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“Stop e-mailing, start communicating”

Enhancing professional e-mail communication

Master’s thesis

Vaasa 2008

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Sähköposti on suosittu työkalu päivittäisessä työviestinnässä. Huolimatta sen standardinomaisesta asemasta työkaluna, yksiselitteistä ohjeistusta siitä, kuinka sähköpostin välityksellä tulisi viestiä, ja missä tilanteissa, ei ole olemassa. Yhdenmukaisen viestinnän mahdollistamiseksi yritykset voivat määritellä oman sähköpostikäytäntönsä, jonka avulla ohjeistetaan työntekijöitä, ja näin ollen tehostetaan yrityksen päivittäistä sähköisesti tapahtuvaa työviestintää. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, mitkä ovat keskeiset asiat yritysten sähköpostikäytäntöä kehitettäessä.

Tämä tutkimus toimii taustoittavana lähtökohtana Wärtsilä Power Plants -yrityksen kehitysprojektille, mutta sen tuloksia voidaan käyttää myös muissa yrityksissä. Yritys haluaa tehostaa viestintäänsä kehittämällä sähköpostikäytäntöään.

Tutkimuksen avulla selvitettiin, millaiset asiat sähköisessä työviestinnässä koetaan tärkeiksi, millä alueilla sähköpostiviestintään keskittyneet oppaat tarjoavat ohjeistusta sekä millaisia suosituksia voidaan antaa yritykselle, joka suunnittelee yrityskohtaisen sähköpostikäytännön laatimista. Vastauksia kysymyksiin etsittiin sekä kohdeyrityksen sisäistä ja ulkoista ohjemateriaalia analysoimalla, että aiempia tutkimustuloksia tulkitsemalla.

Tarkasteltaessa sitä, millä alueilla sähköpostiviestintään keskittyneet oppaat tarjoavat ohjeistusta, voitiin ohjeet jakaa lähettämiseen ja vastaanottamiseen, sisältöön ja kieleen sekä ohjelmiston ja sähköpostin yleiseen käyttöön liittyviin ohjeisiin. Tärkeiksi seikoiksi nousivat mm. vastaanottajakenttien käyttö, suositeltava kieliasu, liitetiedostojen ja luottamuksellisen tiedon käsittely sekä sähköpostin käyttö henkilökohtaisiin tarkoituksiin. Sähköpostikäytännön tulisi käsitellä mm. näitä asioita. Sähköpostikäytäntö voi sisältää myös ohjeistusta siitä, millaisissa tilanteissa tulisi käyttää sähköpostia, ja milloin jotain muuta kanavaa. On myös huolehdittava siitä, että työntekijät ovat tietoisia yrityksen sähköpostikäytännön sisällöstä esimerkiksi järjestämällä koulutustilaisuuksia.

AVAINSANAT: e-mail policy, e-communication, professional communication

1 INTRODUCTION

E-mail has become a somewhat “standardised” tool in the 21st century business communication. Although the more traditional ways of communicating, such as face-to-face and telephone communication, remain important ways of communicating professionally, e-mail offers one solution to for instance communicating between long geographical distances. Another advantage is also the independence of location: travelling people can read their e-mails using a laptop and react upon them regardless of their current location, as long as they have an Internet connection.

What was earlier asked to be faxed, can be, and often is, preferred to be e-mailed now. Some people may even find e-mail the preferred tool on most occasions, while a telephone call could provide a faster and even more efficient solution to the current issue – and vice versa.

The use of e-mail varies widely between companies. Sometimes it varies even inside a company, which can cause confusion and uncertainty on an individual level. People may be unsure of the way they should write their e-mails and what should be attached. It can also be hard to know who all should receive the message. Because of this, some companies develop a policy that defines and guides the use of e-mail to users. Such policy is called *e-mail policy*: a policy which helps employees in their everyday electronic mail communication. It may provide answer to questions such as when to send e-mail or when to use other communication form instead. It can help the user to decide who the right recipient is and who should receive a copy. An e-mail policy may define the use of mailing lists and provide guidelines on how to communicate electronically with people from different cultures effectively, without insulting them.

Some people may receive up to hundreds of e-mails a day. A part of these messages can be personal, or in some other way non-business related. Managing, archiving and keeping track of e-mail may become problematic without categorising e-mail messages and using specific folders to keep the mailbox organised.

There is a variety of guidebooks and websites guiding companies toward more efficient e-mail communication. Some companies have their own guidelines and they may arrange training to improve their employees' e-mail communication skills. In this thesis, I will study what these guides suggest, and whether they stress the same areas of importance, differ or even have opposing views.

1.1 Goal

The goal of this study is to investigate what should be taken into account when developing an e-mail policy for a company and thus to provide supporting background information for companies, such as Wärtsilä Power Plants. The information may be used for improving companies' e-mail communication and thus enhancing their e-mail policy. The three research questions aiming at this goal are presented below.

(1) What kind of guidelines can be found in the guide material? In other words, what is considered important in professional e-mail communication?

(2) What kind of categorisation can be used to classify the e-mail communication guidelines?

(3) What recommendations could be given to a company that is developing an e-mail policy?

In addition Wärtsilä Power Plants wanted to get input for discussion regarding categorisation and retention of e-mail messages. Providing such information would help deciding how to apply or change the existing rules of managing business records and documents in the company. For this purpose, these matters are discussed in chapter three.

During my summer trainee period at Wärtsilä Power Plants, there was ongoing discussion about the use of e-mail and ways of working with it. I was approached with an idea of doing my Master's thesis as background research for the forthcoming e-mail policy.

This was a great opportunity for me to combine work and studies and to do my thesis about a subject that would help companies, such as Wärtsilä Power Plants, to get started with their own e-mail policy. This study is meant to be a starting point for developing an e-mail policy that would enhance the employees' everyday professional communication.

1.2 Method

The research questions mentioned above need to be answered in order to find out, what should be taken into account when developing a company-specific e-mail policy. The first research question, what kind of guidelines can be found in the guide material, will be answered with a content analysis conducted on both generic as well as company-specific guide material. This is done to study what the guides say about professional e-mail.

By developing categories for e-mail guidelines, I will answer the second research question. The aim for creating the categories is to discover what kind of guiding is available for professional e-mail communication. The guidelines will be placed under the category that describes it best. Based on these findings, I discuss the recommendations that could be given to a company developing an e-mail policy, which is the answer to the third research question. Discussing earlier studies regarding categorisation and management of documents, records and e-mail, will help Wärtsilä Power Plants decide the role of e-mail in their documentation and records management.

The first step of content analysis is to decide specifically what the point of interest in the material is. In this thesis, the interest is the enhancement (improvement) of professional e-mail communication. In the next phase, points of interest will be marked in the material and everything else ignored and thus left outside the analysis. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 94–95.) This means that I went through the selected guides and marked up all the matters (guidelines) that relate to instructions on how to improve e-mail communication in professional context. Therefore the unit of the analysis was a guideline (e.g.

You should not write in capital letters, use Cc field sparingly, e-mail should be used for professional purposes only.)

The marked information was then processed and separated from the original material. Next, the marked information was collected into categories which are named after the area of e-mail communication they provide guidance on. I created table for each material and placed the guidelines under the category column that described the guidelines best. As a starting point for my categorisation, I use a well-known communication model, presented by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver as early as in 1947.

The communication model could not be used as it was, and the refining process for the purpose of this study is discussed in chapter 4.2. Finally, conclusions are made based on these categories. It is also very important to decide from what aspect the analysis is done: similarity, difference, logic of action or typicality. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002: 94–95.) Both similar and different guidelines are interesting for this study. Studying similarity helps forming generalisations, whereas difference may give ideas for enhancement. The content analysis conducted in this study is based on the material. The theoretical model for communication supports the categorisation and provides a starting point for category development.

In this study, the theory that supports the content analysis concerns professional e-communication and the use of e-mail in companies (chapters two and three). The role of these theories is supportive: they provide the background information needed in order to study and discover how to improve a company's e-mail communication by enhancing their e-mail policy.

Professional e-communication and more specifically e-mail communication in companies provide framework for the guiding of e-mail communication. While e-mail research relates to computer-mediated communication (CMC), combining it to an organisation brings the study also in the field studying the channels of organisational communication.

1.3 Material

The material used in the analysis consists of guides that provide recommendations and guidelines for efficient professional e-mail communication. Two types of guides are used in this study. Six of the guides are generic guides found on the World Wide Web, and four of them are Wärtsilä Corporation's (later Wärtsilä) internal guides.

All of the studied material is in electronic form. Some of the Wärtsilä material is used for recommended reading before attending internal e-mail training events. I have also studied other Wärtsilä internal material, such as development project specifications, to find out what kind of development regarding e-mail communication is being planned.

Wärtsilä communication guides refer to a site called *emailreplies.com* for further information regarding e-mail. This site among others is included in the analysis. Currently, all e-mail guides in Wärtsilä are found either on their intranet or in their document management system. Also a "*Quick guide to E-mails in English*" compiled by an external company for Wärtsilä, is analysed in this study. The material will be presented more thoroughly in chapter 4.1.

1.4 Wärtsilä Power Plants

Wärtsilä, and especially its Power Plants business unit, is strongly present in this study. This chapter will present the corporation and its business units briefly. Wärtsilä employs more than 15 000 professionals who are placed in 150 Wärtsilä locations in 70 countries around the world. Wärtsilä is listed on The Nordic Stock Exchange in Helsinki, Finland. The corporation consists of three different businesses: Ship Power, Power Plants and Services (see Figure 1). Wärtsilä provides complete lifecycle power solutions for the marine and energy markets. Its business consists of both products and services. The corporation aims at developing environmentally compatible technologies. (Wärtsilä 2007a; Wärtsilä 2007b.)

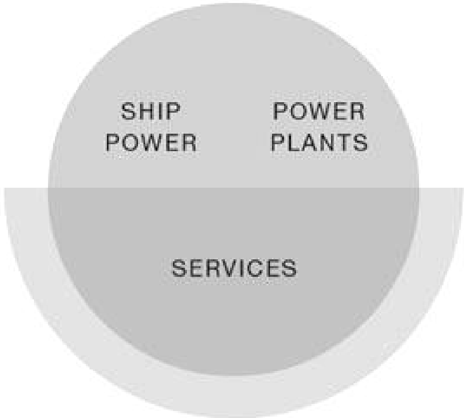

Figure 1. Wärtsilä Corporation (Wärtsilä 2007b).

Wärtsilä Power Plants supplies baseload power solutions for the developing world, islands and remote areas. Also solutions for grid stability and peaking needs for industries are supplied. The Power Plants business provides solutions for industrial self-generation and bio-fuel power plants. The different technologies for power plants include gas, oil, liquid biofuel, biomass fuel and combined heat and power (Wärtsilä 2007a, Wärtsilä 2007c)

Wärtsilä **Ship Power**'s customers are builders, owners and operators of marine vessels and offshore applications. The products cover the entire lifecycle of the installations from design to construction and operation. The products and solutions include automation, ship design, engines, generating sets, auxiliary systems, pitch propellers, thrusters, nozzles, jets, gears, rudders, seals and bearings (Wärtsilä 2008). The **Services** business develops solutions and products for their customers and provides service for both own brands as well as other makes, power systems, power plants and shipping services. The provided services are aimed at all the products and solutions that Power Plants and Ship Power businesses provide. (Wärtsilä 2007a.)

Wärtsilä is an international corporation and the language used in all written communication throughout Wärtsilä is English. This is the reason this thesis is also written in English; it will provide background information for upcoming e-mail policy development.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The study begins by presenting the concept of professional e-communication in chapter two. In this chapter, the most common tools that are used in everyday communication in professional context are discussed. E-mail is one the most popular e-communication tools in this context and the tool in focus of this study.

