that a team targets would contribute to the high-level vision to be the global leader in procurement analytics. The same kind of targets could be set also to other departments. Each department would have their own targets. These targets again would be tied to the organization’s long-term vision constructing the vision.

“[...] I would like to paint a picture or even design like marketing material that what this, spend analysis product, would be in near-term or in a longer-term and that would probably help us going to that direction. For that, you should really have some kind of long-term plan. I don't need like this feature and this feature not that type of roadmap but something perhaps inspirational but also something that this is the problem, and we will tackle it with the product in a few years.” - A team leader

Informants mentioned that they would like to have more support in product vision and product strategy. The more active role needs to be taken in defining what would be the

best possible product or service to enable Sievo to progress to be the global leader. It is also defining where that growth comes from and how to emphasize those key revenue bringing areas more.

To start building up these wanted milestones and team level roadmaps, it calls active communication inside each team. Team individuals are professionals in their own domain and are most likely to be aware of what it takes to be a part of the leading procurement organization. When all teams think about how their team could be the best in their own level, they do not have to worry about other teams' targets. The higher level of vision would be the framework for setting team-specific goals. Team specific goals also should modify the vision if needed. Team-based strategies would be in the framework of the vision and vice versa.

“Communication that could be something that each product team should kind of internally have an open discussion. That's where should we take this piece of functionality, and then somehow use the vision as a framework that the company wants to do this kind of things and does it mean something to us.” – An employee

“I could connect what I do maybe more clear the vision of course if it were more continuous communication where we are going like certain steps. But I think our vision, in this case, is somewhere in the future, you can have maybe goals in between.” – An employee

Before individual goals or team level targets can be implemented in practice, there should be high-level discussions what is wanted to be the milestones and a time window where the teams should fulfill their targets, to progress the company towards the vision in the correct schedule. When team level targets are clear enough, then teams start to work together inside the teams creating the most efficient solutions and determine individual goals to achieve the team level target.

“Somehow setting the priorities to guide the action and somehow doing that team level self-evaluations of the road maps. Then the vision is guiding and instructional.” – An employee

Interviews revealed that employees did not see the vision as individually motivating. It guides the company well but not a single human being. One suggestion for that challenge was to create an internal vision that could be used alongside the current one. Internal vision's aims to collect employees' goals and motivation factors and gather them to bigger completeness. After though gathering, Sievonians could construct common themes from

employee's individual level long-term targets. The employees wanted to see that their work helps to create something bigger, not just business value but also cultural changes and something emotion-related. Examples included, for example, Sievo's impact on sustainability and how to be an as happy employer as could be.

“Emphasizing either something that sense of purpose to everyday work learning and improvement things like that. [...] The end goal of why procurement analytics matters. What's social impact of Sievo having a culture [...]? Does that have an impact on Finnish society? Can Sievo somehow help their customers to purchase for an ethical and more sustainable way? Having more vision starting from roots collecting individual goals and motivating factors targets of different people and trying to find something common between those that are very good in some practice that really motivates people.”

Thus, the vision should receive feedback also from employees and should be modified based on these feelings. When employees have the opportunity to have an impact on vision, it becomes personal, and people are motivated to follow the vision that would really please themselves.

