

Effective communication during planned change

Eike Wagner (2006)

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Figs 2.1 p.15, 3.2 p. 27, table 3.1 p. 29, figs 3.5 p.38, 4.5 p. 102, 8.6 p. 208, 8.8 p.210

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Wagner, E (2006) *Effective communication during planned change* PhD, Oxford Brookes University

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION DURING PLANNED CHANGE:
AN EVALUATION FROM THE RECIPIENTS' PERSPECTIVE**

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Submitted *in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of* Doctor of Philosophy

The Business School
Oxford Brookes University

January 2006

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Figure 2.1 page 15

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for my father

Abstract

In a world in which change is considered the only constant, changes in an organisation's strategy, structure, processes and/or technology are a prerequisite for success. A main reason why many organisational change efforts do not achieve the desired results is seen in the lack of understanding and acceptance of the change among those affected by the change. This is particularly true for planned change because the majority of the employees are not involved in the planning of the change. Although both academics and practitioners view communication as a key mechanism for increasing understanding and acceptance, the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme do not appear to have received adequate research attention and insufficient guidance was available for practitioners on how to design an effective communication programme.

This thesis, written from an interpretivist perspective, reports on case study research undertaken in three different change projects in one large organisation in the automotive industry in Germany. Two and a half years were spent in the field, with each case study lasting between six and nine months. The approach to the research was inductive and the data collected were basically qualitative. The research sought to explore recipients' perceptions of the communication activities used with the intention of increasing the understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme. The findings can be grouped into recipients' perceptions of the effects of the communication activities used and the specific aspects of the communication activities responsible for these perceptions. The focus in the analysis was not on individual occurrences but on the relationships between different effects and on the interdependencies between different communication activities. The relationships found between different effects and between different communication activities highlight the importance of a holistic approach to research on change communication and underline the complexity of designing a communication programme. Suggestions for practitioners on how to structure communication aims and on how to choose and design communication activities can be inferred from these findings.

Acknowledgements

My research ran over a significant period of time and I received help and encouragement in many different ways from numerous people. My thanks are due to all of them. In particular, the value of the contributions made by my supervisors, Prof Denise Skinner and Prof Mark Saunders, needs to be recognised. They have provided valuable support throughout the research and they always had time when I needed their help. Thanks are also due to the individuals within the case study organisation who gave so generously of their time and opinions. Without the support of my colleagues in the central change management department, this thesis would not exist. The key informants in the case studies helped me with getting access to the required information. It was great to work with them. Thanks are also due to all interviewees who were willing to give their time and share their thoughts. I would also like to acknowledge the support offered by my colleagues at the consulting firm because they reminded me from time to time that I might want to complete my PhD.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their patience and unfailing belief in my ability to complete this thesis. From my parents, I have learned a great deal. In particular, their upbringing and education made me internalise that everyone has the right to make one's own decisions, as long as one accepts the consequences of these decisions. This was very helpful in my life and throughout the PhD. I could always make the decisions that were best in my situation, even when experienced people or managers had a different opinion. My wife, Julia, almost always understood when I had to spend time on my PhD instead of with her. I hope that her own career will develop the way she wants and I will also support her in any way that I can.

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1 Introduction

Changes in an organisation's strategy, structure, processes and/or technology are necessary from time to time in order to remain competitive but many organisational change efforts do not achieve the desired results (Bungard and Niethammer, 2003; CSC Index, 1994; Die Akademie, 1999; ILOI, 1996; Schiemann, 1993). A particularly significant type is strategic change that is pursued in anticipation of future events (Nadler and Tushman, 1989; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002; Richardson and Denton, 1996). Because of its strategic nature, this type of change is often implemented top-down and most employees are not involved in the planning of the change (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Heimbrock, 2000; Mohr, 1997; Senior, 2002). The term planned change is used to refer to this type of change in the thesis.

A main reason for the failure of planned change is that those affected by the change do not understand and/or accept the change (Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997; Quirke, 1996). As communication is considered the key mechanism for increasing understanding and acceptance (for example, Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Axley, 2000; Mohr, 1997), a main challenge for those responsible for the implementation of planned change (implementers) is to design a communication programme that creates understanding and acceptance among those that were not involved in the planning of the change (recipients). In order to refer to communication in the context of planned change, the term change communication is used throughout the thesis.

Though much had been written about change communication by the time this research started, the relationships between different aspects of a communication programme and recipients' reactions did not appear to have received adequate research attention and insufficient guidance was available for practitioners on how to design an effective communication programme. The reasons for the gap in the existing understanding were manifold. Firstly, many academic publications did not provide empirical evidence for their claims (for example, Klein, 1996; Kotter, 1995) and many practitioner publications did not include a theoretical foundation for their suggestions (for example, Trapp, 2000; Hutchison, 2000). Weick and Quinn (1999) observe that many of the recommendations given by researchers are reiterated without proof or disproof. Secondly, much empirical

research was limited to single aspects of the communication programme such as written communication (for example, Broadfield, 1997), choice of medium (for example, Timmerman, 2003) or use of language (Sillince, 1999). This is problematic because, whereas understanding of single aspects is important, it is also important to understand the interplay between different aspects of a communication programme because this interplay has a profound impact on communication effectiveness (Mast, 2002a). Thirdly, much research focused on the perspective of implementers and neglected the perspective of recipients. This is problematic because several authors (Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Lippitt, 1997; Smeltzer, 1991) found differences between implementers' and recipients' perspectives and it is recipients' reactions that are to be influenced. Given the low success rates of organisational change efforts, the gap in the literature and continual calls for additional research (Ford and Ford, 1995; Holt *et al.*, 2003; Lewis, 2000a; Lewis and Seibold, 1998; Mohr, 1997; Papa and Papa, 1990; Pfannenberger, 2003), an empirical study on recipients' perceptions of the communication activities actually used was timely. Given the interplay of different factors in influencing the effectiveness of the communication programme, a holistic approach was important.

Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasise the importance of putting clear boundaries around one's research. As communication conceals considerable complexity (Poole, 1997), which certainly is not reduced when analysing communication in the context of planned change, it was important to define which aspect of communication and which aspect of planned change would be analysed. As stated earlier, the main challenge for implementers is to design an effective communication programme. The focus of this research was on the formal communication activities used because informal communication, which is the communication that occurs outside formal communication activities, is outside implementers' control (Bland and Jackson, 1990; Glover, 2001). It has also been stated earlier that two main reasons for the failure of planned changes are a lack of understanding and acceptance of the change among recipients. As understanding and acceptance are important determinants of the behaviour that recipients adopt after the introduction of the change (Buchholz, 2002; Rogers, 1995), understanding and acceptance are ideally created before the introduction of the change. Therefore, the focus of this research was on the formal communication activities used between the announcement of the change and its introduction.

The overall aim of this research was to increase understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme. Through an analysis of the communication activities used in three case studies this research sought to ...

- Explore recipients' perceptions of the effects of the communication activities used
- Identify the aspects of the communication activities responsible for the effects
- Assess the interplay of different communication activities in causing the effects
- Explore the relationships between different effects

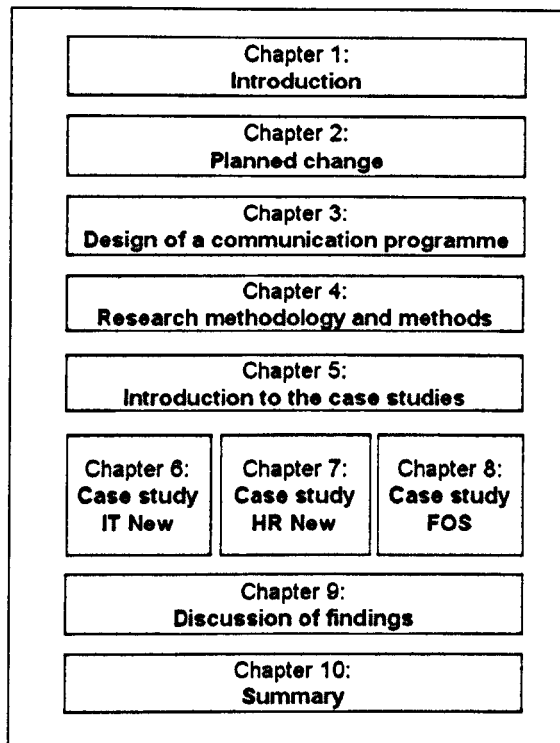
The required depth of analysis lent itself to a case study approach. Three case studies were conducted in three different change projects in a large automotive company based in Germany. Research participants came from different locations and sites (Headquarters and four different plants), worked in different functions (IT, HR and customer service) and held positions within five of the organisation's seven hierarchical levels. On request of the case study organisation, neither the real name of the case study organisation nor the real names of the change projects are disclosed. The thesis is written from an interpretivist perspective, according to which we can have no direct knowledge of the objects of our accounts but only through interpretation (Silverman, 2000; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001). The interpretivist approach was most appropriate for this study because it suggests that the researcher grasps the meanings that constitute an action in order to understand the action (Schwandt, 2000; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001). In this study, it was important to understand how employees perceived the communication activities used and how these perceptions led to follow-up effects.

The thesis is written in the third person singular. However, given the importance of the researcher as the main research instrument in interpretivist research (Patton, 2002), the first person singular is used where necessary in order to specify the influence of the researcher's (my) interpretations of a situation on the conclusions drawn and the decisions made.

The research process was necessarily messy, due to the fact that it explored real life processes. Its presentation, however, requires structure and coherence in order to ensure

clarity and credibility. With this in mind, a fairly traditional thesis structure has been chosen (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Structure of the thesis



Chapter 2 defines the context in which the communication takes place. It discusses the role of communication in different types of change and justifies why this thesis analyses communication in the context of planned change. The chapter also defines the macro-process for this type of change and demonstrates that influencing recipients' behaviour is a key challenge.

Chapter 3 sets the broad framework for the empirical study. It critically evaluates the existing understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme, discusses the communication activities that are available and specifies the gap in previous work. The discussion is not limited to literature on organisational change and communication but also draws on theories and concepts from related fields such as social and cognitive psychology and sociology.

Chapter 4 considers the research philosophy on which the research rests – including its impact on the choice of research process and methods – and then discusses the research approach, design and methods.

Chapter 5 introduces the case studies by providing information relevant for all three case studies and by explaining the conventions used to increase the clarity of the case study chapters.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the evidence from the respective case study: Introduction of a new structure in the IT function (Case IT NEW), introduction of new responsibilities, processes and technologies in the HR function (Case HR NEW) and introduction of a new structure in the service function of a distribution centre (Case FOS). The focus in the case study chapters is on the communication activities used and their effects.

Chapter 9 discusses the similarities and differences between the findings from the three case studies and compares them with the existing understanding, thereby answering the research questions. The focus in this chapter is on the central cause and effect-relationships between specific aspects of the communication programme and recipients' cognitions, emotions and behaviour. Whereas the case study chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) are structured along the communication activities used, the discussion of findings chapter (Chapter 9) is structured along the clusters of effects that have been identified throughout the research because it has become evident that understanding of these effects is key.

Chapter 10 summarises the thesis in that it compares what was to be achieved with what was actually achieved, discusses the implications of the study and its contribution to academic knowledge and makes recommendations for further research.

2 Planned change

2.1 Introduction

Whereas communication plays an important role in any organisational change effort, the role of communication differs from change to change. Different changes are likely to produce different reactions and, therefore, the appropriateness of change communication activities depends on the change at hand (Carnall, 2003; Daly *et al.*, 2003; Dunphy and Stace, 1993; Lewis and Seibold, 1998; Smeltzer, 1991). Lundberg (1990, p.10) states that 'each type of change has implications both for communication content and communication process'. In order to enable the reader to judge the relevance of the findings from this study for another change, a definition of the type of change and the approach to change is important.

The first two sections define different types of change and approaches to change, discuss how far the role of communication differs between these changes and justify why this thesis focuses on planned change. For reasons explained below, planned change is the term used to refer to intensive change that is pursued in anticipation of future events and approached top-down. The next three sections define the macro-process of planned change, the different roles in the change process and the key challenge in planned change.

2.2 Nature of change

An agreed classification system for change is not readily available (Smeltzer, 1991; Dawson, 2003). A range of views about the nature of change exists and a variety of labels, often confusingly similar, is used to describe different types of change. For the purpose of this thesis, changes are defined along four dimensions:

- Intensiveness of change
- Temporal relation to external event
- Change target
- Extensiveness of change

The term type of change is used broadly to refer to a change that is characterised by a certain position on the continuum within one or more of these dimensions. Whereas the dimensions overlap in practice, each affecting the other, it is helpful to consider each dimension in isolation in order to be able to highlight differences regarding the role of communication.

2.2.1 Intensiveness of change

There is agreement in the literature that a distinction between types of change can be made on the basis of how intensive the impact of the change is. A discussion of this dimension is difficult because different authors use different terms in order to define specific types of change. The term intensiveness of change has been introduced in order to avoid misinterpretations by using one of the other terms each of which has been used for different types of change. Furthermore, the term intensiveness of change highlights the clear distinction from the fourth dimension, extensiveness of change.

Many authors distinguish between two types of change, using terms such as evolution and revolution (Greiner, 1972; Miller, 1982), transitional change and transformational change (Wilson, 1992), incremental change and radical change (Meyer *et al.*, 1990), continuous and discontinuous change (Weick and Quinn, 1999), first-level change and second-level change (Jabri, 1997) or first-order change and second-order change (Bartunek and Louis, 1988; Meyer *et al.*, 1990). Despite differences in terminology, the definitions are similar. Authors even use the terminology of other authors in order to define their types of change. Bartunek and Louis (1988), for example, define first-order change as 'incremental' and second-order change as 'transformational' and 'discontinuous'. Similarly Meyer *et al.* (1990) define first-order change as 'incremental' and second-order change as 'radical' and 'discontinuous' departures from the past. Other authors distinguish between three types of change, for example, smooth incremental change, bumpy incremental change and discontinuous change (Grundy, 1993; Senior, 2002), developmental change, transitional change and transformational change (Marshak, 1993), first-level change, second-level change and third-level change (Kumar and Thibodeaux, 1990) or first-order change, second-order change and third-

order change (Bartunek and Moch, 1987, 1994). Nadler and Tushman (1989) and Dunphy and Stace (1993) even discuss four different types of change. Despite these differences in terminology and number of specific types of change, it can be said that different types of change can be defined as lying on a continuum between less intensive to very intensive. Less intensive change occurs within already accepted frameworks, improving effectiveness within existing structures and processes, whereas intensive change means a shift in frameworks (for example, Cummings and Worley, 2001).

Intensive change is interesting from a communication perspective because, if more is changed, the likelihood that employees perceive the loss of something they value increases (Barger and Kirby, 1995; Beer, 1987; Burnes, 2004). This increases the likeliness of resistance (Mast, 2002a), which increases the importance of communication, because communication is considered a key mechanism to prevent and/or reduce resistance (for example, Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997; Smeltzer, 1991). Furthermore, intensive change is more likely to lead to uncertainty among employees (Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Lewis, 2000a), which is likely to trigger negative thoughts and feelings. Therefore, communication activities that address these thoughts and feelings are relatively more important than in less intensive change (for example, Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Klein, 1996; Lundberg and Young, 2001).

2.2.2 Temporal relation to external event

There is agreement in the literature that a distinction between types of change can be made on the basis of whether a change is anticipatory, occurring in advance of expected external changes, or reactive, involving a response to events that have already occurred. The temporal relation of the change is important because it determines how urgently a change is needed (Cummings and Worley, 2001; Nadler and Tushman, 1989; Quirke, 1996). In reactive change, the clear and present danger to organisational failure often creates the energy needed to make change happen (Nadler and Tushman, 1989). In anticipatory change, detailed knowledge about future events often only exists in the heads of the most senior managers (Quirke, 1996). It is even difficult to say whether external events are really triggers for change because it is possible that 'the trigger was

really someone's perception of the shape of things to come, favourable as an opportunity or unfavourable as a threat' (Wille, 1999, p.5).

Anticipatory changes are more interesting from a communication perspective for two main reasons. Firstly, when the need for change is less obvious, controversial views regarding the need for change are more likely to exist and explanation of the need for change becomes more important (Kotter, 1995; Nadler and Tushman, 1989; Quirke, 1996). This view is supported by persuasion theory (Reardon, 1991), according to which explanation becomes more important when views are controversial. Secondly, recipients' attitudes towards current structure, processes and technologies are likely to be more favourable in anticipatory change, because inefficiencies are not yet visible, and consequently changing attitudes becomes more difficult (Klein, 1994).