The third chapter discusses the use of e-mail as a communication tool in companies. It begins with showing how this study approaches organisational communication and moving onto discussion about the channels used in professional communication and the use of e-mail today in our everyday life. The chapter will also discuss topics related to e-mail management, such as document management and records management. The reason they relate to e-mail management is that professional e-mail messages can include or be regarded as records or documents. The chapter will also discuss the management of inboxes in companies and present a case example of how e-mail communication is currently being developed in Wärtsilä Power Plants.

The analysis, which was conducted to find out how a company guides its employees regarding e-mail communication, and what generic e-mail guides suggest, is presented in chapter four. It shows how these guides differ and what they agree on. These two types of guides will be compared to each other with the use of categorisation that is developed for this study with the use of a well known model for communication. Findings from the analysis are presented so that first the company-specific guiding is discussed, followed by those of generic guides. Findings from company-specific (Wärtsilä) guides are presented and then compared to findings from generic guides. This is done to discover how the company's e-mail communication could be improved.

Finally, after discussing the results of the analysis, the whole study is concluded with discussion about the whole study. This includes thoughts about how this study and the conducted analysis provide answers for the presented research questions. The thesis ends with a presentation of recommendations for developing a company-specific e-mail policy.

2 PROFESSIONAL E-COMMUNICATION

This chapter discusses the communication taking place in our everyday work. Moreover it presents *professional communication* as more specific form of communication we use every day to successfully carry out our tasks.

The focus will be on computer mediated communication (CMC) channels used in professional context, especially on e-mail, but the other common channels are also presented to give an overview of what is meant by professional e-communication in this study.

2.1 Professional communication

Here, I will discuss the concept of professional communication. In Finnish, the terms in question are *päivittäisviestintä* and *työviestintä*, used e.g. by Juholin (see Juholin 2006). Professional communication covers the everyday (operational) communication people need to use in order to carry out their tasks at work. Professional communication covers all work related information exchange and discussion, and it supports and makes working possible. Therefore it can be considered the most important form of communication in a work community. (Juholin 2006: 37.)

Operational communication is a term that is closely related to professional communication. Garner and Johnson (2006: 61) define this to be communication that is used to carry out professionally defined activities. The activities can involve personnel, machinery as well as data. Garner and Johnson (Ibid) studied the operational communication of police call-handling. In that context, operational communication is verbal communication between the police and the public (Ibid: 55).

Professional communication covers not only the communication with clients and associates but also the communication between co-workers. It is often guided by instructions, rules and policies which apply inside the company. (Juholin 2006: 37.)

There are many categories that can be used to classify the different channels of professional communication. E-communication and computer-mediated communication are terms that relate to today's professional communication. These terms will be discussed in the following chapters, followed by discussion about classifying the channels.

2.2 E-communication

In this thesis, I use the word e-communication for such communication channels that are used with the help of a computer. The term CMC is often used as a parallel term for e-communication (e.g. Firmin & Miller 2005; Johnson & Johnson 2006). CMC is an abbreviation of *computer-mediated communication* and is often used to describe a scientific discipline whereas e-communication can be considered a less scientific term which refers to communicating through the Internet using tools of "new media" (see Firmin & Miller 2005).

Computer-mediated communication refers to task-related and interpersonal communication conducted by humans with the help of computer. Generally it consists of both synchronous and asynchronous communication as well as information manipulation. (Ferris 1997). Computer-mediated communication is a process of human communication via computers (December 1997). **E-communication** however is not as strictly a defined term as CMC. It can cover the use and communication through all kinds of websites, e-mail, electronic documents, news feeds, mailing lists, streaming media and instant messaging. (Enyeart 2003; Iseek 2004; Jimbyrne.co.uk; Rhodes University Library.) In a study by Jackson, Dawson and Wilson (2000), internal e-mail within organisations is studied. Instead of e-mail, the word e-communication is used in the title.

CMC is used by many academic writers to refer to all situations where humans communicate with the use of Internet. E-communication and CMC are difficult to distinguish and therefore similar to e.g. Firmin and Miller (2005), I use the term e-communication to represent computer-mediated communication in this study. Next, I will discuss the channels of e-communication and present two approaches for classifying the channels.

2.3 E-communication channels

There are different ways of handling the everyday communication in work environment. Here, I will discuss the different channels of professional communication, focusing on e-communication. Juholin (1999: 139) divides the internal communication channels into (1) face-to-face communication supporting personal interaction, (2) printed communication and (3) electronic communication.

Another way of dividing the channels is to do it according to their temporal dimension (Jokinen, Aula & Matikainen 2006: 200). The temporal dimension refers to synchronous and asynchronous communication. Table 1 presents the channels of professional communication. The table is based on a typology by Hollingshead and Contractor (2002: 223), which Jokinen, Aula and Matikainen (2006: 200) have modified. I have divided the channels into traditional and electronic and updated the list of channels to include SMS. Unlike Hollingshead and Contractor (2002: 223) and Jokinen, Aula and Matikainen (2006: 200) I have placed news groups under asynchronous channels. This is because news groups are used via e-mail, and according to definitions of asynchronous and synchronous communication presented here, e-mail and thus news groups classify as asynchronous channels of professional communication..

Table 1. Professional communication channels.

Temporal dimension	**Traditional channels**	**Electronic channels**
Synchronous	telephone calls telephone conference face-to-face	video conference computer conference (e.g. Skype) chat rooms instant messaging
Asynchronous	voice mail SMS fax	video (file) exchange e-mail news groups home pages/websites Blogs

In table 1, the communication channels are divided into synchronous and asynchronous channels, according to their temporal dimension. In **synchronous communication**, the communicators have the possibility to give instant feedback and react upon the other's messages (see Sheldon 2001). The communication transaction happens in real time, and the participants of the transaction need to be "present". Examples of synchronous communication channels are telephone calls and instant messaging.

Asynchronous communication is often independent of time and place; the participants are not required to be present in the transaction simultaneously. E-mail is an example of asynchronous communication: when someone sends an e-mail message, the recipient is not required to be on-line or even near his/her computer and the message can be retrieved in a later point (see Szukala, O'Conor 2001: 58).

Although people communicate with the use of new technology every day, traditional channels are still being used. **Telephone** calls can still be considered important and useful, for example when doing follow-ups on different matters. Because of its synchronous nature, feedback will be received directly, and therefore uncertainty on whether the recipient has had time to get acquainted with the sent message, or if the recipient even has received the message, is avoided. Telephone is no longer necessarily a place dependant channel due to mobile phones. Several people can be involved in a telephone call. On such occasions, the term telephone conferencing is used. **Telephone conferencing** enables several communicators to communicate with each other with the use of telephone lines.

If a telephone call is left unanswered, **voicemail** can be used. Its nature is asynchronous: the caller may leave a message to the recipient, and he/she may check upon it at a more suitable time. Another asynchronous channel for leaving a message for recipient is **SMS** (Short Message Service) which can be useful for example in a conference where a call can not be made or answered. **Face-to-face communication** is perhaps the most traditional way of communicating, both in professional and non professional contexts. It is an easy to way to communicate synchronously, and does not require any tools. **Fax** was earlier a popular channel used for example to send documents between long geographical distances. Today, it is often replaced with e-mail.

In e-communication, both synchronous and asynchronous communication channels can be place dependant, but only asynchronous ones can be considered time independent, since synchronous communication needs to take place when both participants are present at the same time. Being present here does not mean being present in the traditional sense, but being able to receive the sender’s message and therefore using the chosen channel. For example in a telephone call, both the sender and the receiver need to have their telephones with them (mobile phones) or be next to them (desk phones).

Another difference between these two is that when using purely synchronous communication channels, all participants of the transaction need to use the same communication channel. In asynchronous communication however, the participants can reply and give feedback using completely different communication channel; either synchronous or asynchronous. As an example of this, a person could send someone an e-mail message. The person reads the mail later and may respond to it by using e-mail or − if preferred − telephone. In a telephone call however, both the sender and the recipient have to communicate with each other using the telephone at the same time.

Video and computer conference can be used when the geographical distance of the participants is long, but when face-to-face-like contact is desired. The difference between video and computer conference is that the latter does not include video, only voice, whereas video conferencing enables both voice and video communication. **Video (file) exchange** is an asynchronous alternative to video conferencing. Using this channel, the participants send videos or video files to each other, without getting instant feedback. The recipient can watch the video whenever he/she finds the time for it, and send feedback later either using the same communication channel, or a different one.

Instant messaging might sometimes be an option instead of e-mail. Team members may agree on a meeting time and have questions prepared for the meeting. Using instant messaging, they can present the questions and get answers directly, synchronously. (Gillette 2005.) Compared to e-mailing these questions for the whole team and getting everything might result in huge amounts of e-mail traffic and messages, while instant messaging would leave no records to be taken care of. If a record of discussion is required, it is possible to save a discussion log. A study by Cho, Trier and Kim (2005) showed that instant messaging can be good for "virtual corridor talk"; for maintaining relationships at work place. Such spontaneous and instant conversations were considered "handy" within the same apartment, whereas people from different locations were more likely to arrange face-to-face meetings and communicate through e-mail (Ibid).

Blogs can be used in professional communication to develop and maintain relationships between organisations and the public (Kelleher & Miller 2006: 395). Chat rooms can often be accessed through web sites and home pages. While web sites and home pages are listed as asynchronous, chat rooms are synchronous.

All of the different channels used to communicate in professional context have their advantages and disadvantages, and some tools may support some communication occasions better than others. While traditional ways of communicating may not require much technical guidance, the e-communication tools might. In the next chapter, I will discuss about the rules and regulations that are used to guide the employees for proper communication: communication policies.

2.4 Communication policy

So far the channels used in professional e-communication have been discussed. While these can be efficient tools, there can be many ways of using them. This is why it is good to have guides with rules and regulations to help the employees use the tools the way their employer wants. Companies make rules and guidelines for their employees to help them communicate the right way with the given e-communication tool. These rules and guidelines are called policies.

Because of the importance of information, the way of conveying it can either help or hinder company goals and thus it is important to have a communication policy (Goodman 1994: 185−186). There are different kinds of policies related to communication, and one of them is specifically e-mail policy. Other policies may concern the company software or the use of network connections. Depending on the concept, a communication policy can have different goals. Companies may want to ensure that their communication is safe and efficient, while other organisations may have other goals for their policies. A good example of different kind of communication policy can be found in a white paper, presented by the European Commission (2006). This white paper describes this communication policy’s goal to be to improve the communication between the European Commission and the European citizens by, for instance, reinforcing the Commission representation offices. The paper proposes a way forward and encourages the gathering of ideas on how to close the gap between the citizens and the European Commission. (Ibid: 2).

It seems that sometimes a communication policy may relate only on Internet usage policy, or even function as a synonym for Internet policy (see Mathiason & Kuhlman 2007). In a study by Mathiason and Kuhlman (2007), it is argued that the Internet has reached a level of great political importance and therefore some of its aspects needs governing. The problem is to determine which policies should be used to govern which aspects of the Internet. However the document’s title refers only to a communication policy. (Ibid.)

So far, the concept of professional e-communication and its channels have been discussed. In the next chapter, I will discuss topics related to the use of e-mail in companies and its management.

3 E-MAIL IN COMPANIES

Although face-to-face and telephone communication still remain an important part of professional communication, e-mail has overcome some of the limitations that for instance face-to-face communication has. The speed of communication has increased in some cases, and geographic distance is no longer a problem when using e-mail. Today, as a result of this, an organisation can not function effectively without the use of e-mail. (Eisenberg & Goodall 2004: 328–329.)

E-mail research has been done from different aspects and in different contexts. The three metaphors of earlier e-mail research, identified by Ducheneaut and Watts (2005) are listed below.

(1) To study e-mail as a **file cabinet** means that e-mail is being studied as an extension of human information processing capabilities. Studies related to mailbox management, such as foldering and filtering incoming messages are examples of this type of research. HCI (Human-Computer Interaction) and AI (Artificial Intelligence) are common research field for this type of study. (Ibid.)