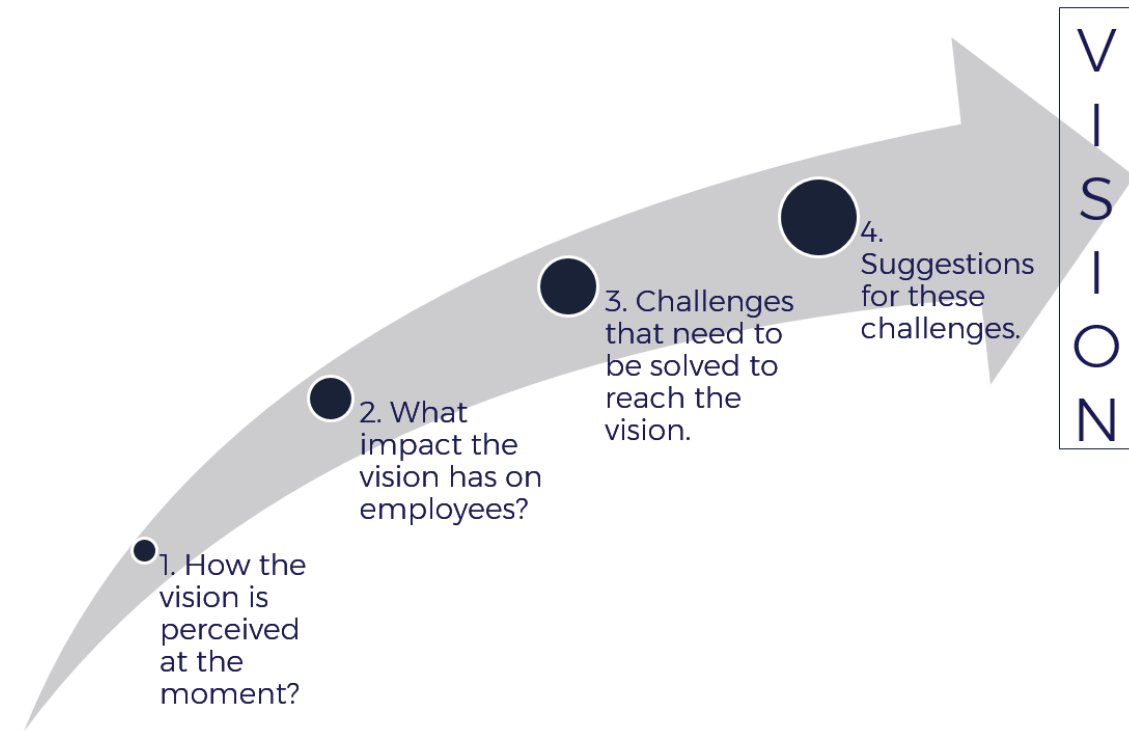
“The vision should also include the employees. For example, our vision should be like the best place to work for example and make every employee happy. It's not always about the client it can be also internal.”

“I don't think it is inspiring and individual it is just the industry that is not inspiring making its corporation richer. It is more contributing to making or solving real challenges, to help customers to be more sustainable not just making money. Or if we could do anything meaningful which resonates with people's belief.”

Team specific goals and high-level alignment would be easier to harmonize strive towards the organization current vision without neglecting individual targets or *internal vision*. Individuals would have different specified targets, and those would be tied to teams' targets when individual and team targets would contribute to the common goal 'being the global leader in procurement analytics'. The current vision is good when communicating towards the customers and other companies, but the internal vision would provide meaning for the employees. These two should be linked together in the way that they would support each other.

This chapter presented the interview findings. The aim was to point out general themes that informants kept the most important concerning the freshly articulated vision of being a global leader in procurement analytics. All in all, informants were very aware of the current vision, and everyone was able to articulate it in the correct way. There can be

noticed that the vision's uniqueness, guidance, and instructions did not please all informants. The vision was only seen as a topic of the company but not as a thing that motivates a single individual. The vision is something that sets the bar high for the business, but it cannot be seen on a daily basis properly. In order to trivialize the vision, roadmaps, team-specific goals, and an internal vision were wanted. Informants wanted to contribute to vision in a tangible way and see how their everyday work is linked to the vision; how little steps help Sievo to go towards the vision to be the global leader in procurement analytics.