Nadler and Tushman (1989) integrate the dimensions that are referred to as intensiveness of change and temporal relation to external events in this thesis into a two-dimensional model with four types of change. Intensive change in anticipation of future events is referred to as 'reorientations' and is defined as 'strategic change, made with the luxury of time afforded by having anticipated the external events that may ultimately require change' (Nadler and Tushman, 1989, p.196). Nadler and Tushman (1989, p.203) argue that reorientations are 'a particularly significant kind of change', which is supported by empirical evidence. 80 percent of 350 executives responding to a survey by the consultancy Arthur D Little said that they had 'anticipated that their companies would be involved in another major change endeavor within the next ten years' (Stout, 1994, p.9). Similarly, 80 percent of a sample of more than 500 sites across industrial sectors planned to implement significant organisational changes in the future (Benchmark Research, 1994). More recently, 76 percent of respondents in a survey conducted by the consultancy BlessingWhite said that they had experienced a major restructuring in the last three years (Garger, 2003).

2.2.3 Change target

The question of what can be changed in order to increase the effectiveness and/or efficiency of an organisation has been addressed by many authors (for example, Leavitt,

1970; Mohr, 1997; Nadler and Tushman, 1989; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Leavitt (1970), for example, considers the aspects task, administrative structure, technology and people as the four main elements of an organisation. A limitation of this model is that strategy is not explicitly considered in the model, although strategy is an important element of an organisation and a main driver for change (Grundy, 1993; Tichy, 1993). Models that explicitly include strategy are, for example, those by Grundy (1993) and Peters and Waterman (1982). The 7S-model developed by Peters and Waterman (1982) includes the seven elements strategy, structure, systems, style, shared values, skills and staff. Grundy (1993) considers the components strategy, structure and culture as the key elements of an organisation. The two models are similar insofar as 'staff, structure and hard skills are subsumed under structure, whilst shared values, style and soft skills are subsumed under culture' (Grundy, 1993, p.28). As these elements are interdependent, intensive change usually includes a change in more than one element (Cummings and Worley, 2001; Leavitt, 1970; Tichy, 1993).

Several authors (for example, Nadler and Tushman, 1989; Stickland, 1998) subsume differences in the change target under intensiveness of change. This is appropriate insofar as several authors (for example, Ledford *et al.*, 1989) argue that the number of elements that are changed influences the intensiveness of change. It is inappropriate, however, insofar as different change targets may require different communication aims and different communication activities (for example, Buehrer *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, the change target is considered a separate dimension in this thesis.

2.2.4 Extensiveness of change

Another dimension of differences between types of change is referred to as extensiveness of change in this thesis in order to clearly delimit it from intensiveness of change. Ledford *et al.* (1989) support a distinction between these two dimensions, using the terms pervasiveness of change instead of extensiveness of change and scale of change instead of intensiveness of change. They argue that a change can be extensive by involving many organisational units (for example, business units, functions, locations) or by affecting many hierarchical levels. A distinction along the number of affected organisational units and hierarchical levels is important because the design of the

communication programme should reflect the size of the change programme (Barrett, 2002).

Other authors do not reject a distinction along the number of affected organisational units and levels but they subsume it under the dimension intensiveness of change, using terms such as level of change (Kumar and Thibodeaux, 1990), scope of change (Nadler and Tushman, 1989), scale of change (Dunphy and Stace, 1993; Meyer *et al.*, 1990) or magnitude of change (Cummings and Worley, 2001). The extensiveness of change is considered a separate dimension in this thesis for two reasons. Firstly, given the importance of the context in the process of communication (for example, Baguley, 1994; Mohr, 1997; Watzlawick *et al.*, 1972), a fine-grained distinction between different types of change is more appropriate. Only then can we explore how far a communication activity may only have a certain effect during a particular type of change. Secondly, it may be the case that intensiveness of change and extensiveness of change are widely independent. It seems as if there is no hint in the literature that the impact of a change on an individual recipient is more or less intense if employees in other units or functions are also affected by the change.

2.3 Nature of the approach to change

In addition to the four dimensions that have been subsumed under type of change, changes can be defined along three more dimensions:

- Direction of change
- Pace of change
- Possibility for modification during implementation

The term approach to change is used broadly to refer to a change that is characterised by a certain position on the continuum within one or more of these dimensions. Although these dimensions are interdependent, each affecting the other, it is helpful to consider each dimension in isolation in order to be able to highlight differences regarding the role of communication.

2.3.1 Direction of change

One dimension of differences between approaches to change is the direction of the change. Two principal directions have been identified as top-down and bottom-up. In organisational practice, change may be a mixture of both directions and may include approaches such as from-middle-both-directions, bipolar or multiple-nucleus (for example, Heimbrock, 2000; Mohr, 1997, Porter *et al.*, 1975). Top-down change is associated with the process of strategic planning by the senior management of an organisation and it is associated more with intensive change, whereas bottom-up change is associated more with a strategy of employee involvement and with less intensive change (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Heimbrock, 2002; Mohr, 1997; Thornhill and Saunders, 2002).

Top-down change is more interesting from a communication perspective because employees on lower levels of the organisation usually are not involved in the planning of the change and, therefore, they are unlikely to understand the change unless it is explained to them. As a lack of understanding and acceptance are main reasons for the low success rate of organisational change efforts (for example, Die Akademie, 1999; ILOI, 1996), it is important to understand how different communication activities influence recipients' understanding and acceptance in top-down change. Participation in the planning of the change, which is another important mechanism to increase acceptance (for example, Armenakis *et al.*, 1999; Bartunek *et al.*, 1999; Streich, 1997), is absent in top-down change by definition. The change is planned at the top and employees are not involved. Another reason to focus on top-down change is that intensive change, which has been chosen as the focus of this thesis (2.2.1), is likely to be implemented top-down (Heimbrock, 2000; Mohr, 1997).

2.3.2 Pace of change

Another dimension of differences between approaches to change is the pace of change, or tempo of change (Weick and Quinn, 1999), which can be radical or sequential (for example, Burnes, 2004; Quirke, 1996). Change in reaction to external events is often

radical because internal problems exist that need to be addressed quickly. In contrast, in anticipatory change there is lead-time before external changes occur and, therefore, emphasis can be placed on transitioning from the present to the future state instead of breaking sharply from it (Cummings and Worley, 2001; Quirke, 1996). This does not mean, however, that a sense of urgency does not have to be created (Nadler and Tushman, 1989).

Several authors (for example, Bartunek and Lacey, 1992; Bridges, 2002; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Jabri, 1997; Klein and Sorra, 1996; Goshal and Bartlett, 1996; Reger *et al.*, 1994) argue that, if organisations have the choice, changes should be implemented in sequences because resistance is unnecessarily high if the gap between the current state and the proposed new ideal is too large. It is argued that, when communicated effectively, each sequence is likely to stay in most individuals' comfort zone (Klein and Sorra, 1996), or change acceptance zone (Reger *et al.*, 1994). This suggests that further research on the barriers to, and enablers of, effective communication during the implementation of sequential change is necessary.

2.3.3 Possibility for modification during implementation

A third dimension of differences between approaches to change affects the question of whether the change can be modified during the implementation (for example, Berman, 1980; Burnes, 2004; Dawson, 2003; Heimbrock, 2000; Lewis and Seibold, 1998; Marcus, 1988; Timmerman, 2003; Wilson, 1992). Berman (1980) distinguishes between programmed and adaptive implementation. Programmed implementation 'assumes that implementation problems can be made tolerable, if not eliminated, by careful and explicit pre-programming of implementation procedures' (p.205), whereas adaptive implementation 'holds that policy execution can be improved by processes that enable initial plans to be adapted to unfolding events and decisions' (p.205-206). Marcus (1988) makes a similar distinction but uses the terms rule-bound and autonomous. Rule-bound approaches 'involve central direction and highly programmed tasks' (p.235), whereas autonomous approaches accept 'that people in the lowest echelons of an organization exhibit autonomy by redefining policies during the course of implementation' (p.237). More recently, the differences between emergent change and

planned change are discussed (Burnes, 2004; Dawson, 1994; Mohr, 1997). Planned change is related to programmed change insofar as it is planned in advance and then implemented according to the plan. The emergent approach to change was developed in response to the planned approach in order to allow for changing temporal and contextual factors (Dawson, 1994; Wilson, 1992). The key factors distinguishing the two approaches to change are the degree to which the majority of the employees are involved in the planning of the change and the degree to which the details of the change are decided upon at an early stage of the change process.

Planned as well as adaptive approaches are interesting from a communication perspective but the role of communication differs, which becomes particularly visible with regard to the aim of two-way communication. In adaptive change, the aim of two-way communication is to integrate diverging opinions and to enable the involvement of employees in the problem-solving process (Mast, 2002a; Timmerman, 2003). This view is similar to the ideal of symmetric dialogue in Grunig *et al.*'s (2002) concept of excellent public relations. In planned change, the aim of two-way communication is to seek information from recipients on their view of the change and of the communication activities used in order to optimise the communication programme (for example, Ashkenas and Jick, 1992; Pfannenberger, 2001, 2003; Young and Post, 1993). This thesis addresses the role of communication during planned change for two reasons. Firstly, top-down change, the type of change of interest in this study, is more associated with the planned approach (for example, Burnes, 2004; Heimbrock, 2000; Mohr, 1997; Senior, 2002). Secondly, in planned change the majority of employees have not been involved in the decisions and have less scope to influence what happens directly. Therefore, there is a need to explore the effect of communication on these employees' understanding and acceptance of the change.

2.4 The macro-process of planned change

In order to understand the communication challenges in planned change, it is important to understand the macro-process of planned change, which is frequently described along the four phases diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation (for example, Bullock and Batten, 1985; Burnes, 2004; Mayon-White, 1992). Once the problem has

been identified (diagnosis) and a solution has been developed (planning), the solution needs to be put into practice (implementation) and the degree to which the solution has been put into practice needs to be reviewed (evaluation). Hayes (2002) elaborates on this model of the macro-process of change in that he adds the two phases recognition of the need for change and start of the change process (Figure 2.1). The dotted lines in Figure 2.1 illustrate feedback loops and possible iterations.

Source: Adapted from Hayes (2002, p.54)

Hayes' (2002) model is beneficial because it emphasises that change begins when someone recognises the need for change. Beckhard and Pritchard (1992, p.77) argue that change 'destroys the known and replaces it with the unknown, which someone thinks will be better'. This someone needs to convince all other employees that the change is both needed and appropriate, if the change is to be successful.

2.5 Different roles in the change process

Ottaway (1983), in his taxonomy of change agents, defined three different groups of roles in the process of social change: Change generators, change implementers and change adopters. Several authors (for example, Jick, 1993; Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Mohr, 1997) apply this taxonomy to the context of organisational change, though using different terminology. Kanter *et al.* (1992), for example, use the term change strategist instead of change generator and the term change recipient instead of change adopter.

‘Three basic groups must be coordinated if change is to be effectively managed: change strategists, change implementers and change recipients’ (Kanter *et al.*, 1992, p.370).

For the purpose of this thesis, the terms ‘change strategist’, ‘implementer’ and ‘recipient’ are used in order to distinguish between these three groups of people. According to Mohr (1997), change strategists usually identify the need for change and they instruct the diagnosis of the problem and the development of a solution. Change strategists make the decision about what is changed, when and how (for example, Kanter *et al.*, 1992). Implementers usually enter the process after the planning of the change (Mohr, 1997). They are responsible for designing and executing change management interventions, which includes communication and training. Recipients are usually the largest group and the most important group (for example, Jick, 1993; Mohr, 1997).

No organization can institute change if its employees will not, at the very least, accept the change. [...] Change can be managed externally by those who decide when it is needed and how it should be implemented. But it will be implemented only when employees accept change – and the specific change – internally (Jick, 1993, p.323).

2.6 The importance of communication in planned change

Several authors (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993, 2001; Huy, 1999; Reger *et al.*, 1994; Townley, 1994) argue that employee compliance is no longer sufficient and that recipients need to accept the change if they are to adopt the desired behaviour. At the same time, several studies (BPR Online Learning Centre, 2003; Die Akademie, 1999; ILOI, 1996; Mohr, 1997) found that a lack of understanding and acceptance remains the main reason for the low success rates of organisational change efforts. This problem is especially present in planned change because recipients are not involved in the planning of the change. Whereas change strategists and implementers have the time to think the change through, most recipients are not involved in the process, they have not explored options, they have little influence and they do not make the final decisions. They may know that something is coming but often they do not know the details (Cummings and Worley, 2001; Jick, 1993; Kanter *et al.*, 1992; Mohr, 1997). Although understanding and

acceptance are not sufficient to produce action (Beer *et al.*, 1990; Ford and Ford, 1995), they are important determinants of the behaviour recipients adopt during top-down change. A key mechanism to create understanding and acceptance of the change among recipients, it is frequently argued, is communication (for example, Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Axley, 2000; Buchholz, 2002; Huy, 1999; Kitchen and Daly, 2002; Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997; Spike and Lesser, 1995). This suggests that the design of an effective communication programme is a prerequisite for the effective implementation of planned change.

2.7 Summary

The first two sections have demonstrated that each of the four dimensions of the nature of change and of the three dimensions of the approach to change influences the role that communication plays in organisational change. Therefore, any research on the effect of communication during change needs to define the change analysed along these dimensions.

The first two sections have also shown that intensive changes pursued in anticipation of future events are a particularly significant type of change in organisational practice and that communication is important in this type of change. This justifies an analysis of the communication process during this type of change. It has become clear that intensive change is often implemented top-down and that intensive change pursued in anticipation of future events is more likely to be successful when radical shifts are avoided. This justifies that this thesis focuses on the process of communication during changes that are approached top-down and in sequences. It has also been shown that employee involvement in the planning of the change is lower in programmed change than in adaptive change. Therefore, communication activities intended to create understanding and acceptance are even more important in programmed change because the first time that recipients hear about the change is often shortly before its introduction. The term planned change will be used throughout the remainder of this thesis, instead of a long phrase that incorporates the definition of the change along all seven dimensions, because the main characteristic of the three changes analysed in this study are that the change is planned at the top and that few employees are involved in its planning.

Throughout the last three sections it has become evident that the nature of the macro-process of planned change and the likely distribution of roles lead to the problem that the majority of employees cannot participate in the planning of the change. In the absence of participation as a main determinant of recipients' understanding and acceptance of a change, the communication programme increases in relative importance. This emphasises the importance of designing an effective communication programme.

3 Design of a communication programme

3.1 Introduction

Although every organisation and every change is different, it is argued that the adoption of a coordinated approach to the design and management of communication can help to avoid costly mistakes and increase the chances of success (for example, Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; MasterMedia, 2000). This chapter first presents the communication model used as the basis for this thesis and then discusses the role of informal communication. The first step in the design of the communication programme is to be clear about its aims. Next the general principles that should be considered when designing communication activities are discussed. The following sections discuss the options available for each component of the communication process, as defined in Section 3.2, and critically review the existing understanding of which option to choose and why. This knowledge provides the basis for the discussion of the benefits and limitations of different communication activities. The last section specifies the gap in previous work that was addressed in the empirical study.

The discussion in this chapter is based on the academic research-based literature as well as on the prescriptive practice-oriented literature. Drawing on both types of literature is necessary because the prescriptive literature is helpful with regard to issues that are hardly covered by the research-based literature. A distinction between the two types of literature is made where necessary, in particular, when an idea is based mainly on prescriptive work.