(2) To study e-mail as a **production facility** concerns the efficiency and effectiveness of e-mail as a tool used in organisational communication. Collective effort plays an important role in this kind of research. Ducheneaut and Watts (2005) name CSCW (Computer-Supported Cooperative Work) as a common field for this research metaphor. (Ibid.)

(3) Research in e-mail as a **communication genre** has earlier concerned substituting other media in organisations with e-mail. Later, this type of research has been focusing on e-mail features and their malleability, as well as the use of e-mail for organisational purposes. (Ibid.)

Using this categorisation, this thesis studies e-mail as file cabinet as well as a production facility. A case study (Hewitt 2006) revealed lately that although e-mail can be considered less influential than face-to-face communication, it positively influences the communication climate. Also, training the employees to use e-mail significantly reduces the defects of e-mail communication (Burgess, Jackson & Edwards: 2005).

Chapter two discussed the concept and channels of professional communication. This chapter will discuss the management of e-mail in companies. As this study focuses on professional e-mail communication, the next chapter (3.1) will place it in the field of studying organisational communication. Followed by this, e-mail will be discussed as a communication tool in chapter 3.2. Chapter 3.3 discusses the management of records and documents in companies. Next, chapter 3.4 discusses inbox management and retention of e-mails. The last sub chapter (3.5) presents a case example of how companies plan to make their e-mail communication more effective.

3.1 Approaching organisational communication

Organisational communication is a wide concept and it is best approached by binding it to a context in which it is studied. Åberg (2002: 95) has defined organisational communication to be a process in which we interpret the state of work-related matters through giving meanings. The matters can also relate to the work community members' communal activity. The interpretation is brought to others' awareness by transmitting messages with the use of an interactive network[1]. (Translation: T.R.).

The reason for such an abstract definition is that organisational communication can be studied from different points of view, conceptions, and to define it in a way that applies on all different concepts results in such complicated definition. Thus, it is important to choose an appropriate approach to organisational communication.

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[1] *Organisaatioviestintä* on prosessi, tapahtuma, jossa merkityksien antamisen kautta tulkitaan sellaisten asioiden tilaa, jotka koskevat työyhteisön toimintaa tai sen jäsenten yhteisöllistä toimintaa, ja jossa tämä tulkinta saatetaan muiden tietoisuuteen vuorovaikutteisen, sanomia välittävän verkoston kautta (Åberg 2002: 95).

Eisenberg and Goodall (2004: 23) list four approaches to organisational communication that have attracted most adherents. These approaches are

1) information transfer
2) transactional process
3) strategic control
4) balance of creativity and constraint

Here, the first two are the most relevant. However, it is difficult to study organisational e-mail communication from only one of these concepts. According to **information transfer** approach, also known as *information engineering*, communication is a tool used to accomplish objectives. The typical communication problems in this approach are information overload, distortion and ambiguity. Information overload means a situation where the receiver receives too much information at one time. Distortion can be semantic, physical or contextual. Semantic distortion occurs in a situation where the sender and the receiver understand the message in different ways. A jet plane passing by could cause physical distortion. An example of contextual distortion would be when the receiver is having a personal crisis and therefore is unable to receive the message in all of its importance. The third problem, ambiguity, may occur due to abstract language and differing connotations. (Eisenberg & Goodall 2004: 23-24.)

The way the **transactional process** approach differs from information transfer is that it makes no clear distinction between senders and receivers and instead asserts that all persons in the communication transaction are engaged in sending and receiving. In this conception, both non-verbal and verbal forms of feedback are regarded as a part of the communication transaction. In information transfer, the location of meaning resides with the sender, whereas in transactional process approach to organisational communication, the meaning is shared, i.e. a sum of both the sender's and the receiver's shared meaning, a consensus. (Eisenberg & Goodall 2004: 25–26.)

Information transfer concept is close to the Shannon-Weaver model, which will work as a basis for the analysis (see chapter 4.2) and transactional process concept extends the communication transaction to include shared meaning and non-verbal communication.

The other approaches are to approach organisational communication as strategic control and as a balance of creativity and constraint. According to **strategic control** approach, communication is a tool for controlling the environment. In this approach, greater clarity is not always the main goal of interaction. Instead, the communicators typically have multiple goals. For example, a supervisor might have two goals in a performance review: to be understood and to preserve a positive working relationship. When approaching organisational communication as a **balance of creativity and constraint**, the employees are considered to shape and create organisations with communication. This approach concerns also the constraints organisations place on that the employees' communication. (Eisenberg & Goodall 2004: 26, 29). While I earlier mentioned only two of these approaches are relevant for this study, the balance of creativity and constraint approach is partly present in this study as well. The emphasis however is not on constraining the communication, but on improving it and thus enhancing the company e-mail policy.

Interpersonal communication is communication between people. A typical form of it is face-to-face communication, but it also covers telephone communication. Group communication is communication within groups of people and by groups of people to others. Organisational communication is often linked to group communication, but party to interpersonal communication as well. (Dimbleby & Burton 1998: 26–27).

Organisational e-mail communication consists of both interpersonal and group communication. The term "business communication" appears sometimes in literature. This can be defined as the (vocational) discipline of writing, presenting and communicating in a professional context. Vocational here means a discipline related to trade or profession. (Cornelissen 2004:183, 198.)

According to Dimbleby's and Burton's (1998: 26–27) categorisation, the other two forms of communication are *intrapersonal communication* and *mass communication*. Intrapersonal communication is communication within and to the self and mass communication is communication received by or used by large numbers of people. (Ibid).

3.2 E-mail as a communication tool

E-mail today, in the 21st century, is a widely used tool for electronic communication. In short, e-mail (electronic mail) is mail that is composed and transmitted on a computer system or network (Okerson, O'Donnel 1995: 198). An e-mail message may also contain attachments which besides plain text can include any kinds of files. These might be for example pictures, music, videoclips and presentations.

E-mail communication traffic has grown to be huge. Many people may think of e-mail as a fast tool for informing and interacting with others. But there is more to it than just that. Juutilainen (2007) writes about a study by IDC (International Data Corporation) which revealed, that in 2007, approximately 97 billion e-mail messages were sent on a daily basis, and about 50 % of these messages are spam or chain letters. Some American and British companies have organised an "e-mail free Friday" encouraging their employees to move more and to avoid unnecessary use of e-mail. Instead the employees would communicate face-to-face and by telephone. (Helsingin Sanomat 2007.)

The increased amount of unwanted e-mail messages may have its effects on the usage of e-mail. Lancaster, Yen, Huang and Hung (2007) conducted a survey to study college students' selection of instant messaging and e-mail. The students perceived instant messaging to provide better possibilities for conveying emotions and building relationships than e-mail, while face-to-face communication still remains the most desirable form of communication. Their study revealed that while instant messaging offers many advantages, e-mail is still preferred for work-related communication (Lancaster et al 2007.)

An e-mail message has its sender and its recipient. There can be only one sender, but several recipients, if needed. The subject field of an e-mail message describes in short what the mail contains. In other words, the subject describes the message.

A typical e-mail has the following **fields for defining its sender and recipient(s):** *From, To, Cc* and *Bcc*. From-field contains the name and address of the sender and is filled automatically when sending a new e-mail message. *To*-field is used to define the recipient(s). *Cc* (Carbon Copy) is also used to define the recipient(s). The difference is that a person in *Cc*-field can be considered as slightly less relevant than the one(s) in *To*-field. *Bcc* (Blind Carbon Copy) contains the name and address of a hidden recipient(s). Those that are mentioned in the *Bcc*-field are hidden to everyone else – also to each other - except for the sender of the message. (Ruan 2004: 25). It should be noted however, that not all of these fields are necessarily present in all e-mail clients.

Mailing lists are used to send e-mail messages to several recipients using only one address. A central system redistributes this message to those who are listed under the mailing list address. Mailing lists are used in both inside and outside of corporate world. (Farnham, Portnoy & Turski 2004: 2.)

A signature (or “signature block”) in e-mail is typically found at the end of an e-mail message. It contains usually the name of the sender, affiliation, different addresses, telephone number(s) and other contact information. (Carvalho & Cohen 2004: 2.)

E-mail clients are needed in order to read and compose e-mail messages. There are several software options for using e-mail (e.g. Microsoft Outlook, Mozilla Thunderbird, Eudora etc.) Also web-based e-mail services, **webmails**, are available. The use of webmail does not require the user to have an e-mail client installed. Instead, the user can use e-mail with a web browser (e.g. Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Opera). In short, a web browser can be used as an interface for an e-mail account, which is located at a server. Both the sender and the recipient need to have an e-mail address to be able to communicate through e-mail. E-mails are processed by an e-mail server, which delivers the e-mail to its recipients. (A Dictionary of the Internet 2001.)

Next, I will discuss the management of documents and business records. This will be followed by a chapter that will focus on mailbox management.

3.3 Managing documents and records

This chapter presents two terms related to managing documents and records: document management and records management. It also gives input for Wärtsilä Power Plants' development of e-mail policy. Using e-mail in professional context results in documents and records (both messages and attachments) that require attention. While the retention of all documents and records need to be efficient, it is also important that the documents and records are easily accessible. A **document** is recorded information which can be treated as a unit in documentation (ISO 2001a: 11). A **record** in turn is a document created or received and maintained by an organisation in context of business transaction or legal obligation (ISO 2001a: 17).

Document management can include tasks such a managing files and e-mail messages, even web pages. The users have to be able to browse and search for documents in the system. Document management systems (DMS) are computer systems that are used to for this purpose. DMS may also contain overviews and histories of all documents, so that users can track down the information they need. (Robertson, Czerwinski, Larson, Robbins, Thiel & van Dantzich 1998: 154.) The documents may be of different document type and also created with the use of common templates. Depending on its type, the documents can have different lifecycles and during them, employees may have different access rights to these documents. At some point, the documents may need to be reviewed and revised, approved or disposed. Some documents may need to be converted to a different format at some stage of its lifecycle. Managing all these tasks can be called document management. (Ibid.)

Records management is a closely related and often overlapping term to document management. It covers the systematic creation, maintenance, use and disposition of records (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration 2001.) Communication in professional context creates business records such as files, reports, presentations, memos, letters and so on. These records are crucial for the company to do business and therefore the records need to be organised. Records management is concerned with how long records should be kept, and where they should be stored. Also access and deletion are issues that concern records management. In companies, useless records may be systematically destroyed whereas valuable information may have to be stored, maintained and well protected. The records should also be accessible at later times. (Emery 2005.)

There are three official standards regarding records management. These standards include

1) **ISO 15489-1:2001**, *Information and documentation – Records management – Part 1: General*[2] and

2) **ISO/TR 15489-2:2001**, which is part two of the previous standard, subtitled as *Guidelines*

3) **ISO 5127:2001**, *Information and documentation. Vocabulary*.[3]

The standards were accepted in 2001. The purpose of ISO-15489-1:2001 is to provide guidance to ensure that all records get appropriate attention and protection. It applies on records in all formats or media, created or received by any public or private organisation as a result of its activities. (ISO 2001b: vi, 1). ISO/TR 15489-2:2001 is a technical report that provides further implementation guidelines for achieving the standardised outcomes. It is therefore a supplementary standard to ISO-15489-1:2001. (ISO 2001b: vi; ISO 2001c: vi, 1). The purpose of the third listed standard, ISO 5127:2001, is to make the communication of information management easier (SFS 2001: 4).

[2] There is a Finnish translation of this standard also, labelled SFS-ISO 15489. Tieto ja dokumentointi. Asiakirjahallinto. Osa 1: Yleistä. (SFS)
[3] There is a Finnish translation of this standard also, labelled SFS-ISO 5127. Tieto- ja dokumentointisanasto. (SFS)

The Finnish Standards Association SFS wanted Stakes, the (Finnish) national research and development centre for welfare and health, to give a statement regarding the Finnish translation of ISO-154589. In the statement, Taipale and Ruotsalainen argued that the terminology is not consistent and more attention should be paid on the translation, so that standard can be put to best use. Taipale and Ruotsalainen point out that the statement only covers the translation's suitability for welfare and health. (Stakes 2006.)