1. How the vision is perceived at the moment?	2. What impact the vision has on employees?	3. Challenges that need to be solved to reach the vision	4. Suggestions for those challenges
The vision is perceived to act the skeleton of the whole company.	Vision articulation has not notably change the way of work.	Communication only one-sided articulation.	The vision needs to be broken down into more swallowable pieces, individual targets, team level goals and challenges what need to be tackled to know that the team is going to the right direction.
The vision's punchline is understood well among the personnel.	Management is not willing to give restrictive strategical steps to follow, meaning that employees' responsibility is to find the way to fulfil the vision.	Some employees not sure how Sievo wants to growth. Being the top-notch high quality player or gaining the biggest market share compared to competitors.	Open dialogue between the management team and operational level specialists.
The vision should more align all organizations actions.	Especially team leaders have an enormous responsibility to try to create new working methods and practicalities to link short-term targets with the long-term vision.	Vision is seen broad and absurd issue.	Management should be able to define must-win-battles that a team need to solve individually to progress striving towards the vision.
Sievo's vision is a good topic for the company but does not inspire an single individual.	Fast growth has forced to process standardization.	Losing original Sievo mentality when growth is too fast. Resource shortage.	Creation of internal vision. Linking Sievonians' beliefs and values with the current vision.

Figure 5. Concluding key findings.

The figure above concludes the findings chapter. The table below presents every phases' key points. These numbers illustrate different phases of the process towards the vision; how the vision is perceived and how it is working at the moment but also show recommendations how the process towards the vision could be improved in the future.

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter puts forward central findings from the analysis of the empirical material and compares these with existing literature.

Visions are nearly stated in every company, but as showed before almost every single company still fails to reach it, mainly because of bad execution of strategy implementation that does not lead towards the vision. (Beer, Eisentat & Spector 1990; Barney & Zajac 1994; Gottschalk 2008: 184, 193; Jooste and Fourie 2009; Speculand 2009; Pella et al. 2013; Hrebiniak 2013; Monauni 2017.) Sievo articulated their vision in fall 2017. Especially the software domain where Sievo is operating the pace of the market change is continuous and continuously changing strategy is essential. Strategy implementation research has faced an increasing attention especially when companies need to adjust to these market movements by changing strategies to keep the right direction towards the vision. (Kauppalehti 2016; Rokka 2017.) Thus, it is crucial to understand how the company's individuals perceive the vision, how it affects their work and what the elements that can be improved in the future are.

All informants were able to articulate Sievo's vision in the correct way and understood it in some way. Unlike the majority of companies, only 5% of companies' personnel understand or know their strategies (Kaplan & Norton 2005: 72; Waterman, Peters & Phillips 1988). Before understanding those strategies, it is even more critical to understand the vision to realize where those strategies are trying to direct the actions. The vision is the starting point for everything. Thus, the study points out that Sievo has a good baseline to start building functional strategies towards the vision.

On the theoretical level, vision is defined as something that guides a company's all actions (Wiita & Leonard 2017). Informants of the target company also agreed with this statement, giving the framework for daily actions. As former literature (Kotter 1995; Kirkpatrick & Locke 1996; James & Lahti 2011), as well the study's informants, perceived the vision to be an idealized future where a company strives to be in the future. Informants invariably mentioned that the vision is the tool and destination that helps individuals to understand where the company wants to go and what it strives to achieve. Like Kamensky (2010: 17), informants stated that without knowing where the company is going a company will not move to the wanted direction. Unlike Kamensky (2017) and other strategy authors, the co-founder of the company did not see the vision or its

definition to be important. The most important factor is instead of everyday actions and skills that the organization's professionals have and how they use it as a tool to reach the vision.

In many cases, team-specific goals and strategies only had rhetorical links with the organization's bigger picture vision (Westley & Mintzberg 1989; Kaplan & Norton 2005; Edgelow 2011: 18). Communication is said to be one of the most crucial factors in the success of strategy implementation that leads the company towards the vision. 70% of strategy implementation challenges are caused because of poor communication. (Heide, Gronhaug & Johannessen 2002: 224.) Informants also mentioned the same challenge in their company. It is surprisingly common how especially enterprises have delusional background assumption that implementation of the vision equals only communication of the vision. (Kamensky 2010: 329-330.) More or less Sievo is suffering from this same assumption. The vision is communicated sufficiently but informants were not seeing it in practice. They expected to find out the pattern how the vision can be transformed into actions. This is a typical problem that has been noticed also in former researches. Kaplan, Norton (2005: 72) and Waterman et al. (1988) spotted that 90% of frontline employees have no link to proper information about success or failure of strategy implementation that lead towards the vision.