3.2 The process of communication

One of the earliest communication models was proposed by Shannon and Weaver (1949) who described the process of communication: some source sends a message through some channel to some receiver. Although there is agreement in the literature (for example, Baguley, 1994; Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997; Richmond and McCroskey, 1992; Staehle, 1991) that this model is too simplistic, because it does not reflect the

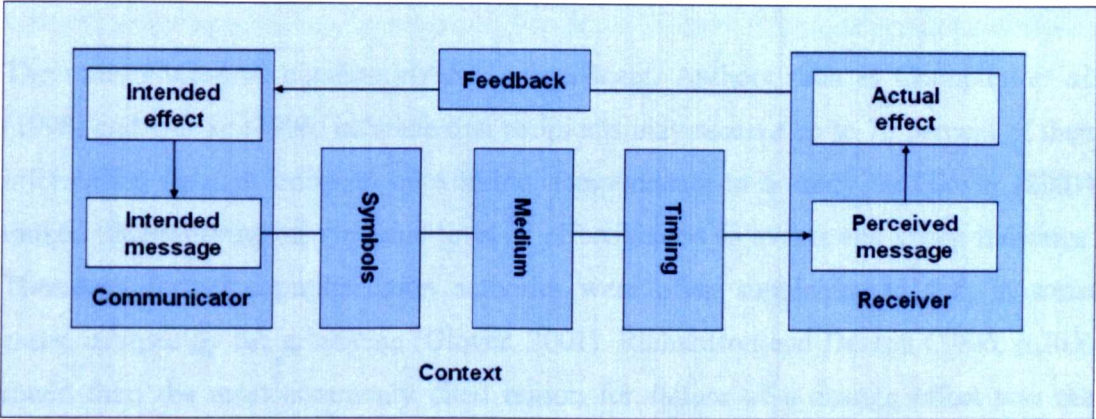
complexity of the communication process, the four elements have been agreed upon by most workers in the field and provide common ground for further communication research.

More sophisticated communication models (for example, Richmond and McCroskey, 1992; Staehle, 1991) include a feedback loop and emphasise that oral and written messages are composed of symbols that communicators consider appropriate for conveying the intended message. The use of symbols is necessary because recipients cannot directly assess communicators' thoughts and feelings. The process by which the sender chooses symbols is usually called encoding and the process by which the recipient gives meaning to the symbols is usually called decoding (for example, Mohr, 1997). Familiarity with the symbols used is essential in order to ensure that communication takes place, but it does not guarantee that the perceived message equals the intended message because the recipient may give a different meaning to the symbols received (for example, Richmond and McCroskey, 1992).

Another element of the communication process is the context in which communication takes place. The context plays an important role in the communication process because it influences the decoding of symbols and, thereby, the perceived message (for example, Koller, 1990; Watzlawick *et al.*, 1972). Furthermore, communication is often pursued with the intention to achieve a certain effect (for example, Baguley, 1994; Mohr, 1997). It could even be said that communication is 'the process by which an idea is transferred from a source to a receiver with the intention of changing his or her behaviour' (Rogers and Rogers, 1976, p.9). As communication is not always effective, there is not only an intended effect but also an actual effect, which is an additional element of the communication process.

The term communicator is used instead of the term source in order to emphasise that feedback is an integral element of the communication process (Broadfield, 1997; Mast, 2002a). The term medium is used in this thesis instead of the term channel because the term channel implies that communication is understood in terms of the conduit metaphor which ignores the importance of the coding and decoding of the symbols used (Axley, 2000; Krippendorff, 1993). Figure 3.1 illustrates the relation between these elements and thereby provides the communication model used in this thesis.

Figure 3.1: Communication model used in this thesis



For the purpose of this thesis, communication is defined as the exchange of symbols between communicator(s) and receiver(s) with the intention to convey the intended meaning and to stimulate a certain response from the receiver. Giving feedback can be considered a communication process in itself. The former receiver becomes the communicator and conveys a message in order to stimulate a response from the former communicator who has become the receiver.

3.3 The role of informal communication

Organisations have a formal and an informal communication system (Mohr, 1997; Poole, 1997). Formal communication is ‘concerned with the flow of information through the authorised channels in the organisation’ (Gallagher *et al.*, 1997, p.584), including supervisory relationships, work groups, permanent and ad hoc committees and management information systems (Poole, 1997; Richmond and McCroskey, 1992). Informal communication is ‘concerned with the flow of information outside the authorised channels in the organisation’ (Gallagher *et al.*, 1997, p.584). The informal communication system is also often referred to as the ‘grapevine’ or ‘the rumour mill’. A rumour can be defined as ‘an unverified statement about an issue of current interest to people’ (Bordia *et al.*, 2000, p.2309). Although the focus of this thesis is on the design of the formal communication programme, informal communication needs to be

considered as well because it influences the effect of formal communication activities (for example, Brehm, 2002; Glover, 2001; Lewis, 1999; Smeltzer, 1991).

The role of informal communication is significant. Authors such as Crampton *et al.* (1998) and Quirke (1996) estimate that recipients may receive up to 70 percent of their information through informal networking. Respondents in a study by Glover (2001) ranked the grapevine on the same level of effectiveness as events and group meetings. Therefore, formal communication activities were often supplemented and, in some cases, usurped by the grapevine (Glover, 2001). Richardson and Denton (1996, p.203) found that 'the most commonly cited reason for failure of a change effort was the presence of inaccurate and negative rumors'.

Informal communication fills the information vacuum when formal communication fails to reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that typically accompanies organisational change (Brimm and Murdock, 1998; DiFonzo *et al.*, 1994; DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Glover, 2001; Mohr, 1997). It provides explanatory control – why something may be happening – and predictive control – what may be happening in the future (Walker and Blaine, 1991). Furthermore, recipients are likely to use informal communication even if formal communication activities provide the desired information because informal networks are a natural consequence of people interacting (Crampton *et al.*, 1998; Davis, 1979; Weick, 2001).

A limitation of informal communication is that it may not reach all employees within an organisation. Distribution through the grapevine is uneven and certain (groups of) individuals may be left out of the circuit (Maude, 1977). Another limitation is that rumours are not an effective means of reducing uncertainty and anxiety because they tend to focus on negative and often inaccurate information (Axley, 2000; Glover, 2001; Schweiger and Denisi, 1991). Furthermore, even if informal information is accurate, recipients cannot know whether the information is accurate. Therefore, recipients are likely to be sceptical about the ability of the informal communication system to relay reliable information and prefer receiving information from formal sources (for example, Glover, 2001; Young and Post, 1993).

For the purpose of this thesis, informal communication is considered a contextual factor insofar as it influences recipients' perceptions of formal communication activities and it is considered an effect insofar as its use is triggered by recipients' perceptions of formal communication activities.

3.4 Aims of the communication programme

The first step towards an effective communication programme is to be clear about the intended effect. The clearer the definition of the communication aims, the higher the likelihood of success (Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; Mercer, 2000). There is agreement in the literature that the overarching aim of the communication programme should be influencing recipients' behaviour (Klein, 1996; Lewis, 2000a; Mohr, 1997; Quirke, 1996). Specific aims are important because different communication activities are appropriate to achieve different aims (Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996). More than twenty specific aims could be identified from the research-based literature and even more aims are available in the prescriptive literature. These include, for example, to encourage higher performance (Barrett, 2002), increase a sense of stability (Eadie, 1997), address recipients' concerns and forestall complaints (Lewis *et al.*, 2001), help employees understand the change (Mercer, 2000), maintain performance during the change (Clampitt *et al.*, 2002), increase willingness to change (Lewis, 1999) and provide identity (Gill, 1996). There appears, however, little detailed discussion of the relationships between different aims. This is problematic because achieving certain aims is a prerequisite for achieving other aims and, therefore, the relationships between different aims need to be understood. For example, understanding increases the likelihood of acceptance (Scott-Jackson, 1999; Streich *et al.*, 1997) and uncertainty is likely to trigger anxiety (Lundberg and Young, 2001). Drawing on the literature on organisational change and communication as well as theories and concepts from psychology, this section develops a structure of communication aims that serves as the broad framework for this study.

As the overarching aim should be influencing recipients' behaviour, an appropriate first step towards the definition of specific communication aims is considering the

determinants of human behaviour. A distinction can be made between situational factors, which can be divided into social norms (such as the way certain things are usually done in an organisation) and material context (such as the availability of a room for a meeting), and individual factors, which can be divided into intention to perform the behaviour and the ability to perform the behaviour (Ajzen, 2001; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Rosenstiel, 1997). Situational factors, by definition, define the context in which the communication takes place and the ability to perform the behaviour is usually influenced by training activities (for example, Streich, 1997). The factor that is most likely to be influenced by communication activities is the intention to perform the behaviour. Furthermore, the intention to perform the behaviour is a critical factor in the context of organisational change because a lack of willingness to adopt the desired behaviour is argued to be a main reason for the low success rate of organisational change efforts (for example, Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Streich, 1997).

An appropriate way to look at intention and its determinants in detail is the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, 2001; Conner and Armitage, 1998). It postulates three conceptually independent determinants of recipients' intention to adopt certain behaviour. The attitude towards the behaviour refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question. Subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour. Perceived behavioural control, which is closely related to the concept of perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1997), refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour. As a general rule, the more favourable the attitude and the subjective norm with respect to behaviour and the greater the perceived behavioural control, the stronger should be an individual's intention to perform the behaviour under consideration (Ajzen, 2001). Important regarding the definition of communication aims is that the 'perception of behavioural control, attitude toward the behaviour and subjective norm each reveals a different aspect of the behaviour, and each can serve as a point of attack in attempts to change the behaviour' (Ajzen, 1991, p.206).

The concept of attitude deserves more detailed attention because several theories in social psychology (for a comprehensive overview, see Frey and Irle, 2002) support claims made in the change management literature (for example, Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997) that attitudes are an important determinant of the behaviour that recipients adopt

in response to the change. For the purpose of this study, an attitude is understood as 'a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor' (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998, p.269). According to the tripartite view of attitudes (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998), attitudes can be structured along three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and intentional. The cognitive dimension refers to an individual's belief about the attitude object. 'Beliefs express positive or negative evaluation of greater or lesser extremity, and occasionally are exactly neutral in their evaluative content' (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998, p.271). The emotional dimension refers to an individual's feelings in response to an attitude object. Eagly and Chaiken (1998, p.272) define this dimension as 'the feelings, moods, emotions, and sympathetic nervous-system activity that people have experienced in relation to an attitude object and subsequently associate with it'. The intentional dimension reflects an individual's evaluations of an attitude object that are based on past behaviours and future intentions. The existence of three dimensions of an attitude suggests that three important communication aims are to address recipients' thoughts, feelings and intentions.

Whereas the theories and concepts discussed above are relevant for any behaviour, other concepts focus on the determinants of the behaviour adopted during organisational change. Resistance to change, for example, has long been recognised as a critically important factor that can influence the success or failure of an organisational change effort (for example, Die Akademie, 1999; Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Nadler, 1992; Scott-Jackson, 1999; Waddell and Sohal, 1998). Consequently, the reduction of resistance is frequently mentioned as a communication aim (for example, Axley, 2000; Lewis *et al.*, 2001; Mast, 2002a). Zaltman and Duncan (1977, p.63) defined resistance as 'any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo'. More recently, Brower and Abolafia (1995) defined resistance as a particular kind of action or inaction and Ashforth and Mael (1998) defined resistance as intentional acts of commission (defiance) or omission. The difficulty with the concept of resistance is that managers and academics alike have frequently presented a too simplistic view of resistance to change and that resistance has come to include 'anything and everything that workers do which managers do not want them to do, and that workers do not do that managers wish them to do' (Davidson, 1994, p.94).

For the purpose of this thesis, it is important to recognise that resistance to change has been conceptualised along three dimensions: behaviour, cognitive state and emotional state. The conceptualisation of resistance as behaviour, which has already been implied in the definitions above, began with the work of Coch and French (1948) who focused on the undesirable behaviour of workers in response to management-imposed changes. The idea that resistance can be overcome cognitively suggests that it includes a component of negative thoughts about the change or a lack of understanding of the change (for example, Ford and Ford, 1995; Piderit, 2000). Axley (2000) considers the accuracy of recipients' understanding of the change as so important that he only differentiates between an inaccurate understanding of the change and other reasons for resistance. The notion that individuals' resistance is based on rational examination of the possible implications of the change is also echoed in attribution models (for example, Fiske and Taylor, 1984; Heider, 1958; Kelley and Michaela, 1980; Martinko and Thomson, 1998), the supposition of which is that individuals look for realistic and logical explanations of events and base their feelings and behaviour on these causal explanations. With regard to the emotional dimension of resistance, Diamond (1986) pointed out that the underlying nature of resistance is portrayed as highly emotional and Vince and Broussine (1996) found that managers' responses to changes in structure were often very emotional. The existence of these three dimensions supports the claim that preventing undesired and activating desired behaviour should be the overarching aim of the communication programme and that two specific communication aims should be addressing the cognitive and affective states responsible for not showing the desired behaviour.

Whereas the concept of resistance to change addresses negative reactions to change, other concepts deal with positive thoughts, emotions and/or behaviour. These concepts are as important as the concept of resistance to change because successful organisational change also requires generating employee support and enthusiasm (Piderit, 2000). One of these concepts is readiness for change, which can be defined as the cognitive precursor of the behaviour adopted in response to the change (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993, Armenakis and Harris, 2001; Beckhard and Harris, 1987). Two concepts closely related to readiness for change are willingness to change (Lewis, 1999; Miller *et al.*, 1994; Streich, 1997) and acceptance of change (for example, Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Carnall, 2003; Ford and Ford, 1995; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Leiter and Harvie, 1998;

Reger *et al.*, 1994; Sillince *et al.*, 2001). Bungard and Niethammer (2003) argue that, from a psychological perspective, employees' acceptance of the change and their willingness to change is central during organisational change efforts. Another helpful concept is receptivity to change (Huy, 1999) because it addresses more clearly the role of emotions in determining the behaviour recipients adopt in response to a change. According to Huy (1999), individuals go through a two-stage appraisal process. Through primary appraisal individuals evaluate the significance of a new event for their own well-being. Through secondary appraisal individuals evaluate their own resources and capability for dealing with the stressor. Primary appraisal determines the extent to which an individual is receptive to change, whereas secondary appraisal determines the extent to which the individual mobilises for change. Huy (1999) argues that receptivity to change can be characterized by varying gradations of willingness to accept a proposed change and, therefore, represents 'the alter ego' to resistance to change. These concepts support the claim that a communication programme needs to address recipients' cognitions and affects because both influence the behaviour that recipients adopt during the change.

In order to illustrate the relationships between understanding, acceptance and behaviour, Buchholz (2002) adjusted the work of Rogers (1995) on the diffusion of innovations to the context of organisational change (Figure 3.2). Previous work on the micro-process of change (Beckhard and Harris, 1987; Broadfield, 1997; Lewin, 1947) supports the relationships between these factors.

Source: Adapted from Buchholz (2002, p.6)

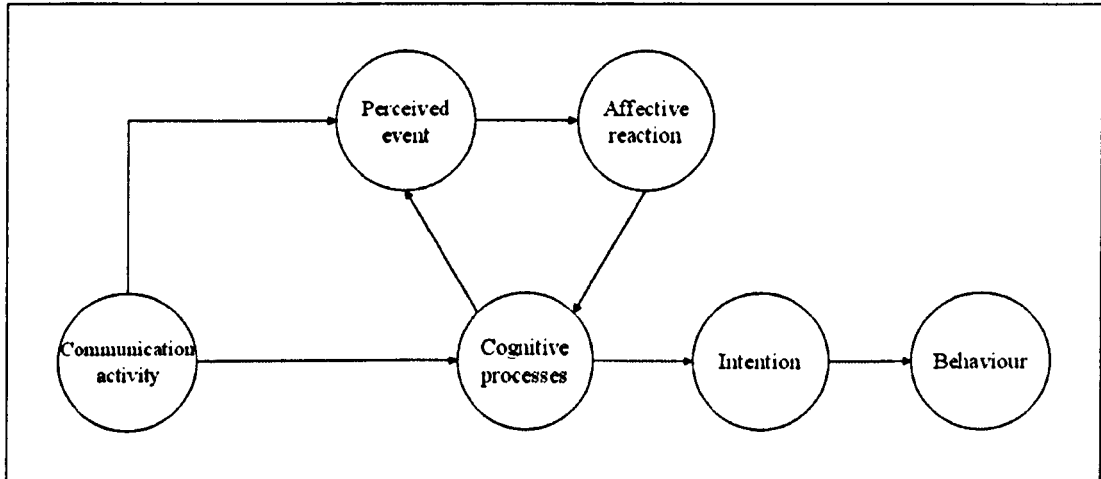
This model is a first step towards a structure of communication aims but the emotional dimension, in particular, has not been considered in sufficient depth yet. Several authors (Carr, 2001; Cox, 1997; Kiefer, 2002) complain that emotions are hardly written about

in the context of organisational change. A first challenge with regard to the role of emotions during organisational change is that even a cursory examination of the scattered but growing literature on emotions in work settings reveals an enormous definitional confusion (Fineman, 2000; Lundberg and Young, 2001; Plutchik, 1994). The terms feeling, affect, emotion, emotionality and mood, for example, are defined inconsistently and often used loosely if not synonymously. Sometimes these terms are seen as antecedents, sometimes as consequences. They may be associated with general or specific stimuli. They sometimes refer to internal traits, sometimes to states. In short, the basic terminology of emotions is notably confusing. For the purpose of this thesis, emotion is used as the umbrella term and refers broadly to 'all subjectively experienced orgasmic arousal' (Lundberg and Young, 2001, p.531). The terms affective reactions and mood are used to refer to two more specific phenomena. Affective reactions are considered to vary from weak to strong in intensity, are relatively short in persistence and have particular stimuli. Moods, in contrast, are considered as less intense, typically of longer duration and diffuse in that they are not associated with anything in particular (Frijda, 1993; Lundberg and Young, 2001; Salovey and Mayer, 1990).