As a summary, document management concerns making the right documents available to the right persons at the right time, and converting them to the required format. Records management is more concerned with managing and retaining, not only documents, but records as well. Both of these concepts overlap partly. The biggest difference between these two is that records management does not concern for example material produced for marketing use, but instead records that need to be retained for proof or other reasons.

3.4 Mailbox management

Because of the massive amount of e-mail messages people receive, there is a need for mailbox management. Mailbox management concerns foldering (automatically or manually placing e-mail messages in specific folders), filtering and categorising the e-mail messages. Studies have been made regarding automatic filtering and categorising e-mail messages (see Koprinska, Poon, Clark & Chan 2006; Carvalho & Cohen 2005; Bekkerman, McCallum & Huang 2004).

Before the release of Enron Corpus in 2004, the research had been difficult and problematic because e-mail messages are often very private. Nor had the companies been willing to give all their e-mail communication for the use of researchers. The Enron corpus, a set of e-mail messages was published during the legal investigation of the Enron Corporation[4] and is now available for everyone on the Internet[5]. The set consists of

[4] The Enron scandal briefly: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1780075.stm

619 446 e-mail messages belonging to 158 users. It was prepared for research use by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University. After the clean-up and preparation, the Enron Corpus contains 200 399 e-mail messages belonging to 158 users. This means an average of 757 messages per user. The Enron Corpus offers a valuable tool for researching authentic e-mail communication. (Kling & Yang 2004; Jabbari, Allison, Guthrie & Guthrie 2006.)

The content of the Enron corpus has been categorised during a project called BAILANDO[6] in Berkeley University. The categories that were generated from the Enron corpus are listed in appendix 1. The categorisation was created in a course for Applied Natural Processing Language Processing. It is very thorough and is meant to be used for annotating a subset of the Enron e-mail messages. (UC Berkeley Enron Email Analysis 2006).

The Enron corpus (see appendix 1) is categorised in four different sections. The first section approaches the messages according to their coarse genre, second according to whether the e-mail message contains included/forwarded information, third provides elaborate categories - primary topics - for coarse genre’s sub section 1.1, and the fourth section approaches categorising e-mail according to the messages’ emotional tone. In the last section, messages with neutral tone were left out. This categorisation is included in this study as an appendix to give input for companies’ (e.g. Wärtsilä) categorisation discussion.

Cohen (1996) has studied a keyword-based method in which the incoming e-mails are scanned for specific keywords in specific fields (to, from, subject, message etc.) and placed into different folders. The material for studying the folders consisted of three different samples. The first sample consisted of 269 messages in 38 folders, the second sample included 397 messages that were saved in 11 folders and the third sample was the biggest consisting of 2162 messages and 71 folders. (Ibid: 4−5.) This results in the

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[5] The Enron Corpus: http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~enron/
[6] BAILANDO is an abbreviation for Better Access to Information using Language Analysis and New Displays and Organizations. See http://bailando.sims.berkeley.edu/

following average numbers: sample one had an average of 7,08 messages in each folder, sample two 36,09 and third 30,45. In this study's samples an average of 24,54 messages were stored in each folder. The average of folders was 40. The focus of Cohen's study was to test how well automatic filtering algorithms work in these different samples, and the folders were not discussed in detail. It can be seen however that the filtering included such categories as *software*, *conferences*, *talks*, *local talks*, *tasks*, *personal* and *to do* (Ibid: 5, 7).

Another study, made by Whittaker & Sidner (1996), studied the personal management of e-mail inboxes. According to it, people do not file their e-mails directly if the messages take long to read. Other e-mails that stay a bit longer in the inbox are (a) to dos, (b) to reads, (c) messages of indeterminate status and (d) ongoing correspondence. Whittaker and Sidner (Ibid) argue that successful filing is highly dependent on being able to imagine future retrieval requirements. Their study showed that one of the reasons users would not file their e-mail could be that users are afraid they would not remember where the information has been filed. Losing messages this way could result in severe consequences, especially if the message requires actions. (Ibid.) I will return to this subject in the next chapter, where I discuss what plans Wärtsilä Power Plants has to improve its e-mail communication.

Foldering e-mail can be considered a subjective task. Users create new folders and delete old ones. Some of the folders will be reused and some abandoned completely. There are many different ways of foldering e-mail messages: some messages may be best arranged by their sender while others by date. E-mail messages that relate to some specific event may best arranged according to the event or the type of this event. In case an automatic foldering system would be used, it should be very adaptive to different, individual styles of working. (Bekkerman et al 2004.)

The discussion provides information which may prove useful when planning mailbox management in companies. On the other hand, such categorisation can be useful when planning document and records management. Cohen's (1996) study suggested that an average inbox consists 24,5 messages. These messages can be stored on an average of

40 folders. Suggestions for possible categories may be named after software, conferences, different talks, tasks, newsletters, purely personal, business, employment or logistic arrangements, collaboration, internal projects and so on. In some cases it might be good to provide possibilities for arranging the messages according to sender, date or related event. (Cohen 1996).

To sum the discussion of this chapter up, there are many different ways of categorising e-mail. The categorising system should not be too restrictive, but adaptive and enable different ways of managing the folders as it can be a subjective, individual task. There are also messages which the users might not want file directly. Such messages may include ongoing correspondence, task/todo -like e-mails, especially long ones. The names used in categories should be easy to remember and descriptive to avoid the users' fear for forgetting in which folder the e-mail is stored.

3.5 Case: Wärtsilä Power Plants

This chapter discusses professional e-communication in Wärtsilä Power Plants. It also discusses how the company wants to improve its e-mail communication by developing a company-specific e-mail policy. One of the most important ongoing development projects regarding e-mail concerns its retention. There is a need to categorise the e-mail messages. This will make the retention more efficient, as searching and browsing for retained messages becomes easier. This categorisation is considered very important. This is why this study also looks into categorisation of e-mail messages and mailbox management. (Måsala 2007a.)

Chapter two introduced the concept of professional e-communication and its channels (see table 1). Wärtsilä Power Plants uses nearly all of the channels that were discussed. Only news groups and chat rooms are not being used, at least for now. *Blogging* is not in use yet, but the forthcoming intranet upgrade will bring along blogs as tools for collaborative professional communication as well. They will be used to for instance to keep other employees informed on what kind of on going projects take place in different departments. Different types of conferences are held depending on the current issue (telephone, computer and face to face). Instant messaging is also available for everyone in the company that have user account for logging on into computers. (Måsala 2007a.)

In Wärtsilä, e-mails are regarded as business records (Måsala 2007b: 3). Chapter 3.3 discussed the management of records and documents and therefore might provide useful input to the discussion of development of Wärtsilä Power Plants' e-mail policy.

In Wärtsilä Ship Power, every e-mail message sent during a project is retained as long as the message meets the specified requirements for retention. The employee is responsible for the retention, and should store the message in Wärtsilä's document management system IDM[7]. To avoid retaining duplicate messages in long e-mail message threads, only the last e-mail of the thread should be saved. The retention policy used in Ship Power will partly be used as an example when developing the equivalent policy in Power Plants. (Måsala 2007a.)

The importance of categorisation also appears in Wärtsilä Power Plants' internal project documentation (Måsala 2007b). A collection of 21 possible descriptive properties for e-mail categories are presented and divided into four main categories. The main categories are *commissioning, design, management* and *site works*. **Management** is the biggest group of the presented preliminary categorisation suggestion and includes the following categories: *clarification, contractual issue, cost development, deviation, EBIT, environment, failure, goal, handing over, harmonisation, manpower, margin, PANFI, penalties, strategy, success, training* and *travel*. **Commissioning, design** and **site works** categories have currently only one sub category each.

The listed matters to be included in the company specific e-mail policy for Wärtsilä Power Plants include guiding on

- how to write e-mails and when to use e-mail in general

[7] IDM is an abbreviation for Integrated Document Management

- how to develop category classes and how to categorise
- how to set the importance of distributed information
- how to determine whether the information contained in e-mail messages is business critical or not
- what kind of information must be available during each work phase

These matters are listed in the documentation for the e-mail policy development project (Måsala 2007b: 4). In the same document, it is stated that the first step is to have rules. After having the rules, the next step is to develop ways of working and tools that help the company follow the e-mail policy. Wärtsilä's global requirements are to be identified, as well as the business unit specific requirements in order to develop the e-mail policy (Ibid).

This chapter has discussed the use and role of e-mail in companies and presenting a case example on how development of e-mail policy enhancement takes place in Wärtsilä Power Plants. Wärtsilä has its own guide material for guiding employees' e-mail communication. In the next chapter, Wärtsilä's guide material is analysed and compared to generic e-mail communication guides to see what they agree on, how they differ, and how Wärtsilä's e-mail communication could be enhanced.

4 ENHANCING E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

This chapter presents the findings of my analysis. I have analysed selected guide material that focuses on enhancing professional e-mail communication. The purpose of this analysis is to discover what matters are considered important in professional e-mail communication according to generic guides, and on the other hand according to the company. The results of this analysis can be used to describe also what e-mail policy is, or could be, and what it can consist of.

4.1 Guides used in the analysis

In my analysis, ten guides (see table 2) for improving professional e-mail communication were analysed. Studying how to improve professional communication provides ideas for enhancing company-specific e-mail policies. Four of these guides are Wärtsilä Power Plants' internal material and six of them are generic guides.

The material was gathered so that it represents public, generic guide material and on the other hand company-specific guide material. The material consists of both electronic and printed material. The web material is studied as it was in 16.1.2008.

Table 2. Summary of the analysed material.

ID	Name	Found in
W1	Quick Guide to Emails in English	Wärtsilä document management system
W2	Business e-mail guidelines	Wärtsilä intranet, Wärtsilä's internal magazine (WattsUp) 2007
W3	E-mail etiquette article	Wärtsilä's internal magazine (WattsUp) 1997
W4	Wärtsilä electronic mail policy	Wärtsilä’s internal document management system
G1	Emailreplies.com etiquette	http://www.emailreplies.com/
G2	Emailreplies.com policy	http://www.emailreplies.com/
G3	OlympusNet policy	http://www.olympus.net/
G4	OlympusNet etiquette	http://www.olympus.net/
G5	OlympusNet business e-mail management	http://www.olympus.net/
G6	Sample e-mail policy	Flynn (2000)

The material is named in the following way. W1, W2, W3 and W4 are Wärtsilä Power Plants’ internal guides whereas G1, G2, G3, G4, G5 and G6 are external generic guides. W stands for Wärtsilä and G for generic.

Next, I will present each of these guides to give a better overview on what was analysed. I have divided the guidess into two sub chapters: Wärtsilä’s internal guides and generic guides.

4.1.1 Wärtsilä’s internal guides

In this chapter I will present the internal e-mail guides of Wärtsilä and Wärtsilä Power Plants. Although not all of them are guides, some matters raise from the guides, that can be considered as issues that should be taken into consideration when communication with e-mail in a professional matter.

Quick Guide to Emails in English v. 1.0 (W1) is a guide made by a company called AAC Global. It was ordered by Wärtsilä Ship Power, but it is nowadays used throughout the Wärtsilä Corporation and also as a preliminary reading for e-mail training. The guide is intended for electronic use, on-screen reading, but can be printed as well if needed. It is divided into three sections which are (1) *Efficient Use of Emails*, with guidelines for how to use emails, (2) *Writing Good Emails*, with guidelines for how to write clear and effective emails and (3) *Common Email Phrases*, with a selection of useful phrases and examples that can be used in e-mail messages. The length of this guide is 50 pages when printed. The language used in this guide is English.