This study and several other types of researches before have proved that even though a vision is meant to work in a longer time span than for example strategy or tactic, it is still wanted to provide a guide for decision-making situations (Armenakis, Harris & Field 1999; James & Lahti 2011). As presented, the most important purpose of the vision was said to be the guidance, showing the ultimate target that is wanted to achieve. Both literature review and empirical findings pointed out that vision cannot be addressed standalone without strategy implementation or vice versa. So if the vision is just the punchline, it does not benefit anyone. It should be linked to actions by using strategies. (Armenakis, Harris & Field 1999; James & Lahti 2011.) Translating the vision 'being the global leader in procurement analytics' into practice needs more examination.

Former research (Beer & Eisenstat 1996; Kaplan & Norton 2000; Hutzschenreuter & Kleindienst 2006) and informants both confirmed that it is good to trust on employees' autonomy and top-down given strategical steps and milestones kill employees' creativity and motivation to figure out best practices to commit the strategy. According to informants, guidance should not focus on micromanagement, instead, it should give a target for employees that they can achieve by using their professionalism. (Kaplan &

Norton 2000.) They wanted to see themes and challenges that need to be tackled to understand that their work is progressing the company's efforts towards the vision. Former researches are supporting informants' suggestion. Those (Allio 2005; Hammond, Dempsey, Szigeti & Davis 2007; Isoraite 2008) showed that linking strategic objectives and vision with day-to-day objectives is essential when building comprehension among personnel that everyday work tasks will step by step bring the company closer to the vision.

Most of vision and implementation based researches emphasized how important is to make the strategy alive. Analyses have shown that high performing teams spend over 25% more time focusing implementation than lower-performing peers. Time is spent establishing *financial and operational metrics*, *aligning goals* with an overarching strategy, *allocating resources*, and reviewing *key metrics*. Informants emphasized those issues when they talked about issues that should be managed better to make vision more practical. Moreover, high performing teams spend 14% more time checking their progress against strategic goals by reviewing key metrics and shifting resources accordingly. (Wiita & Leonard 2017.)

To make the strategy work effectively, it requires communicating organizational level strategy and translating it into plans of the various units and departments. In other words, executing strategic initiatives to deliver the vision aligning employees' professionalism and their personal goals and incentives, with strategic objectives. (Kaplan & Norton 2005.) Even though it is important that employees are aware of the vision and can explain it in their own words. Informants emphasized the fact that the vision is useless if it cannot be understood on a practical level.

According to several strategic studies (Kaplan & Norton 2005: 72 & Hrebiniak 2006), common goals will be easier to understand when organizational level vision is divided into team specified strategies and further to individual-level objectives. Informants were excited to see some shorter-term milestones which will realize in near future. These common goals were seen to keep the focus on issues that really progress the target company step by step towards the vision. Team targets should be set to direct an individual's efforts towards the right direction (Allio 2005; Hammond, Dempsey, Szigeti & Davis 2007; Isoraite 2008).

It seemed that Noble's (1999) strategical consensus did not prevail in the target company. In other words, it was not sure how employees should prioritize their tasks and what were

the most important focus points that really lead towards the vision. As Rensburg et al. (2014) mentioned, this focus responsibility should lie on leaders' shoulders. As former researches (Coetzee, Visagie & Ukpere 2012; Berta, Cranley, Dearing, Dogherty, Squires & Estabrooks 2015) also this study's informants perceived that the leaders are the Kickstarters of the whole practical implementation process. They need to clarify where to pay attention and how subordinates are able to align their actions to reach organizational requirements. It is extremely common that the management team assumes that the strategy will be implemented by specialists on the operational level but simultaneously these specialists are waiting for more guidance from the management team. The strategy will not move in any direction and the vision will fail. Thus, vision development and strategy alignments that help operational level execution should not only be done by leaders.