A second challenge with regard to the role of emotions during organisational change is a lack of understanding of how emotions and cognitive processes relate to each other. One view is, and 'common sense tells us' (Lundberg and Young, 2001, p.532), that emotions are triggered by thoughts reactively. This view neglects the influence of emotions on thoughts. Another view is that the generic process of how emotions relate to observable behaviour begins with a perceived event, which then triggers an affective reaction (Goleman, 1995; Lazarus, 1991; Lundberg and Young, 2001). These affective reactions are heightened or dampened by a strong mood. Affective reactions primarily, and moods more distally, are considered to have an impact on cognitive processes such as attention, judgement, reasoning, analysis, decision making and the like (Goleman, 1995; Kiefer *et al.*, 2001; Schein, 1999). The cognitive processes, influenced by affective reactions and moods, then result in social behaviour. This view neglects the influence of thoughts on emotions. A third view is a combination of the first two views. Kiefer (2002), for example, argues in favour of 'viewing emotion and cognition as an interwoven process' (p.5) and Lundberg and Young (2001) and Goleman (1995), though tending towards the second view, admit that the perceived event already includes one's own thoughts. The third view is the most appropriate framework for this

study because it considers the influence of emotions on cognition as well as the influence of cognition on emotions (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Relationship between emotions, cognition and behaviour



A third challenge with regard to the role of emotions during organisational change is to identify likely emotional reactions to change in order to be able to define specific communication aims. Much previous work focused on negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, frustration or disappointment (for example, Lundberg and Young, 2001; Mirvis, 1985; Orgland, 1997). The model of Lundberg and Young (2001) is particularly helpful because it links perceived circumstances to specific affective reactions (Table 3.1).

Lundberg and Young's model implies that specific communication aims should be preventing the four negative circumstances and addressing the affective reactions triggered by the perception of these circumstances. The importance of addressing uncertainty and anxiety, in particular, is supported by many authors in the field (for example, Clampitt *et al.*, 2002; DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Kitchen and Daly, 2002; Lewis, 1999). Additional input regarding the existence of typical negative emotions is provided by authors who applied the work of Kubler-Ross (1969) on death and personal loss to the context of organisational change (Barger and Kirby, 1995; Bridges, 2002; Carnall, 2003; Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001; Streich, 1997; Tannenbaum and Hanna, 1985). These authors claim that denial is a natural reaction to any change and that denial is often followed by anger, panic, depression and acceptance.

The limitation of these models is the lack of empirical evidence in the context of organisational change. Therefore, Kiefer and her colleagues (Kiefer *et al.*, 2001; Kiefer, 2002, p.6) warn that 'it is necessary not to fall into the trap of applying stereotype assumptions and heuristics about the role of emotions during change'. Furthermore, the single-sided focus on negative emotions has recently come under severe criticism by authors who claim that people can experience a range of positive and negative emotions during organisational change (Cox, 1997; Kiefer, 2002). These authors argue that, instead of considering emotions as unwanted, undesirable or dysfunctional reactions to change, emotions are best viewed as part of the individual experience of change because human experience is widely characterised by emotion. Eadie (1997, p.55) argues that emotions have a lot to do with positive energy and commitment and Kiefer (2002) argues that supporting and enabling positive experiences such as happiness, joy or satisfaction is important because positive emotions can positively influence the processing of information about the change.

The importance of addressing recipients' emotions is also reflected in the variety of relevant aims put forward in the literature. In the academic literature these are, for example, 'address negative emotions' (Dotzler, 1997), 'increase positive emotions' (Mast, 2002a) and 'reduce anxiety' (Smeltzer, 1991). In the practice-oriented literature relevant aims are, for example, 'make recipients' feel safe' (Pfannenberger, 2001), 'create a sense of security' (Eadie, 1997) and 'mitigate fear' (Axley, 2000; Knorr, 1993). The importance of influencing recipients' perceptions of the circumstances is reflected in

both types of literature. Relevant aims are, for example, 'reduce uncertainty' (Mast, 2002a), 'reduce the perceived risk' (Lewis, 1999) and 'reduce confusion' (Lippitt, 1997; Kitchen and Daly, 2002).

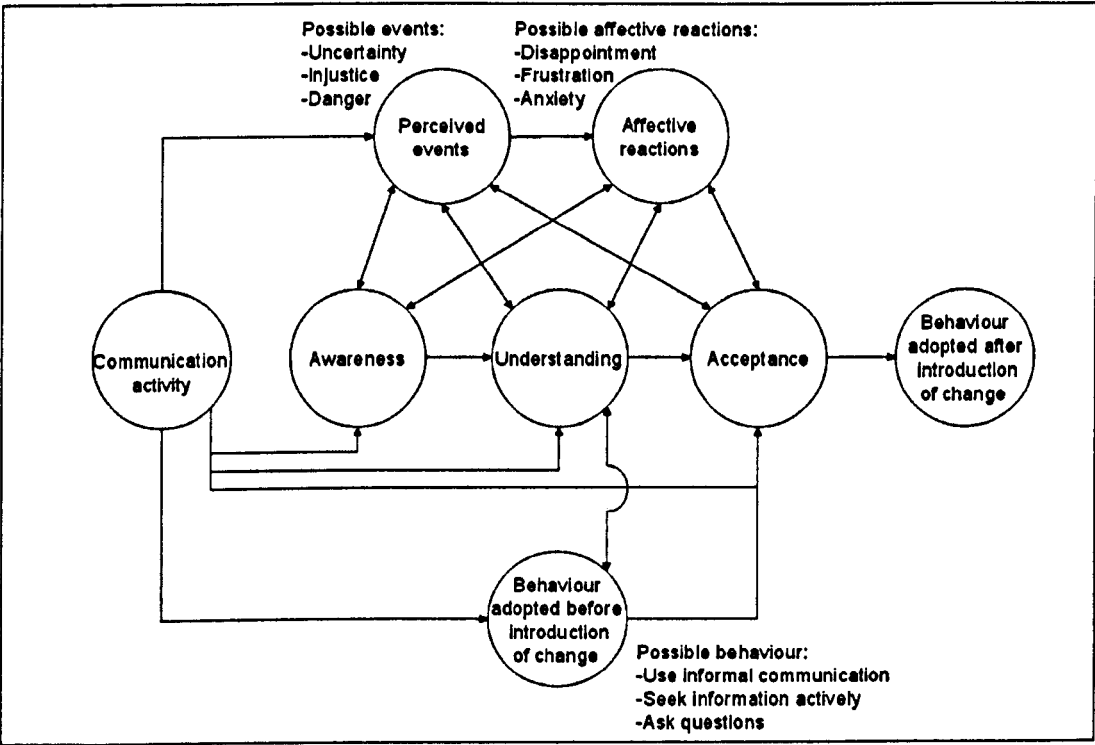
A next step towards the definition of specific communication aims is implied in the work of authors (Klein, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2003) who argue that different aims may be appropriate at different phases of the macro-process of change. As this research focused on communication between the announcement of a change and its introduction, it was important to define which aims should be achieved before the introduction of the change. It is obvious that a change in behaviour cannot take place before the introduction of the change because adoption of the desired behaviour requires the existence of the new structure, processes and/or technology. But the creation of understanding and acceptance could take place before the introduction of the change because it is influenced mainly by the communication about the change (for example, Mast, 2002a; Reger *et al.*, 1994). As understanding and acceptance are important determinants of the behaviour recipients adopt after the introduction of the change, implementers should try to create understanding and acceptance even before the introduction of the change. The more accurate the understanding and the higher the level of acceptance, the more likely it is that the desired behaviour can be mobilised after the introduction of the change (for example, Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Huy, 1999). It has been outlined earlier in this section that emotions need to be addressed throughout the change process.

So far, only the behaviour that recipients adopt after the introduction of the change has been considered and other factors (such as understanding or uncertainty) have been considered as determinants of this behaviour. But the communication aims put forward in the literature include aims such as 'make recipients seek information actively' (Buchholz, 2002) and 'ensure performance during the change' (Clampitt *et al.*, 2002). This suggests that influencing the behaviour that recipients adopt between the announcement of the change and its introduction should also be a communication aim. There appears to be little discussion, however, with regard to the relationships between certain behaviour (such as using informal communication or asking questions) and other factors. This is insufficient because a prerequisite for the development of a structure of communication aims is, for example, understanding how the asking of questions may

relate to the accuracy of recipients’ understanding of the change and how not answering recipients’ questions may relate to negative affective reactions such as anxiety.

In a last step, the existing understanding of the relationships between different aims (outlined in Figures 3.2 and 3.3) can be combined with the existing understanding of specific behaviour, affective reactions and perceived events. This leads to a structure of communication aims that serves as a broad framework for the empirical study conducted as part of this research. It has been demonstrated that the aims and the relationships between different aims included in Figure 3.4 are supported by the literature on organisational change and communication as well as by different theories from social and cognitive psychology.

Figure 3.4: Structure of communication aims used as broad framework for this study



The unanswered question, however, is how certain specific behaviour, affective reactions and perceived events relate to each other and how they relate to recipients’ awareness, understanding and acceptance of the change. Answering this question is important because it provides the basis for the choice and design of communication activities.

3.5 General principles of effective communication

The design of the communication programme should be based on 'a good grasp of some principles of communication' (Klein, 1994, p.30). The principles discussed in this section refer to steps in the design of the communication programme that should occur before the design of specific communication activities (such as the definition of target groups) or are relevant for all elements of a communication activity (such as situation-oriented communication). Principles that are only relevant for one element of a communication activity are discussed in the section on the respective element.

3.5.1 Target group-specific communication

Knowledge about the audience is considered a prerequisite for effective change communication (for example, Lewis, 1999; Lewis *et al.*, 2001; Quirke, 1996). Palmer and Fenner (1999, p.54) argue that 'a key feature of dissemination activities is to tailor the message and the choice of media to the target groups' needs and interests'. Hutchison (2001) elaborates that knowledge about the audience includes general tolerance for change, degree of agreement with the change initiative, need for information and preferred communication activities for receiving the information. Knowledge about the audience becomes even more important when the change is of major importance to the organisation and when the change is controversial (Lewis *et al.*, 2001), which is likely in anticipatory change because the need for change is not obvious. The challenge in addressing recipients' needs is that different (groups of) employees are likely to have different needs, partly because they are affected by the change in different ways at different times (Hutchison, 2001; Lewis *et al.*, 2001; Quirke, 1996). Therefore several authors (Hutchison, 2001; Lewis *et al.*, 2001; Quirke, 1996; Smeltzer, 1991; Smeltzer and Zener, 1992) suggest differentiating between different target groups.

Without knowledge about the target groups, it is difficult to provide the information that individuals need to fully understand the change and communication effectiveness will

depend on mere chance (Klein, 1996; O'Connor, 1990; Quirke, 1996). Tailoring messages to specific target groups does not mean, however, that contradictory messages can be sent to different target groups because it is possible that members of one target group also receive the message sent to another target group (Clutterbuck, 2001).

3.5.2 Situation-oriented communication

An important principle of effective change communication is to adjust communication activities to situational factors in general and to the stages of the macro-process and micro-process of change in particular (Buchholz, 2002; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002; Klein, 1996; Pfannenberger, 2001; Quirke, 1996). Situation-oriented communication is important because the communication behaviour of humans is situation-dependent (Armbrecht, 1992; Bland and Jackson, 1990; Zerfaß, 1996). Mohr (1997) concludes that, because of the importance of the situation, there can be no general suggestion about what and how to communicate apart from choosing the right alternative after carefully reflecting on the specifics of the situation (Mohr, 1997). However, several authors (Buchholz, 2002; Klein, 1996; Pfannenberger, 2001; Sillince, 1999) have still made suggestions about what and how to communicate at which stage in the change process. The common theme in all suggestions is that communication should begin with general information about the change and that communication should then increase in intensity through discussions and detailed reports about single aspects. Whereas these suggestions are explained on the basis of the general influence that the context of communication has on the reception of the message, empirical evidence apparently has not been provided.

3.5.3 Regular process control

The academic communication literature (Buchholz, 2002; Pfannenberger, 2001; Zerfass, 1996), the academic change management literature (Belmiro, 1997; Mohr, 1997) and the practitioner literature (Ahrens and Behrent, 1998; Hirschhorn, 2002; Mohr and Woehe, 1998) claim that regular process control, which is also referred to as *evaluation*, is another prerequisite for effective change communication.

The effectiveness of the company's communication needs to be measured company-wide formally and frequently against defined goals on an ongoing basis and throughout the key stages of any major change (Barrett, 2002, p.222).

Regular process control provides real-time data about recipients' understanding and acceptance of the change as well as other determinants that influence recipients' behaviour. This is a prerequisite for situation-oriented communication. Regular process control also provides the data needed to recognise deficits and potentials for optimisation regarding the communication activities used. Furthermore, it provides information about rumours travelling in the informal communication system. Quirke (1996) warns that a lack of process control leads not simply to resistance but to resistance based on misunderstandings that implementers are not aware of. Mohr (1997) argues that the challenge with regard to process control is not how to do it, because the issue is sufficiently covered in the literature (for example, Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2003), the challenge is to convince implementers to do it at all.

3.5.4 Dialogue

Dialogue between implementers and recipients – also referred to as *two-way communication* or *interactive communication* – is another important principle of effective change communication (Young and Post, 1993; Brehm, 2002; Glover, 2001; Klein, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996; Zerfaß, 1996). In organisational practice, however, the most common error in change communication still seems to be failing to ensure that communication is a two-way process (Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; Lewis, 1999). For the purpose of this thesis, dialogue is defined as a two-way, give-and-take between implementers and recipients that allows different voices to be expressed and listened to (Klein, 1996).

Dialogue addresses recipients' need to state opinions and to make suggestions (Buchholz, 2002; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002). Thereby dialogue taps into the emotional dimension (Mast, 2002a) and leads to positive perceptions of being cared about (Barger and Kirby, 1995). Similarly, Argyle and Henderson (1985) argue that

dialogue is important at a personal level for helping to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships as well as for its contribution to employee morale, well-being and job satisfaction. Quirke (2000) argues that dialogue is also an especially effective form of process control because recipients' questions and concerns can be addressed immediately, thereby reducing uncertainty and increasing understanding (Klein, 1996).

Two important issues which do not appear to have been fully explored with regard to dialogue during organisational change are how to create dialogue via different communication activities and how to prevent the potentially negative effect of an inappropriate use of dialogue. Gill (1996) found that recipients were disappointed when implementers did not respond to their feedback and Glover (2001, p.306) found that recipients were unsatisfied and disappointed when implementers' answers were 'politicians' answers'.

3.5.5 Believability of the information

There is agreement in the literature that believability of information is a necessary condition for its use but there is also agreement that ensuring believability is a big challenge because recipients may not trust the communicator, they may not believe the message content or they may consider the communication activity as inappropriate (Broadfield, 1997; Palmer and Fenner, 1999; Quirke, 1996; Smeltzer, 1991). Several authors (Kotter, 1995; Lippitt, 1997; Quirke, 1996) argue that, with growing frequency, employees interpret change messages for hidden meaning because, 'having gone through downsizing and outsourcing, employees are less likely than ever before to accept information from their companies at face value' (Lippitt, 1997, p.20). Recipients ask themselves why management should tell the truth this time. The problem is that, in the absence of believable information, employees are likely to stop listening to formal communication and use informal communication instead (Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999).