Business e-mail guidelines (W2) is a page found on Wärtsilä's intranet. A printed, Finnish version of this guide was also found in their internal magazine, Wattsup, issue 03.2007 (p. 29). The length of this guide was one page in the internal magazine. In this guide, the reader is informed to refer to a site called emailreplies.com for further information. Two of the generic guides used in this study (G1 and G2) are found in emailreplies.com.

E-mail etiquette article (W3) is an article that was found in the Wärtsilä internal magazine back in 1997. Despite the fact that this article is over ten years old, I wanted to include it in my study however to show what kind of thoughts regarding e-mail communication were considered important back then, and if the focus has changed. This is a not an actual guide, but an article about considerations regarding e-mail etiquette and therefore is related to guiding professional e-mail communication.

Wärtsilä electronic mail policy (W4) is a document that is referred to in legal matters in Wärtsilä's internal e-mail guides. It focuses on guiding the software and system usage to ensure safe and legal use of the company's e-mail address and software. This document is three pages long and includes no writing instructions whatsoever.

4.1.2 Generic guides

The guides presented in this chapter are not made by Wärtsilä. The first two guides however can be considered as recommended reading for Wärtsilä's employees as they are referred to the web site where these two materials (G1 and G2) can be found. The other four generic guides were gathered using web search.

Emailreplies.com is a website where two of the studied guides can be found. Web master of this site is anonymous. In the site's disclaimer it is said that the content should not be regarded as legal advice. The site also contains links to third party web sites and applications, but according to the disclaimer, the site is not responsible for these the third party content. *Emailreplies.com etiquette* (G1) is a web page that includes 32 e-mail etiquette tips and *Emailreplies.com policy* (G2) is a web page that guides the reader how to enforce an e-mail etiquette by creating a written e-mail policy.

OlympusNet policy (G3) is a web page found in an American Internet service provider's community portal. The page is aimed at companies who are interested in developing an e-mail policy. OlympusNet is a company established in 1993.

OlympusNet etiquette (G4) is a web page found in the same portal as the guide above. This guide is not only aimed at companies specifically but for everyone. According to the site, it is aimed at people who want to write good and efficient e-mail messages.

OlympusNet business e-mail management (G5) is a web page that offers tips to business environment that would make the use of e-mail more efficient. It does not include tips about the content of the messages or any writing tips.

Sample e-mail policy (G6) is a sample document of an e-mail policy found in an e-policy guidebook by Nancy Flynn (2000: 215–217). This document is a sample policy concerning the use of e-mail, company network, intranet and the Internet. The guidebook is a handbook for e-policy making in general. As this study focuses on e-mail improvement, only guidelines regarding e-mail policy were included in the analysis. Only the sample policy appendix was analysed, not the whole book.

4.2 Developing guideline categories

This chapter discusses the categories I use in my analysis to divide the guidelines into individual groups. With their help I analyse what kind of issues are considered important in professional e-mail communication. In the following I will go through the process from the theory that provided the basis for my categories, to the final categorisation I ended up using.

I base the categorisation on a generic model for communication, and refine it during the study. First, I present the basis for my categorisation, the Shannon-Weaver model, and then proceed to the evolution of the categorisation.

The Shannon-Weaver model (see figure 2) is a well-known model that provides a basis for communication in general. Although it was discovered some sixty years ago, it still works as a generic model for communication.

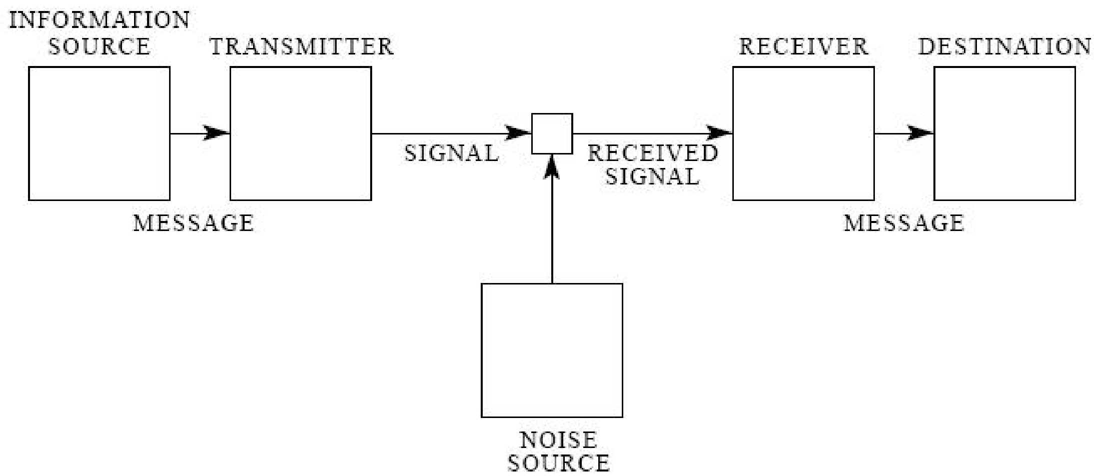

Figure 2. The Shannon-Weaver model (Shannon 1948: 2).

Sending a message, according to Shannon and Weaver, works like this: The **information source** selects the **message**, which can be text, speech, music etc, and sends it by using a **transmitter.** The transmitter encodes the message to a **signal** that can be sent over the *communication channel* to the **receiver**. The receiver then decodes the **received signal** to a form that is understandable by the **destination** the **message**. However the sent signal and the received signal are not necessarily always identical. This is because the signal is often affected and distorted by **noise**. Noise adds unwanted characteristics to the signal and changes it. Thus the source and destination do not always comprehend the message in the same way. (Shannon & Weaver 1971.)

In e-mail communication, the *transmitter* and *receiver* communicate with each other on a technical level, while the *information source* and *destination* can be considered as the persons (or their brains) in the communication transaction. Noise can occur on a technical level from the use of different e-mail clients or different e-mail format and on the other hand from cross-cultural misunderstandings or language barrier in general.

The Shannon-Weaver model approaches communication as a process of sending messages. In the model, the information source decides how and when to send a message, and the receiver receives the message, which can be distorted due to effect of noise. This approach might seem too linear and simple in many occasions, but when applied to e-mail communication and its functions, the model helps in illustrating e-mail communication.

Harold Lasswell's model from 1948 is quite similar to the Shannon-Weaver model, but is expressed in verbal form instead of a figure (Lasswell 1948; Underwood 2003).

Who?	(communicator)
Says what?	(message)
In what channel?	(channel)
To whom?	(receiver)
With what effect?	(effect)

Both of the models are generic for communication. The models are very similar, and can be considered as different presentations of the same idea. The actual basis for the categorisation used in this study is the Shannon-Weaver model. The Lasswell model is only presented as a verbal variation of the same scheme of things.

The first categorisation I used was purely based on the Shannon-Weaver-model. I analysed the material searching for guidelines that fit into these categories. The categories were five as is the amount of main factors in both the Shannon-Weaver model and the Lasswell model.

The categorisation needed refining so I created the following categorisation, keeping the *guiding* of professional e-mail communication in mind:

1) **Sender**, which corresponds to *information source* in the Shannon-Weaver model,
2) **Recipient**, which corresponds to *destination*
3) **Software**, which consists of *transmitter*, *noise* and *receiver*
4) **Message** and
5) **Language and culture**, which corresponds mainly to *noise source* and on the other hand on both sent and received signal as well.

After conducting a test analysis on the material using this categorisation, I noticed that it was still not working in the best possible way, considering the focus of this study. I tested the categorisation by picking random guidelines from the material and trying to place them under the right category. The problem was that some guidelines would fit in into several categories. Finally, I ended up in the following categorisation:

1) Sending and receiving
2) Message content and language
3) Software and e-mail usage

I tested this categorisation on some of the guides (picking them randomly) and this seemed to work. It worked throughout the analysis, so it did not need any refining after this. The guidelines seemed always to fit in some of the three categories, so the categorisation can be considered as one alternative for categorising e-mail communication guidelines.

I will first present guidelines found in Wärtsilä's internal guides. After that, I will compare generic guidelines to those of Wärtsilä's. Next, I will discuss the similarities and differences found in the material. In 4.4, I will discuss what the generic guides have to offer regarding the improvement of Wärtsilä's guiding. Also the possible differences – and opposing views – are noted.

The reason why I first present the company-specific (Wärtsilä) guidelines is because in that way I can more easily show in what areas the e-mail communication can be improved, and what kind of guidelines are not present in the company-specific guides. Presenting company-specific guidelines first makes it easier to see what the generic guides add to Wärtsilä guides, and in what ways the current e-mail policy could be enhanced. The sub chapters presenting findings from each category begin with a table illustrating which guides include guidelines of the listed matters. The guideline that has been discussed in most of the guides, is bolded.

4.3 Wärtsilä internal guidelines

In the next sub chapters, I will discuss the guidelines found in Wärtsilä's internal material. I will refer to specific guides by using the ID's I have given them (see table 2).

Table 3. Summary of Wärtsilä internal guidelines.

Sending and receiving	**Content and language**	**Software and usage**
addressing recipients proofreading replying to messages	abbreviations autoreply content bulleted/numbered lists commenting attachments common phrases confidential information emoticons instructing through e-mail language tone message structure message/sentence length summarising threads use of subject field	other employees' e-mail passwords personal use relying on e-mail retaining e-mail urgent matters using attachments using autoreplies

Table 3 shows a summary of matters that were mostly discussed in Wärtsilä guides. Guidelines concerning sending and receiving focused mainly on three topics (addressing recipients, proofreading and replying to messages) whereas guidelines concerning the other two categories were focusing on several topics.

4.3.1 Sending and receiving

In the introduction part of W1, it was stated that the employees in general feel that they receive too many unnecessary e-mail messages. The employees especially feel that they too often end up as recipients in the *Cc* field. The most common topics concerning sending and receiving in Wärtsilä internal guides are presented in table 4.

Table 4. Wärtsilä internal guidelines concerning sending and receiving.

Sending and receiving	**W1**	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**
addressing recipients	**X**	**X**	**X**	
proofreading		X	X	
replying to messages	X	X		

The results show that there is a need to understand the use of different kinds of **recipient fields**. Wärtsilä wants their employees to consider whether the e-mail messages require a long list of *Cc* recipients, or should the messages perhaps be sent to all the important recipients separately.

The results show that **Reply to all** -function can also be an issue and the use of it should be considered carefully. When there is a long list of *Cc* recipients, replying to all of them results often in unnecessary large amount of e-mail traffic. Furthermore, people may become unsure of whether they should react upon the messages in which they are marked as *Cc* recipient, or if the message is just sent just for information.

While in W1 it was said that employees need to acknowledge the right use of recipient fields (*To*, *Cc* and *Bcc*), W2 guides the user to avoid using *Bcc* completely. A simple rule of thumb arose from the material: the recipients in *To* field are people of whom actions are awaited, whereas those in *Cc* field are only people who need the information, but are not required to act upon it. Both fields are advised to be used sparingly; employees should address as few recipients as possible.

The material suggests that the users should read the mail through before sending it. And especially when the message is of greater importance, it would be good to have someone **proofread** it before sending. Well written e-mails communicate professionalism to the recipient, and there should be no rush clicking the send button before the user is sure that everything that is needed is included and clearly expressed. In W2, it was also reminded that one should not respond to an e-mail message when angry. This could affect the tone used in the message.

4.3.2 Content and language

Guidelines concerning the content and language are presented in table 5. There is not only uncertainty because of unclear use of different recipient fields, but vague and unclear messages itself may be difficult to interpret and cause confusion: who should do what? When should he or she do that? (W1).

Table 5. Wärtsilä internal guidelines concerning content and language.