If individuals from all layers of the company perceive that the change in the vision is necessary then the change should be committed from bottom-up. (Kaplan & Norton 2005.) To answer this challenge informants suggested the internal vision. It was suggested that there could be used an internal vision besides the current vision to give deeper purpose for employees. This study ratifies also the fact that former researches (Collins and Porras 1991; Frese, Beimel & Schoenborn 2003) have proved. The vision should be something that engages a set of organizational core values and inspires personnel. Internal vision concept was totally new term and concept in the field of strategic management. This is exactly mentality that Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) suggested to happen inside the company to engage employees more with the vision. The internal vision idea is a feasible idea and its possibilities should be investigated more precisely in the future too.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study contributes to a common discussion about vision's absurdness and how it is typically seen only as a topic for the company but nothing else. In addition, this study concentrated on how personnel perceives the vision, what challenges occurs during the journey towards the vision. The study pointed out most common hiccup factors that hinder a company's efforts towards the vision. Furthermore, the study suggested ingredients for successful strategy implementation. This chapter concludes the main findings of the study and presents theoretical and managerial implications. Finally, the chapter presents the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

To understand vision as a term, how vision is perceived, how it is affecting to employees and how the vision is successfully reached through strategies, three research questions will be answered in the next chapter: 1) How vision is perceived? 2) How vision is affecting to employees? and 3) How to reach vision successfully through strategies?

5.1 Main findings

The first research question aimed to clarify how personnel perceived a vision term and how it is visible in their company. Sievonians perceived the vision to be an idealized future position; a baseline concept on the background of the company. According to, the majority of informants, the vision was generally seen as one of the most important things that guide the company, still, it was something that was not thought on a daily basis. All ten informants stated that Sievo is taking right steps towards the vision to be the global leader in procurement analytics in the future. Sievonians felt it inspiring that the vision was ambitious and set the bar high. Even though all informants were not sure or confident if Sievo will achieve the vision in coming years, still the direction seemed right and they assumed to be on their way to execute something big.

Even though the vision was seen important for the company, it was not perceived important for a single employee. It was respected that the current vision borders the business domain keeping focus on the value-adding actions that lead towards the vision. The target company's business domain definition was seen as a very niche whereas being a leader was perceived to be very generic. The vision was commonly perceived to be just a topic of a company, but nothing that would awake bigger emotions or motivation.

Target company vision's punchline was known very well, every informant was able to articulate it in the correct way. Almost everyone described vision to be constructed of two elements, firstly being a global leader and secondly being the leader in the field of procurement analytics. Even though the vision was understood and articulated in the correct way, still, informants did not see it individually motivating or guiding enough. Most of the informants wanted the vision to be more guiding, drilling down to details and more inspiring by taking employees' interests more into account.

The second research question aimed to give an answer to which kind of impact and challenges the vision has had on employees. The vision had changed the way of communication. The vision is actively communicated inside the company but especially to external stakeholders. Active communication had positively affected employees' understanding of what the vision is and what it means. Informants expected to find out the pattern how the vision can be transformed into actions. At the moment in the target company, the vision seems to be just a topic that is actively communicated but in practice, vision is not taken into account. Communication seemed to be one-sided articulation but the real practical level meaning was missing. The study's informants mentioned several times that they were missing steps and milestones to achieve the vision. They did not have roadmaps to follow and assumed that the vision should be something more than words on an abstract level. Moreover, informants were not sure where to focus on.

The findings pointed out that the vision was a motivating factor for the company but did not give deeper purpose for a single individual. Besides the lack of deeper purpose, informants were worried about how fast growth and how it could be managed. Due to the ambitious vision, the company had the intention to grow as fast as possible to be the leader in the procurement analytics domain. Informants were unanimous about the fact that it will be a crucial challenge to manage growth and simultaneously keep up the startup mentality that Sievo has had from the very beginning. Fast growth brought worry how resourcing will be managed. Resource allocation could not maintain the same pace than growth, causing work overload and frustration among employees. Lack of resources had also caused that there was not sufficient time for strategic planning. Most time went to executing operational tasks that yield results instantly and strategic planning was neglected. Another issue concerned the way how Sievo wants to grow. It seemed that the strategical consensus did not prevail in the target company. In other words, it was not sure how employees should prioritize their tasks and what were the most important focus points that really lead towards the vision.