3.5.6 Consistency

Several authors suggest avoiding dissonances and ensuring consistency in order to increase the accuracy of recipients' understanding of the change (Armenakis and Harris, 2001; Knorr, 1993; Lippitt, 1997; Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997; Richardson and Denton, 1996; Young and Post, 1993). Dissonance between messages from different senior managers suggests high-level dissension and, therefore, fuels speculation that the change might be unsuccessful (Mohr, 1997). Furthermore, messages should be consistent over time. Otherwise, recipients are likely to become confused (Mast, 2002a). As everything has the potential to influence the perception of the message, actions even more than words, verbal and non-verbal messages should also be consistent (Richardson and Denton, 1996; Young and Post, 1993). Lippitt (1997) adds that inconsistency between words and deeds not only reduces the accuracy of current understanding but also affects the interpretations of future messages because the credibility of managers is likely to decrease.

3.5.7 Amount of information

There is no agreement in the literature with regard to the amount of information to be conveyed. Authors such as Caruth *et al.* (1995) and Townley (1994) argue in favour of conveying enough information because recipients need this information in order to be able to understand the change and because a lack of formal communication is likely to foster low morale, low trust and even pursuit of disparate goals. Authors such as Weick (2001) and Clampitt *et al.* (2000), on the contrary, argue that the problem is that there are too many meanings, not too few. They warn that implementers should not overload the system with too much information because it is likely to result in confusion and lack of focus and important information may not be received. The findings of Daly *et al.* (2003, p.160) suggest that the appropriate amount of information may depend on the prevalent management style.

Clampitt *et al.* (2000) identified five communication strategies that differ in the amount of information conveyed (Figure 3.5) and argue that the 'underscore and explore' strategy is likely to be most effective. Implementers should focus on several

fundamental issues that are most clearly linked to organisational success and allow employees the freedom to explore the implications of those ideas in a disciplined way. In addition, implementers should actively and attentively listen for potential misunderstandings and unrecognised obstacles.

Source: Clampitt *et al.* (2000, p.48)

3.6 Intended message

There is agreement in the literature that key messages should be defined for each change project in order to specify what information each recipient should have received by the introduction of the change (for example, Axley, 2000; Day and Jung, 2000; Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997). There is also agreement that implementers should communicate why the change is needed, what will change, who will be affected, how the change will proceed and when changes will occur. A more detailed discussion is necessary, however, in order to be able to understand the challenges in defining the messages to be conveyed.

3.6.1 Individual impact of the change

It is widely accepted that implementers should explain how the change impacts the roles, responsibilities, tasks and career opportunities of the individual employee (Brehm, 2002; Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a; O'Connor, 1990; Pfannenberger, 2001; Quirke, 1999; Richardson and Denton, 1996). Therefore, changes in the organisation should be translated into implications for each plant, job and employee. Young and Post (1993, p.41) state 'That's the only way you can get support'. Whereas information about the individual impact of the change is likely to increase understanding and acceptance (Pfannenberger, 2003; Rogers, 1995), a lack of understanding of the individual impact of the change is likely to trigger uncertainty and anxiety (Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a) and cause low acceptance (Quirke, 2000). Furthermore, information that directly affects an individual's job territory is better attended to and better retained (Klein, 1996), whereas information about the organisation in general tends to be forgotten more easily or is not even registered at the outset.

Two important aspects of the impact of the change are the benefit of the change and potential risks. The benefit of the change should be communicated because recipients are unlikely to support a change that they do not perceive as beneficial (for example, Quirke, 2000; Mast, 2002a). Without explicitly addressing the benefit of the change, recipients will view the change as an unfair violation of their actual or implicit contract with the organisation (Quirke, 1996). But previous work rarely makes clear that it is not the objective benefit that matters but the subjectively perceived benefit (Mohr, 1997; Rogers, 1995) and that the message should, therefore, be formulated in a way that makes recipients perceive their own interests as considered (Quirke, 1999).

Potential difficulties of the change should also not be played down because communicating challenges and negative aspects increases the believability of the message (Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2001; Quirke, 1996). Larkin and Larkin (1996) argue that uncertainty is even more painful than bad news and Young and Post (1993, p.39) found that, 'when bad news is candidly reported, an environment is created in which good news is more believable'. It needs to be mentioned, however, that the effect of communicating realistic information is mediated by the nature of the relation between implementers and recipients. Glover (2001) found that a lack of trust made recipients

suspect that the intention of implementers' focus on negative information was to create a climate of insecurity so that the employees would be more compliant with implementers' wishes. Similarly suspicious recipients in a study by Quirke (1996) observed that 'management starts to talk about how hard life is just before the annual salary reviews' (p.79).

3.6.2 Background information

Quirke (1996) argues that changes make more sense in context and that misunderstanding is almost inevitable if a formal context is not given because recipients then put information into their own context. The problem is, he argues, that recipients' own context is determined by their immediate concerns and that these immediate concerns often come from the need for security. Recipients ask, for example, whether their job is at risk. This focus prevents recipients from seeing the bigger picture. Therefore, the literature clearly argues that information about the impact of the change is not sufficient and that at least some background information needs to be conveyed (Armenakis and Harris, 2001; Gill, 1996; Mohr, 1997; Quirke, 1996).

The difficulty is that the context of a change includes many different factors. Several authors (for example, Nadler and Tushman, 1989; Quirke, 1996) suggest that the change should be linked clearly to the core strategic issues of the firm. The intended message should also include information about the relation of the current change to past changes and, if past changes failed, about why the current change is likely to be successful. This can prevent resistance because personal experiences with past changes influence recipients' perception of the risks involved in the current change (for example, Kotter, 1995; Quirke, 1996). Closely related to communication about past changes is communication about past approaches to change implementation. Townley (1994) argues that the move toward increased information is generally treated with suspicion when communication has been neglected in the past. In a study by Gill (1996) early communication did not increase recipients' understanding and acceptance because recipients perceived implementers' decision to communicate early and openly as an indicator that something negative such as job loss was about to come. Gill (1996) is convinced that the effect would have been different if implementers had communicated

the reasons for, and the benefits of, the new approach to implementation. Recipients' previous understanding of a general topic such as empowerment or total quality management is another contextual factor. Bartunek and Lacey (1992) argue that the details of the current change may be misinterpreted because recipients interpret them on the basis of their previous understanding of the general topic. They conclude that it is necessary to know about potential understandings of the topic and integrate them into the intended message. The vision of a quality improvement programme, for example, needs to define what is meant by quality (Lewis, 2000a). Another contextual factor is the situation in other organisations. Authors such as Armenakis and Harris (2001) and Quirke (1996) suggest undertaking a review of the dynamics in the industry and including a presentation of the benefits of a similar change in another organisation into the communication programme. Despite the existing understanding of these contextual factors and their effect on the communication process, the role of contextual factors is not sufficiently explored. There are likely to be other contextual factors, the role of which is not known yet.

3.6.3 Need for change

In a study by People in Business (1991) the most common reason given for the slow pace of change was that employees did not see the need for change and Young and Post (1993) found that employees have a need to know the rationale underlying management decisions, particularly if their future is uncertain. The danger in top-down change is that implementers think that the need for change is obvious, because they have spent a lot of time reviewing scenarios and weighing up alternative proposals (Barger and Kirby, 1995; Nadler and Tushman, 1989; Quirke, 1996), but for the majority of the people in the organisation the need for change often is not clear. Therefore, the intended message should include information about why the change is happening (Brehm, 2002; Brimm and Murdoch, 1998; Mohr, 1997; Mohr and Woehe, 1998; Quirke, 1996; Richardson and Denton, 1996; Young and Post, 1993).

Failure to explain the need for change is likely to have several negative effects. Firstly, without an understanding of the need for change, perceived urgency and acceptance are likely to be low (Covin and Kilman, 1990a; Klein, 1996; Quirke, 1996). Secondly,

recipients are unlikely to take personal risks, if the change is not perceived as urgent (Kotter, 1996). Furthermore, the forces that sustain the status quo are likely to remain high if the need for change is not explained (Klein, 1996). Finally, if implementers do not explain the need for change, people are likely to provide their own explanation and it is unlikely to be a positive one (Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Quirke, 1996).

There is agreement in the literature (Armenakis and Harris, 2001; Beer, 1988; Nadler and Tushman, 1989) that a good way to explain the need for change is showing the discrepancy between an organisation's current performance and the desired performance. Quirke (1996) found that, in organisational practice, there is a tendency to paint too bright a picture of tomorrow and contrast it with the dullness and mistakes of yesterday. Therefore, he warns that such statements imply that the organisation has been wrong in the past and is now about to put it right, which may lead to perceptions of injustice if the failures of the past are exaggerated in order to highlight the need for change. As discussed earlier, perceptions of injustice are likely to trigger negative emotions such as disappointment or anger. This warning is especially important when implementing anticipatory changes because the organisation's current performance is not necessarily low. The change is undertaken in order to prevent the reduction of the organisation's performance in the future (Quirke, 1996).

3.6.4 Vision and goals

Information about the goals of the change and the vision behind it is considered of utmost importance in the research-based literature (Barrett, 2002; Brimm and Murdock, 1998; Lewis, 2000a; Reger *et al.*, 1994; Young and Post, 1993) as well as in prescriptive work (Klein, 1994, 1996; Mohr and Woehe, 1998) because a vision can provide orientation, in particular, during the early stage of the change process. Armenakis and Harris (2001) specify that, in order to give orientation, a vision needs to be salient and that the level of salience depends on how the vision is articulated, whether management support for the vision is demonstrated and whether recipients perceive the vision as appropriate. But specific research evidence for this claim apparently has not been provided. If recipients do not understand the vision, it is

unlikely that they adopt the behaviour necessary to achieve the goals of the change effort (Quirke, 2000).

Klein (1996) elaborates on these claims and argues that communicating a vision is not sufficient because specific goals need to be communicated in order to ready recipients for the change. Similarly, a respondent in a study by Lewis (2000a, p.150) stated that 'philosophy is fine but we need to get into the nuts and bolts of quality', which means that it would have been important to discuss the specific goals of the intended quality improvement programme. Whereas the importance of goals has been discussed in the general management literature (for example, Gallagher *et al.*, 1997) and in the change management literature (for example, Burnes, 2004; Carnall, 2003), the change communication literature has widely neglected the questions of when and how to communicate about specific goals. The claim of Klein (1996) and the finding of Lewis (2000a) suggest exploring this issue further to identify the effects of communicating and not communicating specific goals.

3.6.5 Likelihood of success

Authors such as Armenakis and Harris (2001) and Kotter (1995) suggest not only communicating a vision but also explaining how the vision can be achieved. They explain that individuals are more likely to be motivated to attempt a change, if they have confidence that they can succeed. Armenakis and Harris (2001) specify that, if individuals do not have the confidence to embrace a new way of operating, an organisational change is difficult, at best. This claim is supported by the expectancy theory of motivation (for example, Vroom, 1964) and the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2001), according to which recipients' behaviour is determined by their anticipation of the consequences of the behaviour. Armenakis and Harris (2001) provide a good overview of how to convince recipients of the likelihood of success. They suggest, for example, using historical examples ('We succeeded at a similar change'), appealing to commitment ('I know we will do whatever it takes to succeed') and demonstrating confidence ('I trust you to succeed').

3.6.6 Process of making the decision

Quirke (1996) argues that, in order to accept the change, employees must understand how the need for change was identified, the alternatives that were considered and the basis on which conclusions were drawn. When the process of thinking is explained, recipients can see how they themselves might have reached the same conclusion. Dotzler (1997) found that communication about the process of making the decision increased loyalty because recipients felt they were involved in the change process. If implementers communicate only the decision, they prevent recipients from sharing their thought processes and from seeing why the conclusions make sense for the business (Quirke, 1996), which leads to the problem that recipients are unlikely to enact the change as desired. Similarly, Schweiger and Denisi (1991) found that people who are unhappy about the expected outcomes of the change will have less dissatisfaction if they understand the process of planning the change through open communication and see that it was fair.

3.7 Timing

There is agreement in the literature that communication should be timely. Timely communication prevents rumours (for example, Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Hutchinson, 2001; Jay and Smith, 1996; Klein, 1996; Richardson and Denton, 1996; Smeltzer, 1991). This is important because, once information is travelling around the informal communication system, it may be difficult to eliminate and management loses influence and credibility (Glover, 2001; Smeltzer, 1991). In a study by Smeltzer and Zener (1992), the official announcement became meaningless because of extensive unofficial messages. Furthermore, timely communication increases recipients' understanding of the change, thereby preventing uncertainty and anxiety. Finally, Hutchison (2001) argues that timely communication can be considered as evidence that the organisation trusts its employees, which is important when asking employees to undergo significant change.

There is also agreement in the literature that it is sometimes necessary to conceal certain information and that the decision to reveal or conceal is situation-dependent (Lewis, 1999; Schick, 2002; Sillince, 1999; Smeltzer and Zener, 1992). Many authors (Dotzler, 1997; Eisenberg and Witten, 1987; Ihrig, 1997; Lewis, 1999; Smeltzer and Zener, 1992) argue that one reason for remaining secretive is to further strategic aims or to maintain competitiveness. Negotiations about a merger, for example, are usually kept secret in order to prevent an increase in stock prices. Another widely accepted reason for not communicating early is when implementers do not yet have the information themselves. A third reason to withhold information, found Sillince (1999), is to enable the communicator to weave a more coherent message. But several authors (for example, DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Quirke, 2000; Schick, 2002; Smeltzer, 1991) warn that implementers should not wait until they have got the whole story together because the negative effects of late communication are likely to outweigh the positive effects of a more coherent message. Despite these claims, the issue has not been explored to the detailed level of when different types of information should be revealed or concealed.

Previous work (Armbrrecht, 1992; Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997; Pfannenberger, 2001; Quirke, 1996; Young and Post, 1993) also agrees on the importance of continuous communication. Human beings are only able to take in a small percentage of the information they receive (Armbrrecht, 1992; Mohr and Woehe, 1998). Continuous communication about a change overlaps communication about other issues and thereby increases the likelihood of an accurate understanding (Pfannenberger, 2001). If communication about a change is not continuous, recipients may take in information about other issues instead of information about the change. Furthermore, continuous communication creates an information-rich climate in which recipients are more likely to forgive occasional errors (Young and Post, 1993). Thirdly, continuous provision of relevant information can reduce the negative impact that major changes can have on organisational effectiveness because recipients are less emotionally and cognitively distracted (Eadie, 1997; Schweiger and Denise, 1991). In the absence of continuous formal communication, recipients tend to rely on informal communication (Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Quirke, 1996, 2000).

In order to ensure continuous communication, several authors (Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002; Quirke, 1996; Young and Post, 1993) argue that implementers should

communicate small events immediately. Young and Post (1993, p.41) explain that sometimes 'a steady hum' is more important than the message itself because a steady hum of information gives employees the idea that something is happening. This may require conveying holding statements such as 'discussions are continuing' (Young and Post, 1993, p.41).

Repeating key messages via different communication activities is a third suggestion with regard to timing (Bachrach and Aiken, 1987; Hutchison, 2001; Klein, 1996; Mohr, 1997; Pfannenberger, 2001; Smeltzer, 1991). In one of the organisations studied by Lewis (2000a), the frequency of exposure to vision statements and the prevalence of them in the workplace aided employees' understanding and internalisation of the values of the program. Similarly, Nadler and Tushman (1989) argue that, since individuals have a unique capacity for denial, multiple intense exposures may be necessary to create the required depth of emotional reaction. Furthermore, repetition of key messages contributes to achieving continuous communication (Quirke, 1996).

Another question with regard to timing is what to communicate when. Several authors (Armenakis and Harris, 2001; Klein, 1994, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2001, 2003) suggest adjusting the information to the stage of the micro-process of change developed by Lewin (1947). During unfreezing, it is important to provide the rationale for the change and to explain the goals of the change, during changing it is necessary to provide detailed information about the progress of the change and communicate first achievements and during freezing it is important to celebrate success and to explain aspects of the change that recipients have not yet understood. Another frequent advice is to communicate general principles first and add details later (Quirke, 1996). The unanswered question is which communication activity to use and when in order to communicate these messages.