Content and language	**W1**	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**
abbreviations		X		
autoreply content	X			
bulleted/numbered lists	X			
commenting attachments	X			
common phrases	X	X		
confidential information		X		
emoticons		X		
instructing through e-mail	X	X		
language style/tone	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
message structure	X	X		
message/sentence length	X	X	X	
summarising threads		X		
use of subject field	X	X		

A good **subject field** is considered to be such that already by reading the subject, the user gets the idea of the message, and is not required to open the e-mail message itself. This may be slight exaggeration in some cases, where the message itself contains detailed information, but a good and descriptive subject saves time and tells the recipient what there is to be expected from the message. This requires the subject to be clear, concise and it should reflect the content of the message. Also, in case of longer e-mail discussions (**"threads"**), the subject field should be updated whenever needed, for it to reflect the content in the best possible way. When these threads get long, a short summary at the beginning of an e-mail message saves a lot of time and helps the recipient understand the "big picture".

The **length** of e-mail messages is ideally considered short. As a rule, the message should fit to the users screen, and he or she should not have to scroll down to see the message in whole. It is, however, difficult to know how big a display the recipient has. The laptop displays in general are smaller compared to desktop displays. In spite of the uncertainty on this factor, the sender should keep this in mind. In W3 it was stated that the messages should be easy to scroll down on an *average* pc. To get an idea of this, the sender can think of his/her own display as a comparison and scale the length of the message so that it fits in his/her own screen.

Also the length of sentences should be kept short. The reader focus is important to acknowledge, and the content of e-mail messages should be seen as face-to-face discussions. Of course the direct feedback to each or every other sentence is missing from e-mail messages compared to face-to-face discussion, but it is advised to be kept in mind; messages should be written using **clear language**. Although the messages should be short, no vital information should be left out.

When writing messages, attractiveness, directness and sharpness should be kept in mind. **Abbreviations and emoticons** should be taken care with, and the sender should always consider whether the recipient is familiar with the same abbreviations or emoticons he/she is about to use. It is encouraged to avoid the use of such completely, because it is the best way to make sure the recipient completely understands the content of the message. The use of capital letter should be avoided, as it can sometimes be considered shouting. Also, the overuse of punctuation, such as exclamation marks and full stop (…) should be avoided.

It is advisable that the messages should begin and end with a **common opening/closing phrase**. This is important for professional communication; the messages need to be polite. One section of W1 was dedicated completely to common phrases and salutations, and lists of synonyms for words and expressions that should not be used. This may be used as a checklist when writing important, especially external e-mail messages.

The common thought in the material regarding **message structure** is that the most important things should be placed in the beginning of the message. These should be followed by the details and explanations. Also the writing should include only one topic per paragraph. The first sentence of each paragraph ideally introduces the content of the current paragraph. Although the tone of an e-mail message should be positive, humour and irony should be used sparingly as they might lead to misunderstanding.

When **instructing** the recipient and when the messages require actions, this should be mentioned clearly: who needs to do what. Deadlines should also be included and when writing down deadlines, one should consider whether the recipient has had enough time to even read the message by that point.

Wärtsilä's internal guides suggest that **attachments** should be commented in the message part itself. What are the contents of the attachments, and which pages should the recipients pay attention to. If there are many files attached, the sender should describe all of them briefly in the message, and tell the recipient why they actually are attached.

Confidential information should not be included in e-mails. It is good to remember that the sender can not be sure who finally will end up reading the message. For the same reason, personal remarks of third parties should be avoided.

The legal aspect in the corporate wide policy (W4) to message content is that e-mails may not be defamatory, fraudulent or harassing. Also, the company e-mail may not be used to engage any illegal or wrongful conduct. The last two findings fit in two categories: on the other hand content and language category, but on the other hand to software and usage. I ended up placing it to content and language category, since *defamatory, fraudulent, harassing, illegal* and *wrongful* are all adjectives that may be used to describe the content of a message.

The content of **automatic replies** may vary depending on the length of absence. The guide material offers two different templates for automatic absence replies: one for absence that is shorter than five days, and another for longer periods for being out of office. Unnecessary information in automatic replies should be avoided. After all, one can never know who would send an e-mail message to someone with an automatic reply. Formal greeting, date of return, alternate mode of immediate contact and formal closing are the main things to remember and on most occasions sufficient information. The reason for absence can be included when the user is more than five days out of office but without too many details: business trip or vacation is considered sufficient information.

In W1 there are two different templates for automatic replies which Wärtsilä encourages its employees to use.

Finally, the employees are recommended to use the **active voice** instead of the passive. In this way the messages feel more personal and meaningful. This is especially important when the message includes instructions. It is also good to use **lists**, both numbered and bulleted ones, when instructing the recipient. Numbered lists however should be used only when the number of listed things matter, or when the sender is providing the recipient(s) steps for carrying out a task. For other kind of lists, such as describing features or stating ideas, a bulleted list should be used.

Throughout the Wärtsilä writing instructions, the recipient is considered to be in an important role and he or she should be guided through the e-mail message in good and clear written English, placing oneself to the reader's place thinking whether the sender would feel good to receive such a message or not.

4.3.3 Software and usage

In the previous chapter, instructing the content of **automatic replies** of absence was discussed. There are also guidelines in the material on how to use it. First of all, the use of it should be efficient, as in it should not be used unnecessarily; not when the employee is out of the office for less than two days.

Table 6. Wärtsilä internal guidelines concerning software and usage.

Software and usage	**W1**	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**
other employees' e-mail				X
passwords				X
personal use				X
relying on e-mail		X		
retaining e-mail				X
urgent matters		X		
using attachments	**X**	**X**	**X**	
using autoreplies	X			X

It does not matter, however, whether the user physically is out of office or not, but whether he or she has access to his or her e-mail or not. The most discussed guidelines regarding software and usage are presented in table 6. So far the findings on use of automatic reply of absence are a) not to use absence of e-mail in absences shorter than two days, b) not to give too much information in automatic replies, and to c) include the reason for absence only when the period of absence is longer than five days. An alternative can be found in W4: instead of using automatic reply, the user can forward e-mails to someone else, or authorise someone to receive and read his or her messages during the absence.

A slight contradiction can be found between two different statements found in W1: there is a template for one to five days absence, but on the other hand in the same guide it is said that automatic replies should be used only when the absence is longer than two days.

Although there are guidelines found in the material for **using attachments**, the preferred way in Wärtsilä would be not to use any attachments at all. Should it be necessary to use attachments, the number of attachments should be kept as small as possible. In Wärtsilä, the employees are encouraged to upload the content they wish to attach, onto the company document management server (in Wärtsilä it is called IDM), and include a link to the material in the message. This however is only possible in internal communication, since external recipients do not have access to Wärtsilä IDM. It is also recommended that when sending long texts to clients, they should be attachments instead of long e-mail messages. This means that the sender should write longer e-mails as text documents, which they would attach to an e-mail.

This reflects the earlier finding regarding the preferred length of the messages: the message should fit in an average display, and there should be no need to scroll down to read the message in whole. The guides instruct also in the opposite situation: if the content of an attachment is very short, it should be copied into the e-mail message, instead of included as an attachment. The sender should also consider whether the recipient has the needed software and tools for viewing the attached file. In W4, it is stated that the company e-mail system is not to be used for storing files; it is meant for messaging.

In W2 it is said that e-mail messages should not be marked as urgent if that really not is the case. Furthermore, the sender should not **rely only on e-mail in urgent cases**, but the follow-ups can and should be made by phone, which is considered more reliable in such cases: e-mails can get lost.

Wärtsilä wants their employees to acknowledge that no matter should be considered as settled or agreed just because an e-mail has been sent regarding it. The employees are encouraged to think whether the matter would be more efficient to handle by face-to-face, than to send an e-mail about it. In W3, a punchy sentence was found saying *"Please, stop e-mailing, start communicating with today's tools and do not forget that you are writing to human beings; and not to computers"*. This sentence was written over ten years ago, back in 1997, and yet the findings from the studied material suggest that this proposal is still valid today.

Wärtsilä guides state that the e-mail system is provided and maintained for business purposes only. The **use for personal purposes** should only be incidental, and it may not require substantial expenditures of time. Nor should the company e-mail be used for any personal profit. The employees are responsible for their **e-mail passwords** and they should keep them confidential. It is said in W4 that the employees should not read or send on behalf of **other employees' e-mail** messages, unless they have been authorised to do so by the person in question; others people's privacy should be respected.

The employees are also responsible for **retaining e-mails** that include customer work according to the policies that apply on the work in question. The findings indicate that in Wärtsilä, a lot of attention has been already paid toward professional e-mail communication. In spite of that, the company wants to enhance their communication to make it even better from what it is now. Some ideas on how this could be done can be found in generic guides, which are discussed in the next chapter.

4.4 Generic guidelines

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings in generic guides and how the findings correlate to those of Wärtsilä's company-specific ones. The focus will be on guidelines that were not included in the Wärtsilä guides, and in differing views.

Table 7. Summary of generic guidelines.

Sending and receiving	Content and language	Software and usage
addressing recipients	abbreviations	e-mail risks
certifying sent mail	common phrases	following e-mail etiquette
forwarding	confidential information	formatting
non professional mail	emoticons	monitoring e-mail
read/delivery receipts	language style/tone	new message notifications
replying	message structure	newsletters/news groups
signaling "end of message"	quoting messages	other employees' e-mail
	use of subject field	personal use
		prioritising e-mail
		retaining e-mail
		signatures
		using attachments
		using disclaimers

The guidelines in each category will be presented so that the similarities are being discussed first. This will be followed by ideas that would help enhancing the company-specific guides. These are issues that are not included in Wärtsilä guides. Next, any possible inconsistence or contradictions between the both guide types will be handled. At the end of each sub chapter, thoughts of how the company-specific and generic guides compare to each other, are discussed. A summary of guidelines found in the generic guides is presented in table 7.

4.4.1 Sending and receiving

The generic guide material agrees with Wärtsilä guides on that messages should be thoroughly **read before sending**. Also the *Cc* field and **reply** to all -function should be avoided, or at least used sparingly. G2 recommends companies to have clear guidelines on when to send e-mails to *Cc* or *Bcc* recipients, and furthermore, what to do when receiving e-mails in which these fields are used. Instructions on these issues could also be found in the Wärtsilä material. Generic guidelines concerning sending and receiving are presented in table 8.

Table 8. Generic guidelines concerning sending and receiving.

Sending and receiving	**G1**	**G2**	**G3**	**G4**	**G5**	**G6**
addressing recipients	**X**	**X**		**X**	**X**	**X**
certifying sent mail					X	
forwarding	X	X			X	
non professional mail		X				X
read/delivery receipts	X					
replying	X	X		X		
signaling "end of message"					X	

Wärtsilä guides their users to avoid using too many *Cc* recipients and not to use *Bcc* recipients at all. *Cc* recipients, according to Wärtsilä, are recipients of whom actions are not required. G5 discourages the use of *FYI* (For Your Information) e-mail. To avoid uncertainty on the actions needed and unnecessary e-mail traffic, the amount of FYI e-mails is advised to be kept low. G5 also points out that for good e-mail management, employees should be asked to **forward** their e-mail when they are not in office. In Wärtsilä guides, this was an alternative for using automatic replies.

Similar to Wärtsilä guides, the generic guides suggest users not to rely on e-mail on very important matters, and not to consider things dealt with only because an e-mail has been sent regarding the issue, and to do follow-ups by phone. A guideline in G5 for example states the following of this matter: important e-mails should be *certified*. In some cases it is good to have proof that an e-mail (or an attachment) **has been sent**. This may become important especially in some contractual or legal issues.

As an issue not mentioned in W1-W4, G2 suggests that an e-mail policy should include **a time within which the users should reply** to an e-mail message. The same goes for forwarding: the users should know when to forward e-mail messages and how to handle them. **Non-professional e-mail**, such as chain letters, spam and other suspicious messages are not to be forwarded. This is not mentioned in Wärtsilä's guides, but is noted in G1. G1 is a generic guide and is not aimed at companies only but also for private persons' everyday use. Some things may be taken for granted and since e-mail policies are advised to be kept quite short in order to be efficient, some things may be left out to save space.