The third research question considered the aspect to be successful in reaching the vision through strategies. The suggestions from informants were especially linked to the clarification of the vision. Leaders were wanted to act a role of the supporter who connects the dots between long-term vision and short-term strategic actions. They were wanted to be the Kickstarters who start the planning process with employees and create time for strategy work. Informants also suggested emphasizing practicality in communication. This practicality means setting milestones and targets that can be measured. The vision was suggested to be broken down into more swallowable pieces, building team specific milestones that would be ease vision understanding. This allows employees to follow their progress and instant improvements could be done. According to employees this guidance and precise communication did not mean top-down instructions that would include strategical steps but more kind of roadmap which presents the problem that needs to be tackled with the product in a few years.

5.2 Theoretical and managerial implications

This study contributes to existing theory on vision, strategy and strategy implementation. The term vision is researched widely how it should be inspiring and guiding force behind organizational change (Parish, Cadwallander & Busch 2008; Whelan-Barry, Gordon & Hinings 2003), how strategy encompasses everyday actions (Porter 1991) and how implementation (Kaplan & Norton 2009) is the most important part on the journey towards the vision. Nevertheless tying those three elements with each other has not got too much attention. As mentioned before, previous research has mainly focused on strategic planning but vision perceiving and strategic implementation correlation has not been studied broadly enough. Vision perceiving has a notable theoretical implication in this study. The study aims to fulfill the gap between vision and current situation's challenges and how solving them eases a company to strive towards the vision.

The first point of the managerial contribution of this study is to clarify the pattern for employees how to reach the vision. Some informants were not sure how Sievo is going to achieve the wanted position in markets; They were not sure does Sievo aim to the broadest customer portfolio in markets or are they trying to generate better turnover from an existing customer in providing high-quality customer service. Guidance and setting milestones seem to play a crucial role in clarifying the pattern towards the vision. Seems like management is afraid to give guidelines that might restrict employees' professional

abilities. Research clarified the fact that managers need to allow independent action planning but also precise guiding to achieve the desired outcome. This does not mean giving top-down designed standardized operation procedures. It would be more like setting goals in the dialogue between the management team and teams inside the organization. In this dialogue, long-term vision and team-specific targets would be aligned with each other. Further, team-specific targets will be translated into individual targets that bring vision closer to everyday actions. Long-term targets should be discussed on a team level and further individual targets in face-to-face meetings where goals could be defined to be as personalized as possible.

A managerial suggestion to consider is creating an *internal vision* that would give a deeper purpose for employees. Employees were willing to perceive the vision to be more motivating and personalized. The current vision was perceived to be a good leading topic for the company but did not awaken feelings on an individual level. This internal vision would be used alongside the current vision. It would include the target company's employees' values, targets, and what is important for them when working for Sievo. This gives more relevance for employees but would support efforts to reach the current vision.

The last managerial suggestion considered resourcing. Sievo is growing extremely fast and according to informants they are suffering from a lack of resources. This lack had a negative impact that can be noticed in some employees' excessive workload. In some cases, new customer deals are not seen victories anymore but extra work that has to be managed with the same headcount than before. Employees were getting exhausted and work efficiency did not stay at the same level. Informants were wondering why Sievo is a self-financed company if external funding could be obtained. Employees knew that founders have many times mentioned that they want to keep the firm self-finance, but a couple of informants did not understand why. A suggestion is to communicate more clearly about the prevailing situation and tell why the company is wanted to keep self-financed as long as possible.

5.3 Limitations

In total, it is essential to have an understanding about the limitations of systematically collected data that inhibits understanding of studied phenomena. The first limitation of this study considers the methodological approach of the study. Qualitative research aims to contextual understanding different perspectives and interpretations (Hirsjärvi & Hurme

2006: 22) like this study aims to understand how the target company's personnel perceive the vision and how vision could be reached through strategies. Thus, this study's findings cannot be generalized because informants' experiences are strongly dependent on one single company. Despite this, the research's findings provide an understanding of how vision is commonly perceived, challenges of the implementation process and general impacts that affect personnel who face strategy change.