3.8 Communicator

It is accepted that the choice of the communicator influences the process of message transmission and thereby the perceived message (Axley, 2000; Klein, 1996; Larkin and Larkin, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Palmer and Fenner, 1999; Smeltzer, 1991; Young and Post, 1993). This section first discusses criteria for choosing a communicator and then reviews existing suggestions about which communicator to choose and why.

The communicators' trustworthiness is an important criterion because the credibility of the message is directly related to the credibility of the source of the message (Klein, 1996; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Smeltzer and Zener, 1992) and, as discussed above (3.5.6), believability of the message is a prerequisite for its use. Smeltzer and Zener (1992) found that, the more recipients trusted communicators, the less suspicion appeared and the more they believed in the purpose and rationale of the change. Broadfield (1997) argues that only a credible communicator can decrease negative emotions if the message is discomfoting.

The communicator's communication skills influence the effectiveness of the communication programme because change communication requires challenging tasks such as spreading enthusiasm or addressing recipients' emotions (Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997). Palmer and Fenner (1999) argue that poor presentation skills can damage the credibility and effectiveness of a dissemination strategy and Gill (1996) found that communication problems lay in the cascade process utilised, especially in the abilities of managers to effectively use this form of communication activity. Therefore, previous work (for example, Klein, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996; Young and Post, 1993) clearly argues that managers need to be trained in providing the required information and to answer most of the questions that are likely to be raised.

Communicators' understanding of, and support for, the change are also important criteria (for example, Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; Moore, 1996; Quirke, 1996). If communicators do not understand the change themselves, they will certainly have difficulties with conveying accurate messages to their employees, and it is very likely that communicators who do not support the change themselves are less willing to make

other recipients support the change. 'One of the major obstacles to successfully communicating change is the attitude of the communicator' (Quirke, 1996, p.91).

A fifth criterion is the relation between communicator and message (Axley, 2000; Klein, 1994, 1996; Young and Post, 1993). Axley (2000) argues that certain messages regarding change are too far-reaching in their implications to be initiated by anyone other than someone whose influence is equally far reaching and some messages about change are too local in their implications to be initiated by anyone other than someone local. Without alignment between the stature of message and messenger, messages acquire all kinds of unintentional and unfortunate interpretations such as 'Doesn't the VP have more important things to do than micro-manage our purchasing processes for office supplies?' or 'To think what we found out about downsizing from a first-line supervisor' (Axley, 2000, p.21).

Whereas the effect of fulfilling these criteria is explained well by theory and supported by empirical evidence, the existing understanding of how to compensate for partly fulfilled criteria is limited. For example, there appears little guidance on what to do if a communicator lacks communication skills, shows little support for the change or has an inadequate understanding of the change. Existing suggestions such as providing slide sets for presentations (Pfannenberger, 2003) or communicating directly with the employees affected by the change (Larkin and Larkin, 1994) may be appropriate but are not supported by empirical evidence.

Several reasons have been put forward as to why communication by senior managers is an important success factor in change communication (Barrett, 2002; Brimm and Murdock, 1998; Hutchison, 2001; Klein, 1996; Young and Post, 1993). Young and Post (1993) found that a CEO with a strong commitment to employee communication set a different tone for the rest of the company than one who considered communication nice but not necessary. Several authors (for example, Henry, 1997; Hutchison, 2001) argue that senior managers must be able to tell a compelling change story that the rest of the organisation understands and supports because they are best positioned to see and articulate the performance gap between what the organisation currently achieves versus what the organization needs to achieve in the future. Young and Post (1993) add that even first-rate communication staff cannot compensate for change strategists who are

unwilling to provide visible leadership. Furthermore, communication by senior managers not only sends the literal message but also the symbolic message that the change is important enough to take the time and resources necessary to communicate them directly (Armenakis and Harris, 2001). Although the importance of top-management support is widely accepted, some authors (Katzenbach, 1996; Larkin and Larkin, 1994, 1996; Saunders and Thornhill, 2004) argue that the role of senior management is often overemphasised and that senior, middle and first-line managers are all critical in a successful change effort.

Several authors (Katzenbach, 1996; Klein, 1996; Larkin and Larkin, 1994, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996) argue that direct supervisors on all hierarchical levels play an important role in influencing recipients' reactions to a change and authors such as Arndt and Deekeling (2000), Mohr (1997) or Young and Post (1993) provide empirical evidence that recipients prefer direct supervisors as the source of information during times of change. Several reasons for the importance of direct supervisors have been put forward. Klein (1996, p.36) explains that a line manager 'carries more organisational muscle than staff positions'. Katzenbach (1996, p.186) and Larkin and Larkin (1994) argue that supervisors are the most credible source because they 'speak the workers' language'. Fairhurst (1993) found that articulation of the vision of a planned change by senior management is not enough and that the vision has to be framed by lower-level supervisors. Lewis (2000a, p.152) adds that 'supervisors ... are best positioned to translate major change initiatives into everyday realities for employees'. However, academics (for example, Quirke, 1996) and consultants (for example, Mercer, 2000) warn that, without substantial support, most line managers will either mangle the message or not deliver it. There is likely to be a 'refractive layer' (Quirke, 1996, p.103) where information from above is modified or bent before being passed on and where information from below is similarly bent to fit before passing up.

A third important group of communicators, which is frequently discussed in the literature, are opinion leaders (Buchholz, 2002; Deekeling and Fiebig, 1999; Derieth, 1995; Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997; Mohr and Woehe, 1998; Rogers, 1995). Opinion leaders are individuals who lead in influencing others (Rogers, 1995). They are likely to vary from group to group, from topic to topic and probably from individual to individual (Moore, 1996; Palmer and Fenner, 1999). According to Klein (1994), the use

of opinion leaders comes from the literature on political processes and the formation of public opinion. It is also frequently used in marketing approaches and in the work of Rogers (1995) on the diffusion of innovations. The importance of opinion leaders is supported by social influence theory (Mittman *et al.*, 1992), according to which colleagues' judgement and beliefs play a major role in an individual's evaluation of new information. Several authors (Fairhurst, 1993; Klein, 1994, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Palmer and Fenner, 1999) state that the principles can be wholly transferred to organisations and put forward several reasons for integrating opinion leaders into the formal communication programme. Firstly, employees tend to model opinion leaders' behaviour during times of uncertainty (Buchholz, 2002; Mohr, 1997) because opinion leaders have collegial authority (Klein, 1994). Secondly, opinion leaders can greatly influence the other recipients' reactions to the change because opinion leaders are expected to evaluate information in the context of group norms (Mohr, 1997; Palmer and Fenner, 1999). Thirdly, the integration of opinion leaders increases the believability of a message because opinion leaders have a high reputation (Mast, 2002a).

Although the advantages of giving opinion leaders a formal role in the communication programme are explained, it appears as if two questions that have not been answered yet are how opinion leaders can be integrated into formal communication activities and what sorts of messages should be communicated by opinion leaders. Therefore, Palmer and Fenner (1999) suggest further research to determine if opinion leaders can be identified and in which circumstances they are likely to influence their peers' reactions to the change. A third question, which previous work does not appear to have covered yet, is how to prevent or compensate for the potentially negative effect of opinion leaders who do not support the change. This third question is particularly interesting in relation to those opinion leaders who are not intended to be given a formal role in the communication process but who emerge as informal opinion leaders.

In summary, the research-based and the prescriptive literature suggests that senior managers should address the broad issues such as the vision and the need for change and local managers should adjust information about the change to their group and discuss the impact of the change on their employees' job. The unanswered question is how to combine communication activities in a way to achieve this.

3.9 Medium

Several authors (Axley, 2000; Lengel and Daft, 1988; Smeltzer, 1991) argue that the choice of appropriate media is important because media differ markedly in their capacity to convey information. Therefore, media can enhance or distort the intended message (Axley, 2000; Buchholz, 2002; Lengel and Daft, 1988; Mast, 2002a). In order to guide communication planners' media choices, researchers (Lengel and Daft, 1988; Rogers and Rogers, 1976) have attempted to rank media in terms of the degree to which they allow direct personal contact, immediate feedback and a variety of personal cues. Often used as a basis for further investigation is the work of Lengel and Daft (1988, p.226) on media richness who categorised media as follows:

Face-to-face is the richest medium because it has the capacity for direct experience, multiple information cues, immediate feedback, and personal focus. Face-to-face discussions enable the assimilation of broad cues and deep, emotional understanding of the message. Telephone conversations and interactive electronic media provide rapid feedback, but lack the element of 'being there'. Eye contact, gaze, blush, head nods, posture and other body language cues are eliminated. Electronic media therefore fall short of the richness of face-to-face communication. Written media that are addressed, such as memos, notes, and reports, can be personally focused, but they convey limited cues and are slow in feedback. Impersonal written media (including fliers, bulletins, and standard computer reports) are the leanest, providing no personal cues, and not enabling feedback.

Axley (2000) adds the criteria speed and reach to those of Lengel and Daft (1988). For example, email and video conferencing are much faster than traditional physical bulletin boards and face-to-face is more limited in potential reach than email messages.

Previous work advocates face-to-face communication over the use of other media (Barrett, 2002; Buchholz, 2002; Katzenbach, 1996; Klein, 1996; Larkin and Larkin, 1996; Lewis, 1999; Mast, 2002a; MasterMedia, 2000; Mohr, 1997; Pfannenberger, 2001; Quirke, 1999, 2002; Young and Post, 1993). Smeltzer (1991) even argues that it would be ideal if all big changes were communicated by means of one-to-one communication that was face-to-face. A benefit of face-to-face communication is its influence on recipients' emotions (Klein, 1996). Emotions can be conveyed more easily via personal

communication because non-verbal cues can be used whereas too much information gets lost in print and electronic communication (Mast, 2002a). Quirke (1996) argues that direct contact between implementers and recipients creates familiarity and familiarity creates good relationships and trust. Furthermore, Bernecker and Reiss (2003) argue that face-to-face communication is likely to trigger feelings of being important because recipients see that managers take their time for recipients. Another benefit of face-to-face communication is its contribution to dialogue because recipients' questions can be answered and their concerns can be addressed immediately, which is likely to reduce uncertainty (Lewis, 1999; Mast, 2002a; Mikeleit, 2000; Quirke, 1999; Smeltzer, 1991).

The importance of face-to-face communication, however, does not obviate the need for other communication efforts (Bland and Jackson, 1990; Larkin and Larkin, 1994; Lukas, 1996; Young and Post, 1993). A benefit of print and electronic communication is their reach. It is possible to convey information to many employees at different locations (Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a). Another benefit is that the information is available any time. Quirke (1996) found that employees want information on demand, not when it suits the deliverer to send it, and that employees want to know that they can find certain information, even if they do not need it now. An additional benefit of electronic communication is the speed at which topical information can be conveyed to large audiences. Clampitt *et al.* (2000) argue that, during times of uncertainty, speed is sometimes more important than complete two-way communication. A key limitation of online and print communication is that it rarely provides an opportunity for ensuring the feedback and debate that is necessary for increasing understanding and acceptance (Quirke, 1996). Furthermore, many communication activities using print and online media are designed for consumption by a broad audience and, therefore, not tailored to specific target groups (Quirke, 1996). These limitations may be the reason why Dotzler (1997) found that written communication activities were perceived as less relevant than other activities and why Bernecker and Reiss (2003) argue that the use of electronic media is limited to a support function.

An important issue regarding the choice of the medium is the relation between medium and message. There is agreement in the literature that a communication programme is more likely to be successful when communication activities and message content fit

together compared to when there is a random pattern of disbursing information (Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Quirke, 1996; Smeltzer, 1991). Lengel and Daft (1988) argue that rich media should be used for complex and non-routine messages. This claim is supported by Smeltzer (1991) who found that messages about change having serious human implications could be alienating when delivered via communication activities perceived as impersonal and distant. Therefore, Quirke (2001) suggests communicating the need for change and the vision face-to-face. But there are few suggestions available that specify this claim and empirical evidence (Broadfield, 1997; Lewis, 2000a) contradicts the general applicability of this claim. Broadfield (1997) found that a new vision (complex message) could well be conveyed effectively via media low in richness (written communication). In a study by Lewis (2000a), employees internalised new values, although the mission statement was only displayed in offices, meeting rooms and on blackboards.

Because of this gap in the literature, Lewis (1999) suggests further research on whether different content should be communicated via different media and why. The most important question that has not been addressed in sufficient depth yet, however, is how to combine communication activities so that different media are used at different points in time in order to communicate certain messages or to achieve certain aims.

3.10 Potential communication activities

This section discusses the benefits and limitations of different communication activities as well as existing suggestions on which communication activities to use and how to combine them. As each communication activity can be defined along the elements of the communication process, this section draws on the discussion of the options available for the elements intended message, timing, communicator and medium which have been discussed in the previous sections. Following the advice of authors such as Lewis (1999) and Mast (2002a), the discussion of the different communication activities is structured according to whether the communication activity uses the medium face-to-face, electronic or print (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Overview of communication activities available

Category	Examples
Face-to-face	Workshop, discussion, forum, road show, information market, presentations, events, information point, information stand, business theatre, business simulations, management cascade, departmental meetings, focus groups, one-on-one meetings, town hall meeting, etc
Print	Bulletin board, cafeteria postings, newsletter, company publication, brochure, flyer, payslip inserts, handouts after events, letters, article in external publication, letter of CEO, project documentation, handbook, change booklet, fax, posters, memos, leaflets, etc
Electronic	Website (Intranet), discussion forum, live-chat, business TV and video-conferencing, email, email-newsletter, satellite broadcasting, videoconferencing, radio shows, voicemail, online project documentation, screensaver, live chat, video, film, frequently asked questions (FAQ), Intranet pop-ups, etc

Source: Developed from Change Management Learning Centre (2004, Table 1) and Mast (2002a)

Prescriptive work (for example, Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002; Quirke, 1999), in particular, considers the personal conversation between manager and immediate subordinate as the most important communication activity. In the academic literature, Mast (2002a) argues that personal conversations should be part of any communication programme because personal conversations provide exactly the information that the recipient requires and are particularly suited to reduce emotional stress. Cascading information down the hierarchy via group meetings is considered another important communication activity (Brimm and Murdock, 1998; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002; Klein, 1996; Mast, 2002a; Schmitt, 1999; Townley, 1994). A benefit of the management cascade is that, on each level, the information received can be supplemented by local information of more specific and/or immediate relevance to those being informed (Quirke, 1996; Townley, 1994). Mast (2002b) found that, after employees have learned about the basics of the change via intranet or presentations, they want additional information from their supervisors and they want to hear their supervisors' evaluation of the information provided in the intranet.

Despite the benefits of individual conversations and the management cascade, it needs to be recognised that their effectiveness depends on the respective manager. Managers

need to be willing and able to convey the relevant information. Even then, argues Quirke (1996), each successive layer of management tends to filter and distort the messages they pass on to the next, either consciously because managers assume that employees only want certain information or unconsciously because they are not familiar with the details themselves. A barrier to dialogue via the management cascade is the respective manager's attitude towards dialogue. Managers in a study by Belmiro (1997), for example, admitted that they liked to discuss the things they knew the answers to and avoided talking about those things they did not know. Therefore, both individual conversations and the management cascade need to be actively managed, if they are to be effective.

Large events are also frequently used during organisational change (Mast, 2002a). A benefit of events is the possibility to present the view of change strategists and to allow direct and immediate exchange between change strategists and recipients. Another benefit of large group meetings, argue authors such as Belmiro (1997) and Brimm and Murdoch (1998), is that all recipients receive the same message by the same person without any intermediates. Other benefits depend on the type of the event. For example, large group events offer the opportunity to mix recipients from different functions, hierarchical levels and locations. Quirke (1996) argues that the different viewpoints existing in a heterogeneous group help to avoid the monolithic common group view that prevents accurate understanding because recipients are more likely to accept corroborating evidence from each other rather than from a manager. Furthermore, events offer the possibility of dialogue between implementers and recipients, which is important, because discussions of issues that are of personal interest to employees influence their attitude towards the change (Grasse, 1999; Quirke, 1996; Spiker and Lesser, 1995; Townley, 1994). Mast (2002a) argues that dialogue is most likely during personal conversations, it is high in well-led meetings and it tends to be zero during presentations. Although dialogue is important, the lack of possibility of dialogue at certain types of meetings does not mean that these events are not effective. Grasse (1999), for example, reports that in the organisation he studied the most effective communication activity was a series of town meetings because in-depth information about the new roles and work habits were conveyed. A benefit of road shows – a series of events at different locations – is that they offer access to specific information about

the change for managers and employees at peripheral locations (Schnöller and Tasch, 2001).