In G5 there is a guideline saying that the senders should signal to recipients **in case an answer is not expected** to the e-mail. According to this guide, the signalling could be done by adding "EOM" (End Of Message) to the end of the subject field. This would signal that the message ends and therefore reply is not needed nor expected. Employees may feel that they should somehow acknowledge the e-mail they received or thank the sender in some way. This could be avoided with the use of *"EOM"*.

The use of *read* and *delivery receipts* has not been noted in Wärtsilä's guide material. G1 suggests that **read receipts** should not be used at all. Especially in big organisations, where the amount of recipients may be very high, the use of read receipt may cause unnecessary e-mail traffic and therefore should be avoided.

The sample policy G6 includes a reminder that the senders should check that the right recipients are added, and on the other hand that no unnecessary recipients are added by mistake. In the users' personal contacts, there may be several addresses per recipient, and it is important that the right address is used on the right occasion.

In this category the most significant difference was found in the guiding regarding the use of *Bcc* field. While W2 guided the user to avoid the use of *Bcc* field completely, G1 and G4 suggest that this field should be used when e-mailing to groups of people. G4 however is an etiquette for *everyone*, not just for companies. In companies, such as

Wärtsilä Power Plants, it may be crucial to see the whole list of recipients, in order to carry out some work related tasks.

Also in G4, there is a note of the usage of *Bcc* field: in some situations when using the *Bcc* field for sending e-mail to groups of people, the result may seem like unwanted e-mail: *spam*. In non professional, everyday use though, it might have other benefits. Especially when sending e-mail to recipients who do not now each other, the use of *Bcc* field helps preserving the recipients’ privacy.

In this category, both of the guide types are focusing on similar issues. No direct contradictions were found although the view on few matters varied. The differences were mostly related to the use of two recipient fields *Cc* and *Bcc*.

4.4.2 Content and language

The findings in this category in generic guides were very similar to those in Wärtsilä’s guides. The importance of making the e-mail messages personal and to use proper **structuring** and layout are valued in generic guides as well. **Good written English** (spelling, grammar and punctuation) should be valued and the use of capital letters should be avoided as well as **emoticons** and **abbreviations**. The most common generic guidelines regarding content and language are presented in table 9. When writing an e-mail, the sender should be concise and get to the point, and put the most important issues in the beginning of a message. According to G2, a company should have guidelines on opening and closing **phrases** to be used in e-mails. A list of common and preferred phrases could be found in W1. In G1 it is also recommended to use active voice instead of passive and long sentences should be avoided.

Table 9. Generic guidelines concerning content and language.

Content and language	**G1**	**G2**	**G3**	**G4**	**G5**	**G6**
abbreviations	X					
common phrases		X				
confidential information	**X**	**X**				**X**
emoticons	X					
language style/tone	**X**			**X**		**X**
message structure	X			X		
quoting messages				X		
use of subject field	X			X		

The generic guides agree with Wärtsilä guiding on that **subject** should be meaningful and kept updated when the content of the message changes, so that it always reflects the content in the best possible way. Both guide types also agree that the content of an e-mail message should not include **confidential** information. In G6 it is said that the company e-mail is not to be used for sending and receiving proprietary data, trade secrets or other confidential information of the company. This may also be a matter taken for granted in Wärtsilä guidelines and possibly in Finnish (and in most other European countries) policies in general.

Some interesting guidelines were found, which the Wärtsilä's company specific guides did not mention at all. G1 suggests that when writing e-mails, the **language gender** (he/she) should be kept neutral. This might however be difficult to carry out, especially keeping in mind the guideline that suggested making the e-mails personal.

G4 includes instructions about **quoting** other messages. According to this, when quoting messages, only the relevant parts of the message should be quoted, and irrelevant parts should be deleted. Also, in case the user would include larger blocks of text in his or her response, he or she should put the comments regarding the text at the top, so that any unnecessary down scrolling would be avoided. The use of words such as URGENT and IMPORTANT (especially capitalised) should be avoided.

The sample policy G6 prohibits the use of offensive, harassing and racist statements as well as content that has to do with unethical activities, as well as content that could damage the company's professional reputation. Such matters also are included in Wärtsilä guiding, but the sample policy adds that the use of sexually oriented messages and images is prohibited.

In this category, there were no actual findings that would be in contradiction with the guides used in Wärtsilä Power Plants. All in all, the guidelines concerning content and language were highly comparable. In both guide types, there were a few characteristics that were not included in the other, but mostly the guide types agreed on how the content of e-mail messages should be, and what kind of language is preferred: both in professional context, and in everyday communication.

4.4.3 Software and usage

The generic guides instruct companies to have rules on **personal use** of company e-mail. In the sample policy (G6), the use is restricted to official business only, while G2 and G3 suggest having set rules for the personal use of e-mail. G3 also adds that the personal e-mail should be kept separated from professional mail. This has been noted in the Wärtsilä guide material: the use was permitted but within certain limitations. Restricting the use of personal e-mail is considered a very important part of an e-mail policy. According to G2 this increases the company's productivity. Generic guidelines concerning software and usage are presented in table 10.

Table 10. Generic guidelines concerning software and usage.

Software and usage	**G1**	**G2**	**G3**	**G4**	**G5**	**G6**
e-mail risks		X				X
following e-mail etiquette		**X**	**X**			**X**
formatting	X					
monitoring e-mail		X				X
new message notifications			X		X	
newsletters/news groups		X		X		
other employees' e-mail				X		
personal use		**X**	**X**			**X**
prioritising e-mail	X	X				
retaining e-mail			X		X	
signatures	X	X				
using attachments	X					
using disclaimers	X					

An e-mail policy, according to G2, should include basic rules on how to write e-mail messages; an **e-mail etiquette**. The Wärtsilä guide W1 focuses mostly on writing instructions and can therefore be considered as a document that includes guidelines on e-mail etiquette, although not named so. G2 and G6 also advise to clearly state what is considered inappropriate content. This too, is noted in the current Wärtsilä guidelines.

It is also considered important to include privacy matters in an e-mail policy: other **employees' e-mail** addresses should not be misused in any way. Like in Wärtsilä guides, G4 instructs the users not to use someone else's e-mail address in a way that could result in for example spam. Another thing to consider is not to copy a message or attachment without permission (G1).

Both the generic and Wärtsilä's guides agree on instructing the users to avoid **attaching** anything unnecessary, as well as not overusing the **prioritising** function in e-mail (marking e-mails with high priority). The policy should contain information on how to decide which e-mails get priority (G2).

The use of **disclaimers** in e-mail messages is encouraged, and such disclaimer could be found in Wärtsilä's material W1. The generic guides also suggest being careful with the **formatting** of e-mail messages: html formatted e-mail may not always show like intended (G1). A common e-mail **signature** is also recommended. In Wärtsilä's material, a template for e-mail signature can be found, but this signature model is not in anyway enforced or controlled in practice.

In G2 it is said that before starting to create an e-mail policy, it would be good to go through the existing policies and investigate what kinds of guidelines exist. On a side note, this study can be considered as such investigation. The guides suggest companies having **target answering times** (G1; G2). In the studied Wärtsilä guides, there are no mentions of target answering times.

Some of the generic guides (G3; G5) recommend including rules concerning **notifications** for new (e-mail, instant messaging) message arrivals, in the e-mail policy. The interval for fetching new mail should not be too short and sounds indicating new messages should be turned off. In shis way the employees will not get disturbed while they work and their concentration will not be jeopardised.

The sample e-mail policy contains text saying that the company reserves the right to *"at any time and without notice access, read and review, monitor, and copy all messages and files on computer, as it deems necessary"* (G6). It also denies the use of any personal e-mail. The same kinds of privacy statements were included also in G2. These are examples of strict rules and can not be considered as recommendations, but as examples. G2 also points out that in case the employer would **monitor** the employees' e-mail, it should be clearly said in the e-mail policy.

The use of **newsletters** and **news groups** should be defined in the e-mail policy (G2). Also, every activity that ties up the network traffic should be restricted. It is also recommended to have a list of **e-mail risks** to show why the e-mail policy exists and to make the users aware of the potential harmful effects of their actions (G2).

The guides recommend ensuring that the employees are aware of the company's email policy and the rules it includes. It would also be important to mention what the consequences of not following the company e-mail policy. One way, according to the guides, to ensure that the employees are aware of at least the most important parts of the e-mail policy is to include the most important points of the e-mail policy in the employment contract. It is also advised to review and update the e-mail policy often enough because the development in the communication techniques are evolving constantly (G2). To keep the employees up to date on the e-mail policy, it is also good thing to arrange training now and then.

The retention of e-mail is not discussed much in the studied guide material. G3 however advises to define a policy that states the kinds of e-mail to archive. This policy would also include information on how long the e-mail messages should be retained, and information on what kinds of e-mails are not (necessarily) to be retained.

The only slight contradiction can be found in G5. In it, it is stated that important e-mail should be archived in a separate mailbox. While this guide is aimed at companies to enhance their business e-mail management, this guideline goes against the current Wärtsilä policy[8].

4.5 Discussion

In the previous chapters, all of the three category types of e-mail guidelines have been discussed regarding both of the guide types. This chapter will sum up the similarities and differences of the two guide types.

All in all, both of the guide types (generic and company-specific) were quite similar to each other, and barely had any conflicting recommendations. In the studied material, most of the guidelines that appeared in the company-specific guides were included in

[8] While I was writing this thesis, Wärtsilä Power Plants had started developing and testing a solution for retaining e-mail messages.

the generic guides. The generic guides had sometimes suggestions that were not included at all in the Wärtsilä guides. Such differences might occur for example because of cultural and law related differences. Wärtsilä is a Finnish corporation, while all the generic guides used in this study were foreign. In the Wärtsilä guides, the legislation and common ways of noted and some of the guidelines not included in Wärtsilä guides, were possibly taken for granted.

The findings showed that the current Wärtsilä e-mail guiding is very similar to guidelines found in generic guides. The guides that the Wärtsilä guides were compared to were such that were easily found with web search engines. This indicates that the guides are popular and therefore good examples of generic guides.

It could also be seen that the web page Wärtsilä refers to for further information on e-mail communication (G1 and G2), has affected the creation of Wärtsilä's company-specific guide material. G1 also names three objectives that an e-mail policy accomplishes: commercial, productivity and legal objective. The latter two objectives can be considered as fulfilled in Wärtsilä: productivity objective is about setting rules for the personal use of e-mail, and fulfilling legal objective includes having clearly stated what is considered as inappropriate content in the company e-mail messages. The first objective, commercial, is not however completely fulfilled, according to G1.It includes having both target reply times set as well as to teach how to send effective e-mails. Wärtsilä has guided thoroughly in sending good and efficient e-mails, but there are no mentions of target answering times. It should be noted however that not all of the generic guides even mention setting target answering times, but the one Wärtsilä guides its employees to refer to, does have this point mentioned.

Not only those Wärtsilä refer to, but also other generic guides showed similarities. Some generalisations can be made based on findings from all the studied material. It can be easily seen that the all the generic guides stress the same areas of importance.

Table 11. Most discussed guidelines.

	Sending and receiving	**Content and language**	**Software and usage**
Wärtsilä	addressing recipients (3/4)	language style/tone (6/6)	using attachments (3/4)
Generic	addressing recipients (5/6)	confidential information (3/6)	following e-mail etiquette (3/6)
		language style/tone (3/6)	personal use (3/6)

Table 11 shows the most discussed guidelines in the studied material. The number of guides that discuss the matter is mentioned after the guideline. This is followed by the number of guides (i.e. addressing recipients (3/4) means that three of the total four Wärtsilä guides discuss addressing recipients in some way). Concerning sending and receiving, most of both Wärtsilä's and the generic guides instruct in addressing the recipients correctly. Language style and tone was discussed in half of the generic guides, and in all of Wärtsilä's guides in content and language category. In software and usage, three of Wärsilä's guides discussed the use of attachments. Most of the generic guides discussed the importance of following the e-mail etiquette and the personal use of e-mail at work.