Also, the preparation of the interview questions could have been created more precisely to serve research questions better. The researcher's chance to have a longer time to focus on question layout and structure could have made interviews more profound. The focus would have also eased the researcher's answering to research questions when interview questions would have served the core themes more precisely. For example, the interview structure too excessively emphasized an aspect of how to notice when one is succeeded with the vision and how they measure that success. This took time from the investigation of vision perceiving and what improvements could be done to successfully reach the vision through strategies. On the other hand, informants' descriptions about how they know when they were succeeded, helped the researcher to understand the topic more broadly from the pragmatic point of view.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

This study provides several opportunities for future researches. This study took an overlook how vision is perceived in a medium-sized company. Thus, it would be interesting to commit a new research which focuses on how vision is perceived in a big multinational enterprise compared to a start-up firm that only has a couple of employees. Does vision play a more crucial role in either one, how vision is perceived in those organizations and how different visions have been built in big enterprises compared to small firms? What kind of motivating aspects a vision has among personnel in these firms? Should vision setting be different depending on the company's size and if yes, what would be those parts that should be designed differently?

Second suggestion theme is heavily linked to this study's theme and would be a functional research opportunity to continue this study. A suggestion is to investigate how employees from different layers of organization can be engaged to vision planning and creating it. It would be interesting to study what are the most functional and engaging ways to involve personnel in creating a motivating vision.

Thirdly, the study emphasized individual and team-specific goal creation and breaking the vision down to more swallowable pieces. Thus, the study exhorts to examine how to create individual targets that are tied and aligned with the organizational level vision. Moreover, how to align these goals with the bigger picture and which measurement tools and metrics or combinations of those are the most functional to measure individuals' success.

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APPENDIX 1 (Interview questions)

Background:

Tell me about your background (education, former work experience, current work)? How did you end up to this work position?

What are the most important work tasks and responsibilities in your position?

1. Defining the new vision?

What is the vision of the company?

- What are the goals of the company?
- How the goals are measured and accomplished in practice?

What you think about the vision and how is the vision implemented in practice?

What does it mean in practice to be a leader in procurement analytics?

2. Work-related questions?

How you are involved in the vision? How do you execute the vision in your everyday work?

Have your work tasks changed since the vision was articulated last fall 2017?

- If YES, please explain what has changed? Please also explain the issues if something has hindered a change in work tasks?

How the vision has changed the work tasks of the company generally?

3. Support in implementation / strategy process

Have you been supported or have you supported someone to adopt the new vision and in what way?

Is there something unique or different with the vision?

How important do you perceive the implementation of the vision?

- How do you feel your role in vision implementation?
- Which factors do you think will enable vision to be implemented?
- Which factors do you think could prevent the strategy from being implemented?

Have you individually been able to formulate and implement strategies to achieve this vision? What are the strategies you have implemented independently? (What are the steps you have put in place to achieve these goals?)

- How realistic are these steps

What are your roles and responsibilities concerning the goals/specific task of the company?

Do you feel that Sievo has succeeded with the strategy work since fall 2017?

- What are those things that have been successful? Why?
- What are those things that have been unsuccessful? Why?

What would be the next steps to take with the strategy process to achieve the vision? Why?

4. How do you see the vision?

What should be done in order to reach the vision?

Does your own work contribute positively to achieve the vision, if yes --> how?

Do you see the new vision guiding and instructional?

What are the issues that help you to understand and execute the strategy in practice?

What do you need to do individually to achieve the vision?

Do you think it is very important to be able to create a vision and goals for the company?

5. Challenges

What are the biggest challenges in achieving the vision during the next four years?

What are the challenges of the strategy process in order to reach the vision?

6. Development suggestions to reach the vision?

How do you feel that the strategy process should be developed in the future?

- What would enable better strategy process in the future?