A general limitation of events, argues Quirke (1996), is the low ability to address individual recipients' concerns. Although this is mainly true for events that do not offer the possibility of dialogue, several authors (Belmiro, 1997; Belmiro *et al.*, 2000; Glover, 2001; Quirke, 1996) argue that many employees feel unable to ask questions in large meetings. Another limitation of events is the relatively long planning process, which is why they are inappropriate to address topical events. However, because of their benefits, several authors (Bernecker and Reiss, 2003; Brimm and Murdock, 1998; Klein, 1996; Quirke, 1996; Richardson and Denton, 1996) recommend using events in the communication process, in particular, to 'kick off' the communication process.

Many change projects include several written communication activities. Mast (2002a) argues that the company publication was frequently used to announce organisation-wide changes and to inform recipients about the progress of the change. As the development of information technologies offers alternative possibilities, Mast (2002a) continues to argue, communication programmes can be more effective if the focus of company publications shifts from providing topical information to providing background information. Newsletters are also frequently used and usually aim at conveying topical information about the change (Klöfer, 2003; Mast, 2002a; Marlow and O'Connor-Wilson, 1997). Brochures are often used to provide background information about a change because there is sufficient space to explain the change in detail (Dotzler, 1997; Mast, 2002a). Blackboards in offices, meeting rooms or public areas offer the opportunity to publish background information as well as topical events related to the change (Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a). The benefit of blackboards is that employees automatically check whether there is something of interest (Klöfer, 2003; Mast, 2002a). Despite the general limitations of written communication discussed in the previous section, print communication activities have been found to be an important supplement to face-to-face communication. Klein (1996), for example, suggests using brochures and flyers before the kick-off event because employees can then ask questions about the change and provide feedback during the event. Ihrig (1997) adds that large group events can only address the intensity and variety of emotions that are likely to occur after the

announcement of a change, when information about the change is provided before the event.

A website of the change project in the intranet offers different forms of information, communication and interaction. A website enables employees to look up general information and news about the change, a video message by the CEO can be published and short surveys about recipients' perceptions of the change can be integrated. A general advantage of a website is that the information is available any time at any place (Hoffmann, 2001). Mast (2002a) argues that this opportunity reduces feelings of being a passive recipient because employees can actively seek the information they desire. Emails have replaced the traditional letter in many organisations (Bernecker and Reiss, 2003; Mast, 2002a) because emails offer the opportunity to send information about the change to a large number of recipients more quickly. A difficulty in organisation-wide change projects is that front-line employees often do not have access to email (Mast, 2002a). A limitation of both websites and newsletters is that they allow neither personal cues nor immediate feedback. Therefore, socialising and networking, which play an important role in creating the positive relationships needed during organisational change, are difficult via these communication activities (Bernecker and Reiss, 2003). Another limitation of websites and newsletters is the limited possibility for dialogue. Although a website can include a contact form and although recipients can reply to a newsletter, these communication activities are likely to have a supportive role in the creation of dialogue only (Bernecker and Reiss, 2003; Schick, 2002). For example, when a point made, or question asked, in a speak-up programme is expected to be of general relevance, it may be published in the intranet (Townley, 1994).

Several authors (Buchholz, 2002; Marlow and O'Connor-Wilson, 1997; Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2001; Wuck, 2000) suggest using television and videos to convey information. Young and Post (1993) found that business television was the most appropriate communication activity when a change had to be announced quickly to employees at many locations. Television can also be used to broadcast events at one site to employees at other sites (Young and Post, 1993) and videos can be used to make speeches available for those who could not participate (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993). Finally, video and email can be used to create awareness of a change before a kick-off event (Quirke, 1996).

In addition to the discussion of the benefits and limitations of different communication activities, previous work suggested what to consider when combining communication activities. Several authors (Axley, 2000; Barrett, 2002; Bernecker and Reiss, 2003; Dotzler, 1997; Palmer and Fenner, 1999; Smeltzer, 1991) argue that existing communication practices should be considered, that existing communication conventions should not be broken and that recipients' preferences should be taken into account. Furthermore, the efficiency and effectiveness of different communication activities should be considered (Axley, 2000; Clampitt *et al.*, 2000; Mast, 2002a). For example, it may be more efficient to send an email to all employees in order to outline a major change but it may be more effective to use face-to-face communication. Another key to success, argue authors such as Clampitt *et al.* (2000) and Mast (2002a), is combining communication activities that enable implementers to 'push' certain key messages and communication activities that enable recipients to 'pull' other information. Finally, several authors (Bernecker and Reiss, 2003; Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996) argue in favour of combining face-to-face and electronic communication in order to use the benefits of face-to-face communication (such as multiple cues and direct contact) as well as the benefits of electronic communication (such as speed and reach).

Given the complexity of the communication process and the interrelatedness of communication aims, the existing understanding of the relationships between different communication activities is not sufficient. The design of an effective communication programme requires more robust recommendations – supported by theory and empirical research evidence – on which communication activity to use when and for what purpose.

3.11 Analysis from the recipients' perspective

The process of communication during top-down change can be analysed from the perspective of implementers and from the perspective of recipients. Authors such as Lewis and Seibold (1998) and Lewis (2000a) complain much previous work focused on implementers' understanding of effective communication (for example, Smeltzer, 1991; Young and Post, 1993) whereas recipients' view of the communication process received little research attention.

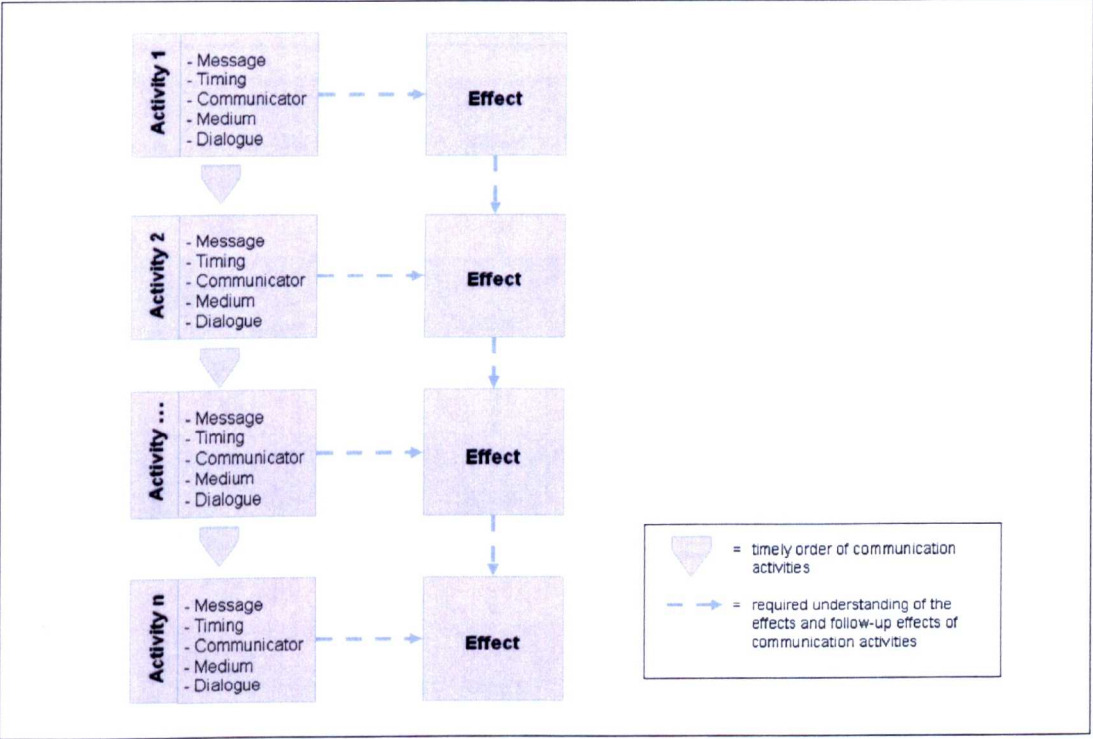
A single-sided focus on the implementers' perspective is problematic because several authors (Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Lippitt, 1997; Smeltzer, 1991) found differences between the implementers' and recipients' perspective and it is recipients' emotions, cognitions and behaviour that are to be influenced. Lippitt (1997) found that most employees saw the plans as vague statements although most executives believed the plans they announced were clear. Harshman and Harshman (1999) argued that there often is a difference between the two groups' perceptions of the effectiveness of the communication activities used. Smeltzer (1991) specified that management generally did not seem to be aware of the ineffectiveness of the communication programme. On the basis of findings from studies by Davis (1979) and Walton (1961), Crampton *et al.* (1998) also argue that management's perceptions of how well it is communicating do not match employees' perceptions. In one study, for example, 60% of top management responded that they communicate frequently with employees but only 30% of the employees agreed.

As authors such as Lewis (2000a) justly complain that there is a lack of studies that explore recipients' perceptions of the communication activities actually used, the empirical study conducted as part of the research presented in this thesis focused on recipients' perceptions of the communication activities actually used.

3.12 Summary

As outlined in the introduction of this chapter, previous work claims the importance of designing a coordinated communication programme in order to increase its overall effectiveness. The arrows between the different communication activities in Figure 3.6 indicate that communication activities need to be coordinated. The dotted lines illustrate that understanding the reasons for the overall effect of a communication programme requires understanding the effect of the communication activities used (horizontal lines) as well as understanding the influence of the effect of earlier communication activities on the effect of later communication activities (vertical lines).

Figure 3.6: Requirements for the design of a coordinated communication programme



Although theory on how to design a communication programme and empirical evidence on the effect of different communication activities had accumulated, there were still gaps that needed to be addressed. Part of the gap in previous work that appeared was that the focus had been on the elements of the communication process (such as the role of supervisors or the effect of early communication). Another part of the gap was that the effect of specific communication activities (such as kick-off events or newsletters)

had been insufficiently researched in the context of organisational change. A third part of the gap was that the interdependence of different communication activities (such as the effect of group meetings on the use of the intranet) had been widely neglected. Figure 3.7 illustrates the gap between the requirements for the design of a coordinated communication programme and the state of research on the issue. The dotted horizontal lines indicate that the effects of several communication activities were not sufficiently explored yet in the context of organisational change. The dotted vertical lines indicate that the interdependencies between different communication activities were also not well understood. The solid lines illustrate that some effects and some relationships between effects had been addressed by previous research by the time this research started.

Figure 3.7: State of research on the design of a coordinated communication programme

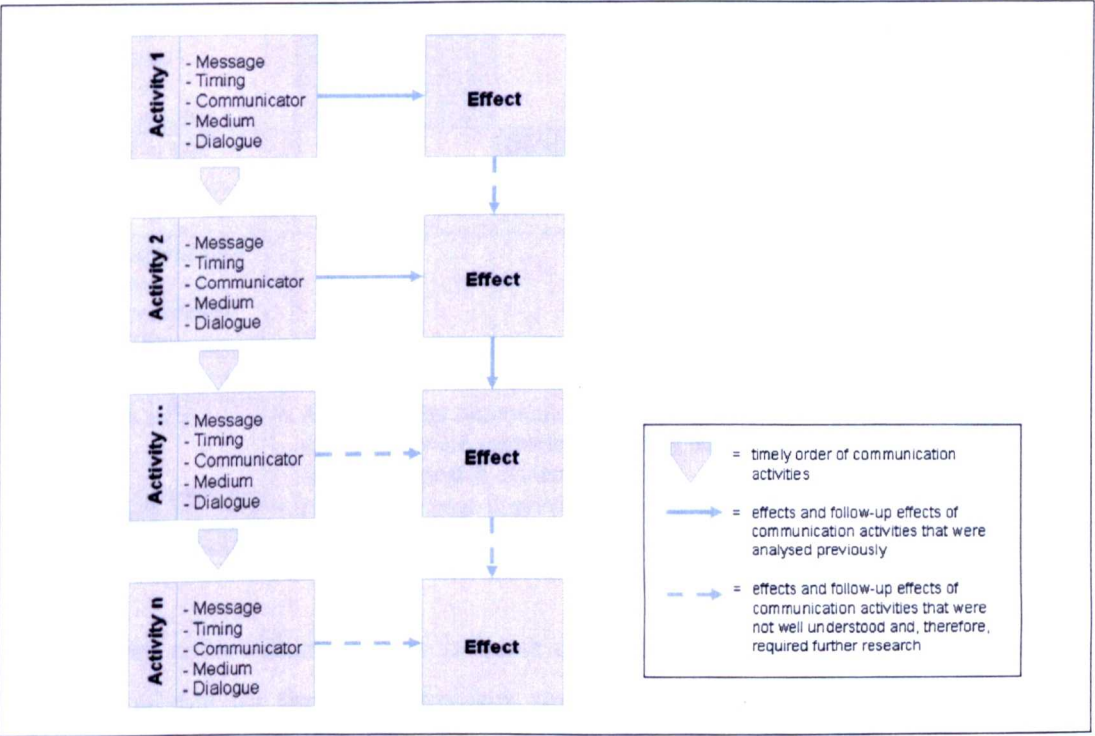


Table 3.3 specifies in detail the gap in previous work, thereby providing the framework for the empirical study conducted in this research. The grey cells indicate aspects of the communication programme and effects that were supported by theory and/or empirical research evidence. White cells indicate the need for further research.

Table 3.3: Gaps in previous work

	1	2	3	4	5
	Communication activity	Intended message	Communicator	Timing	Likely effect(s)
A	Kick-off event? Other activities?	Broad direction	Change strategists	Once / early	Understand change / Oriented
B	Same kick-off event?	Impact of change on location	Highest local manager	Once / early	Understand impact of change
C	Group meeting after kick-off event? Individual conversations?	Impact of change on group and individual	Direct supervisor		Understand impact of change / Less anxious
D	?	Key milestones	Highest local manager	Soon after milestones reached	Perceive likelihood of success
E	Group meeting	Topical information	Direct supervisor	Regularly	Prevent informal communication
F	Newsletter	Topical information	Change project	Regularly	
G	Website? Brochure? Company publication?	Background information			Better understand specific aspects of the change
H	Large event?		Opinion leaders		Understand change / Accept change
I	?			Repeatedly	Understand change?
J	Interdependence between communication activities				

White cells

Grey cells

= Aspects of the communication programme and effects that were supported by theory and/or empirical research evidence

= Limited coverage in previous work and, therefore, need for further research

Several grey cells within one row indicate that the relationships between some of the options available for the three elements are well understood. For example, previous work provided empirical evidence that senior managers should set the broad direction of the change at the very beginning of the change process (Row A) and that direct supervisors should explain the impact of the change on their group after its announcement (Row B). Several white cells within one row show that the relationships between other options available were not understood yet. For example, there was agreement that opinion leaders play an important role in the communication process but it was unclear which message should be conveyed by opinion leaders and when (Row

H). The white cells in Column 1 indicate that the appropriateness of different communication activities for achieving certain effects was not well understood. It was unclear, for example, whether a kick-off event is the ideal platform for top managers to present the broad direction of the change or whether other communication activities should be used instead (Row A). The fact that the Row J includes only white cells demonstrates that the interdependence between different communication activities in causing certain effects had hardly been addressed in previous work by the time this research started.

Given the importance of an effective communication programme and the gaps in the literature, the overall research aim of this study was to increase understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme. As the overall effect of the communication programme depends on the effects of the communication activities used, one specific research objective was to explore the effects of the communication activities used. Another specific research objective was to identify the specific aspects of the communication activities responsible for the effects. The third and fourth specific research objectives were to assess interdependences between different communication activities and between different effects because, as illustrated in Figure 3.7, the effect of a communication activity depends on the effects of earlier communication activities.

4 Research methodology and methods

The critical issue for any researcher is how to explore, describe and explain the phenomenon of interest (Gummesson, 2000). This chapter explains how this challenge was addressed. The first section outlines the philosophical position underlying this research. The second section defines the nature of the research aims and shows how the aims fit the interpretivist assumptions underlying the research. Then the appropriateness of the research approach and design for achieving the research aims is justified, followed by a definition and justification of the criteria chosen to assess the quality of the research. The last two sections outline how the decisions made regarding data collection and analysis contributed to the quality of the study and to the achievement of the research aims.