According to the guides, characteristics of good and efficient e-mail messages are that they are short, polite and clearly written. The use of capital letters, business-related abbreviations and other jargon should be avoided in order to ensure that the recipient fully understands the message.

Important things should be placed in the beginning of a message. Follow-ups, in case of very important e-mails, should be done with use of other tool than e-mail, such as phone or if possible from face to face. Sometimes it can also be important to certify that a message has been sent. According to the guides, e-mail should not be relied on 100 % when a very important case is in question. No one should consider matters to be solved, only because an e-mail has been sent regarding it. According to the guide material, e-mails should be kept personal and the recipient should be kept in mind when writing. If possible, the language gender is advised to be kept neutral.

In the next chapter, the research questions are answered and the study will be concluded. Ideas for further research are also discussed.

5 CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to investigate what should be taken into account when developing an e-mail policy. In order to answer this question, the problem was divided into three more elaborate research questions. These questions were concerned with (1) what kind of guidelines can be found in the guide material, (2) what kind of categorisation can be used to classify the e-mail communication guidelines, (3) what recommendations could be given to a company that is developing its own e-mail policy.

This study provides background information for Wärtsilä Power Plants, a Finnish company that wants to enhance its e-mail communication by improving its e-mail policy. For this reason, Wärtsilä's guide material is analysed. Wärtsilä Power Plants also wanted to get input for discussion regarding categorisation and retention of e-mail messages. For this purpose I studied findings from earlier research regarding the foldering and categorisation of e-mail.

The analysis provided answers for research questions one and two. Six generic guides available on the Internet and four of Wärtsilä's internal guides were analysed to see what guidelines they offered regarding e-mail communication. These guidelines were divided into three categories which are presented later in this chapter. The given recommendations are based on the results of the analysis as well as on earlier research.

The generic guides that were analysed during this study were selected according to their popularity: they were among the first results in the used web search engine, Google. The company-specific material includes all the material that was easily accessed in Wärtsilä Power Plants. The generic guides seemed to agree mostly with the company-specific guides. The company specific-guides consisted of only one company, which functioned as a case example. Companies that function on other lines of business may have differing points of views on their communication guides. Another affecting matter may be that the case example, Wärtsilä Power Plants, operates internationally, and its guidelines are designed so that they would not be culturally restricted. Guides used in companies which only function within a specific geographical area might contain opposing views or differing guidelines.

I analysed the guides so that I extracted every guideline regarding e-mail, and placed it under the category that described it best. I also compared how the guidelines differed and what they agreed on. Next, I created tables to illustrate which topics were most discussed in the material. In this way I could see what was considered important in professional e-mail communication.

While e-communication is strongly present in today’s professional communication, some traditional channels are still being used. Face-to-face and the use of telephone still remain efficient when used in the right situation. However, channels like e-mail have overcome some of the possible limitations and as a result of this professionals can communicate using asynchronous channels regardless of time and place. But in order to use e-mail efficiently, some rules and regulations need to be set. This can be done by defining e-mail policies which aim to standardise a company-specific way of writing and using the given tools.

The results of my analysis indicate that there are three areas in which the guide material provides instructions. These are (1) sending and receiving, (2) content and language and (3) software and usage. I will next present the most discussed guidelines in these categories. These guidelines indicate what is considered important in professional communication.

Guidelines in the **sending and receiving** category seemed to relate to the use of different e-mail recipient fields. Instructions in this category may also define in what kind of situations e-mail should be used or when another channel would be preferred instead.

The **Content and language** category includes guiding on what the language should be like and which words are preferred instead of others. There can be guidance on preferred words and phrases and suggestions on how to use the subject field efficiently.

Also guidelines regarding the structure and length of e-mail messages and including confidential information in e-mail messages fit in this category.

Instructions regarding **software and usage** may include guidelines regarding the personal use of company e-mail. It can also contain information on the preferred way of organising and retaining e-mail messages and using attachments. Privacy issues and any legal matters belong to this category as well.

These matters could be included in an e-mail policy. A policy could also define the retention of e-mail messages and the possible attachments: what should be stored and where, and for how long. It may also be good to have a policy that defines how the sender could indicate in his or her message, that no further answers are required. One solution could be to include the letters EOM in the subject line, as an abbreviation for *end of message*.

If the company requires its employees to follow the policy strictly, the most important parts of the e-mail policy could be included in the contract of employment. Also, as the technology develops and new tools and ways of working are introduced, it is good to revise the policy and update it accordingly whenever changes are made. A policy is not efficient if the users are not aware of it. Training for both current employees to refresh their skills, as well as for newcomers may be good aid in helping the employees to follow the defined policy.

Some of the guides discuss the concept of e-mail etiquette. An e-mail etiquette can consist of matters belonging to all of the categories mentioned above. E-mail etiquette and policy are very closely related terms. In some cases the etiquette might only consist of matters in the content and language category and be a part of an e-mail policy, while other etiquettes may consist of all the three categories mentioned here. An e-mail etiquette is a document that includes the policy according to which the e-mails should be written and what is considered the right way of communicating within the company, as well as with the customers. Following the policy and etiquette will help companies ensure that their employees maintain and convey the desired professional image also through e-mail.

Companies, such as Wärtsilä, need to manage various documents and business records. Documents need to be available for the right people at the right time, and some records need to be retained for a longer time than the others. Some e-mail messages can be records themselves or they may include attached records, or documents. In order to manage big record and document collections, some sort of categorisation is needed. In this way the retention and further use becomes more efficient and reliable, as well as the everyday use of e-mail. When users have their mailboxes organised, they may find the currently needed information in much shorter time, compared to storing anything in just one folder. In case a user's hard drive error or other possible technical failures, effective retention should be assured. The categories help organising the information on personal level as well as in document management systems.

There is however no one right way to implement the categories that would function on every occasion. It can be a very subjective task and users may have opposing views on how to keep their documents and records organised. If an automatic foldering system or retention system is used it is thus important that the users can affect the process and that the system is adaptive and learns from the decisions the user makes. When the users know that they can affect the foldering and categorisation, the management becomes easier to them and they can feel more confident about knowing where to find the correct document or record at a later time.

An e-mail policy is an important tool in maintaining a professional image and minimising threats related to communication. The studied material contains guidelines, rules and regulations that are suggested so that people would not just send e-mail without further considerations, but instead communicate in an efficient way, whether in professional context or not.

It is impossible to provide instructions for all the needs and all the companies, since there are many factors that form the framework for an e-mail policy. Companies of different size may also have different needs. When developing an e-mail policy, a company should start by defining why the e-mail policy is being developed in the first place; what is the need the policy is being created for. An e-mail policy may include different things. On one hand it can be an etiquette which includes only rules for how to write e-mails and on the other hand it can include much more information, such as when e-mail should be used, within what time should e-mails be answered, which e-mails should receive priority and so on.

The suggested categorisation can be used as a framework in helping to decide in what areas guidance is provided in a company's e-mail policy. Thus they can consider (1) what is the preferred and most efficient way of sending and receiving e-mail, (2) what is the desired content and what kind of language should be used, and (3) how the company wants its employees to use the e-mail in general and whether personal use is allowed or not. An important thing to acknowledge in a company is also the role of e-mail: are the messages or possible attachments records, and in case they are, where should they be retained and for how long.

While this categorisation may seem obvious, it may prove useful in further research. Using a consistent categorisation makes it easier to compare results. The categorisation may also be used to divide an e-mail policy into sections so that closely related rules and recommendations can be found in the same place.

In this thesis, I have studied a Finnish company's e-mail guide material and compared it to generic guide material available on the Internet. Based on this material, a proposed categorisation was created to study in what areas of e-mail communication the guidelines were given and which guidelines were the most discussed. The most discussed guidelines can be considered important issues in professional e-mail communication, and thus they require attention from companies. These matters should be discussed in a company e-mail policy.

Professional e-communication is more than just e-mail in a traditional sense. E-mail can be used with mobile phones as well as handheld computers. Professional communication is not restricted only to the office. This may result in new security risks. Because of this, it is important to include the other professional e-communication channels in communication policies as well. E-mail policy might not be enough and thus companies should consider developing an e-communication policy to ensure that their employees know how to communicate in an efficient and secure way using all the channels their employer provide.

This study showed what matters are considered important in professional e-mail communication according to guides found on the Internet and according to Wärtsilä. Although the material agreed on most matters, this study only provides answer to this question by studying guides. The fact that these guides instruct in the discussed matters does not necessarily reflect the most important matters in professional communication in general, but it offers one way of studying such matters using also a company as an example.

The suggested categorisation divides the guidelines into three categories. The categories combine two closely related topics. This is only one way of classifying the guidelines, and if someone else were to study the same material, they might end up with another way of classifying the guidelines. The Shannon-Weaver model might also be used to form more than just three categories. The guidelines however would remain the same.

Earlier e-mail related research has mainly focused on issues such as automatic foldering of incoming e-mail messages, efficiency of e-mail in organisational communication and substituting other media with e-mail in organisations. This study however focused on e-mail policies and the guiding of professional e-mail communication.

The categorisation suggested in this study could also be used to study and develop e-communication policies. It might help researchers study how the most discussed e-mail guidelines compare to those found in e-communication guides. This would help investigating whether the same matters are considered important in both e-communication, and in e-mail communication specifically.

Companies, on the other hand, could use the guidelines and categorisation as a basis for their development of e-communication policies. Further research could also investigate how well the e-mail policies are followed in companies by, for instance, interviewing the employees. The most discussed topics found in the guide material could be used as a basis for the interview. Wärtsilä Power Plants could investigate whether its employees are aware of these guidelines, and how well they follow them. A test group could be formed and during a time period these matters would be paid attention to.

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APPENDIX. The Enron categories

1 Coarse genre

1.1 Company Business, Strategy, etc. (elaborate in Section 3 [Topics])
1.2 Purely Personal
1.3 Personal but in professional context (e.g., it was good working with you)
1.4 Logistic Arrangements (meeting scheduling, technical support, etc)
1.5 Employment arrangements (job seeking, hiring, recommendations, etc)
1.6 Document editing/checking (collaboration)
1.7 Empty message (due to missing attachment)
1.8 Empty message

2 Included/forwarded information

2.1 Includes new text in addition to forwarded material
2.2 Forwarded email(s) including replies
2.3 Business letter(s) / document(s)
2.4 News article(s)
2.5 Government / academic report(s)
2.6 Government action(s) (such as results of a hearing, etc)
2.7 Press release(s)
2.8 Legal documents (complaints, lawsuits, advice)
2.9 Pointers to url(s)
2.10 Newsletters
2.11 Jokes, humor (related to business)
2.12 Jokes, humor (unrelated to business)
2.13 Attachment(s) (assumed missing)

3 Primary topics (if coarse genre 1.1 is selected)

3.1 regulations and regulators (includes price caps)
3.2 internal projects -- progress and strategy
3.3 company image -- current
3.4 company image -- changing / influencing
3.5 political influence / contributions / contacts
3.6 california energy crisis / california politics
3.7 internal company policy
3.8 internal company operations
3.9 alliances / partnerships
3.10 legal advice
3.11 talking points
3.12 meeting minutes
3.13 trip reports

4 Emotional tone (if not neutral)

4.1 jubilation
4.2 hope / anticipation
4.3 humor
4.4 camaraderie
4.5 admiration
4.6 gratitude
4.7 friendship / affection
4.8 sympathy / support
4.9 sarcasm
4.10 secrecy / confidentiality
4.11 worry / anxiety
4.12 concern
4.13 competitiveness / aggressiveness
4.14 triumph / gloating
4.15 pride
4.16 anger / agitation
4.17 sadness / despair
4.18 shame
4.19 dislike / scorn

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