4.1 Research philosophy

Since Kuhn (1962) the term paradigm has often been used to refer to the philosophical assumptions underlying one's research. In general terms, a paradigm includes answers to important questions such as what kinds of things exist in the universe, what kinds of questions can legitimately be asked about these things, what techniques are appropriate for answering these questions and what counts as an explanation for some phenomenon (Chalmers, 1999; Johnson and Duberley, 2000; Ladyman, 2002). The three dimensions of one's philosophical position are one's ontological, epistemological and axiological stance. Ontology refers to the nature of being, epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge acquisition and axiology refers to the role of values in research (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Johnson and Duberley (2000, p.7) emphasise the importance of being clear about one's philosophical position when they argue that

our epistemological commitments influence the processes through which we develop what we take to be warranted knowledge of the world. Such deeply held taken-for-granted assumptions about how we come 'to know' influence what we experience as being true or false, what we mean by true or false, and indeed whether we think true and false are viable constructs.

In management research, there is no single agreed paradigm (Breuer and Reichertz, 2001; Starkey and Madan, 2001). It is a heterogeneous and fragmented field and there is an on-going debate about the most appropriate philosophical position from which the research approach and design should be derived. Johnson and Duberley (2000, p.8) argue that, for a long time, philosophical assumptions were 'usually left tacit or implicit and were rarely clearly presented or subjected to sustained reflection'. At that time, writers of management research texts usually discussed two different philosophies and often labelled these positivism and phenomenology (for example, Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991; Saunders *et al.*, 1997). While the discussion was helpful to provide an understanding of the two different philosophies, it was limited insofar as several other philosophies exist. For the purpose of this thesis, the terms 'objectivist' paradigm and 'subjectivist' paradigm are appropriate (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Johnson and Duberley, 2000). Specific philosophical positions in the objectivist paradigm are, for example, positivism and empiricism and specific positions in the subjectivist paradigm are, for example, phenomenology, social constructionism and critical postmodernism. Furthermore, despite the existence of different philosophical positions within each paradigm, the two paradigms do not cover the variety of possible philosophical positions. Johnson and Duberley (2000) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) argue that at least the two philosophical positions critical realism and pragmatism need to be included into the discussion. This gap was acknowledged by a number of writers of management research texts (for example, Saunders *et al.*, 2003) who, therefore, have come to discuss the objectivist (or positivist), the subjectivist (or interpretivist) and the pragmatist paradigm.

Proponents of the objectivist paradigm believe that there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts (Bryman, 2001; Lamnek, 1995; Remenyi *et al.*, 1998; Chalmers, 1999; Ladyman, 2002) but several authors (for example, Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002; Welman and Kruger, 2001) argue that the objectivist approach with its exploration of facts pays insufficient attention to the individual human being's experience and the effect of this experience on behaviour. In the context of organisational change, different recipients may perceive the same change in different ways (Taylor, 1999) and they may also perceive the same communication differently (Mast, 2002a; Mohr, 1997). The lack of sensitivity to the individual human being's experience may be the reason why, over the last 15 years, there has been a trend away

from the objectivist to the subjectivist paradigm (Breuer and Reichertz, 2001; Lincoln and Guba, 2000).

Proponents of the subjectivist paradigm argue that all human products are infused with subjective meaning (Lamnek, 1995; Robson, 2002; Silverman, 2000) and they consider the researcher 'as an active social agent conducting a value-laden enterprise' (Johnson and Duberley, 2000, p.62). Subjective meaning also plays an important role in the process of communication during an organisational change. The individual recipient's subjective understanding and acceptance of the change are important determinants of the behaviour that he or she adopts in response to a change (Axley, 2000; Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Huy, 1999). The emotions that an individual recipient experiences in response to the communication about the change are also important determinants of the success of the change effort (Huy, 1999; Kiefer, 2002). Therefore, it was key in this study to explore recipients' subjective perceptions. As subjective meaning cannot be uncovered through analysis of the external characteristics, it has to be investigated through interpretation (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Robson, 2002; Silverman, 2000; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001; Welman and Kruger, 2001). Easterby-Smith *et al.* (1991, p.24) argue that researchers should not 'gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur' but 'appreciate the different constructions and meanings people place upon their experience' because 'human action arises from the sense people make of different situations, rather than as a direct response from external stimuli'.

As noted above, several philosophical positions exist within the subjectivist paradigm. Schwandt (2000, p.190) argues that the subjectivist paradigm is a 'home' for a variety of researchers 'who are seriously at odds with one another'. Johnson and Duberley (2000, p.62) suggest that most philosophical positions within the subjectivist paradigm can be understood as 'developments of distinctive critiques of certain aspects of positivism's epistemological commitments'. Whereas Taylor and Trujillo (2001) distinguish between quasi-positivism, interpretivism and critical theory, Schwandt (2000) discusses interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism and Johnson and Duberley (2000) focus on postmodernism and conventionalism. Given these differences in terminology and definitions, a structured discussion of the different philosophical positions is almost impossible at this point.

It is possible, however, to define one's own philosophical position and to delimit it from other philosophical positions within the subjectivist paradigm. According to Taylor and Trujillo (2001), the quasi-positivists focus on deduction, a stance that is inappropriate in situations where fully formed hypothesis cannot be developed on the basis of the published work of other research. I do not share the stance of critical theorists because of their focus on critiquing managerial rationality (Taylor and Trujillo, 2001). In my opinion, they overemphasise the importance of changing the power relations and meaning structures of an organisation. Instead, I believe in the interpretivist position that the main distinction between human action and the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful and that the researcher must grasp the meanings that constitute the action in order to understand the action (Schwandt, 2000; Silverman, 2000; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001). Whereas positivist research seeks 'erklären' (literally, to explain), interpretivist research seeks 'verstehen' (literally, to understand). In interpretivist research, it is important to be open to the understanding of the people who are studied (Weber, 1964). The researcher should engage in dialogue with the people being studied and give them the chance to explain their view. Consequently, I believe in the view that researchers 'cannot claim to have a neutral standpoint from which they can objectively observe and assess knowledge claims' (Johnson and Duberley, 2000, p.72). My interpretivist stance also leads to a rejection of the possibility of a single correct position in favour of a multiplicity of perspectives. However, I do not agree with the postmodernist view that dissensus should be encouraged and that consensus should not even tried to be achieved (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

It is widely accepted that the research approach, design and methods should be chosen on the basis of the research objective but that the decisions made also need to be in line with one's philosophical position (for example, Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002; Robson, 2002; Saunders *et al.*, 2003). Interpretivists tend to look at the situation as a whole, choose an inductive focus and prefer an in-depth investigation of a small sample and the collection of qualitative data (Silverman, 2000; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001).

4.2 Nature of the research objectives

As outlined earlier, the overall research aim of this study was to expand the existing theory on the effects of different communication activities on recipients' cognitions, emotions and behaviour in the context of planned organisational change. In line with Gill and Johnson (1997, p.178), the term theory is understood as 'a formulation regarding the cause and effect relationships between two or more variables'.

Exploratory research is usually undertaken to seek new insights into so far little-understood phenomena (Zikmund, 2000). As the existing understanding of the possible effects of different communication activities was not sufficient, the research was exploratory. The central idea was to generate hypotheses to be tested in future research (Welman and Kruger, 2001; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). The four specific objectives were to explore the effects of the communication programme, the aspects of the communication programme responsible for the effects, the interplay of communication activities in causing the effects and the relationships between different effects. As the understanding of the effects of communication activities becomes stronger when the reasons for the effects can be explained, this research was designed to be explanatory as well. The objective was to explain the relationships between the relevant aspects of the communication programme and the different effects. As there can be no explanation without prior description (Gummesson, 2000; Robson, 2002; Weber, 1964; Wolcott, 1990), this research also was descriptive. This combination of exploration, description and explanation was necessary in order to be able to achieve the overall research aim.

4.3 Research approach

Any research project involves the use of theory (Gummesson, 2000). The extent to which the researcher is clear about the theory at the beginning of the research raises the important question of the relation between data and theory. The deductive approach develops a theory and then designs a research project to test the hypothesis, whereas the inductive approach collects data and then develops a theory as a result of the data analysis (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002).

The inductive approach was most appropriate to achieve my research objectives for several reasons. Firstly, the literature review has shown that neither testable theory nor fully formed hypotheses could be developed on the basis of the reported research of others. Secondly, inductive reasoning is more open-ended and exploratory than deductive reasoning (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). Such an open approach is necessary in order to be able to identify the aspects of the communication programme that influence recipients' perceptions and reactions in the context of planned organisational change. Finally, an inductive approach is in line with my interpretivist position according to which the introduction of theory into analysis is suspended until a holistic understanding of the scene has been developed (Gummesson, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001).

Using an inductive approach does not mean, however, that the research setting was entered *tabula rasa*. Hartley (2004) argues that at least some theoretical understanding is necessary if a case study is to produce findings that have any wider significance rather than degenerating into a simple descriptive story and Eisenhardt (1989) advocates knowledge of relevant theory because it facilitates the design of theory-building research. Similarly, Gummesson (2000) and Stenbacka (2001) argue that 'pre-understanding' – the knowledge that accompanies the researcher entering the research process – is important input to the research process in interpretivist research. During data analysis, the pre-understanding was used in order to gain maximum awareness and to be able to recognise leads without being led (Morse, 1994). As expected by Stenbacka (2001), the pre-understanding not only enabled the identification of relevant statements, it also enabled understanding the meaning of these statements and thereby made understanding the phenomenon possible.

4.4 Research design

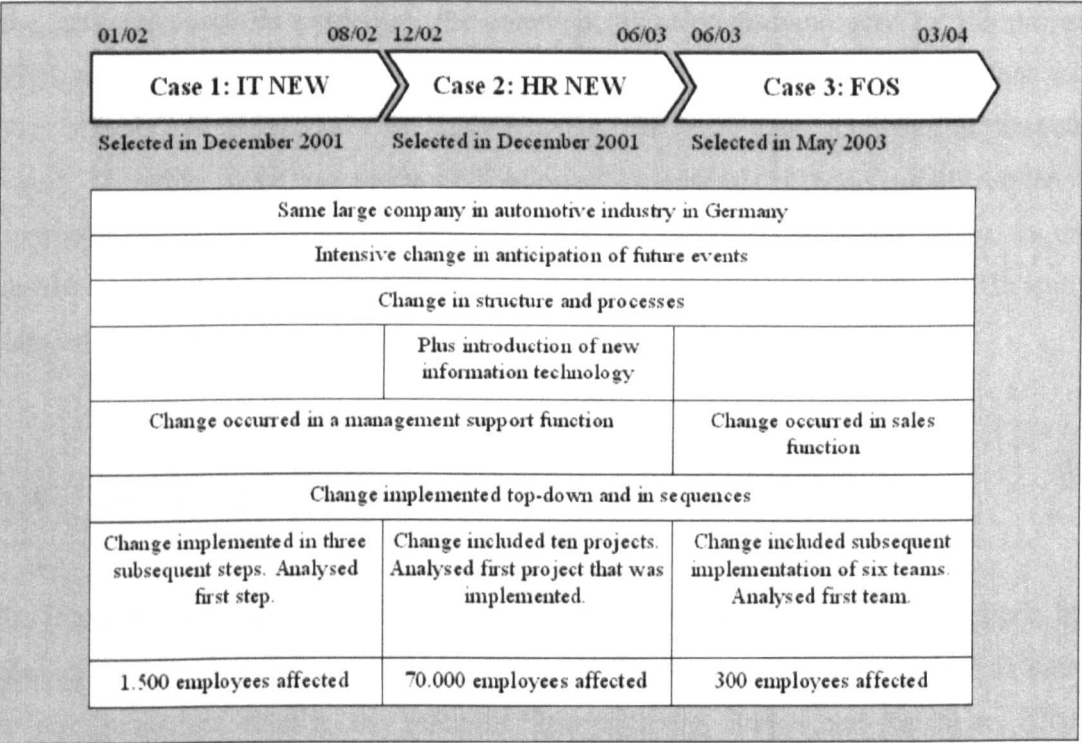
The case study design is a specific way of collecting, organising and analysing data. The purpose is to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest (Patton, 2002). A multiple case study design was most appropriate

for answering the research questions for several reasons. Firstly, authors such as Broadfield (1997), Belmiro (1997) and Lewis (2000a) suggest further in-depth research on the effect of different communication activities. Similarly, a number of researchers propound the careful examination of a few cases rather than trying to generalise over hundreds of cases (Gill and Johnson, 2002; Gummesson, 2000; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), considering quality and depth more important than mere sample size. Secondly, case studies allow researchers to focus specifically on a phenomenon of interest and they offer 'the greatest potential for revealing the richness, holism and complexity of naturally occurring events' (Torracco, 1997, p.130). Thirdly, a case study design is particularly useful when trying to understand the context of the research and the processes being enacted in-depth (Stake, 1995). This opportunity was important because this study analysed the process of communication as well as the context in which the communication took place. Furthermore, case studies are beneficial when trying to investigate a phenomenon where the boundaries between phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003). This was the case in this research because the line between the communication process and the context in which it took place was difficult to draw. Finally, several researchers (Lewis and Seibold, 1998, Lewis, 2000a) have criticised that much previous work looked at the phenomenon from the perspective of implementers, neglecting the perspective of recipients. The case study design chosen enabled an analysis of the subjective view of different groups of participants.

Although each case study provided insight into the phenomenon of interest and therefore was instrumental (Stake, 2000), multiple cases were conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest and to maximise what could be learned in the period of time available for study. Suggestions regarding the minimum number of cases range from four (Eisenhardt, 1989) to ten (Yin, 2003) but Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2003) admit that there is no ideal number of cases. Furthermore, cross-case comparison and analytical generalisation is already possible when data are collected from two or more cases (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). Gummesson (2000) even argues that, depending on the size of the report, it may be difficult to carry out more than a very limited number of in-depth case studies in a research project. In this research project, the time and resources available were sufficient to conduct three case studies.

All three case studies included planned change as defined in Chapter 2. An overview of the similarities and differences between the cases studied is provided in Figure 4.1. Knowledge about these characteristics is important because the effect of communication activities partly depends on the context in which the communication takes place (for example, Belmiro, 1997; Lewis, 2000a) and, therefore, transferability of the findings depends on the question in how far salient conditions overlap between the case studies conducted in this research project and the situation of interest to the reader (Crawford *et al.*, 2000; Hartley, 2004).

Figure 4.1: Characteristics of the three case studies



Each case was selected on the basis of the potential contributions to answering the research questions, which is referred to as theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989) or purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). The first two cases (IT NEW and HR NEW) were chosen at the point of entry into the case study organisation. It was part of my responsibility as a change manager to evaluate the effect of the communication activities used in the two change projects. The two cases were chosen because they both included formal communication activities over a period of several months before the change was introduced and because both change projects were part of a wider change

initiative. This meant sufficient similarity to allow comparison across cases. The two cases were different with regard to the relation between the change analysed and the other changes of the change initiative. In the Case Study IT NEW, the change analysed was the first of three steps whereas, in the Case Study HR NEW, the change analysed was one of several projects that were implemented at different points in time. Another difference between the two cases studies was that the first case involved employees working in IT whereas the second change involved employees working in HR. These two differences were interesting because it was possible to analyse their influence on the perceived effectiveness of the communication activities used. The third case in the project "Future-oriented Service" (FOS) was chosen on the basis of the findings from the first two cases. In particular, the communication programme used by the project FOS included the use of multipliers which is an approach to communication that was very effective in the second case study but that had rarely been addressed in previous work. Therefore, the Case Study FOS allowed an analysis of a potentially effective approach to communication in a context different from the second case study. As the third case included implementation of the change in subsequent steps, it was sufficiently similar to the two previous cases.

4.5 Quality of the research

An important concern for any research is that of quality. Traditional quality criteria for research undertaken within the objectivist paradigm are internal validity, external validity, construct validity and reliability (for example, Breuer and Reichertz, 2001; Stenbacka, 2001; Yin, 2003). There is consensus among the adherents of the subjectivist paradigm that traditional criteria are less appropriate for research in which subjectivity is an integral part of the research design and in which only a small number of cases are involved. Multiple sets of quality criteria for interpretivist research emerged in response but there is as yet no agreed-upon catalogue of quality criteria for interpretivist research. Positions are spread across a broad spectrum, ranging from an in-principal adoption of the traditional criteria (for example, Kirk and Miller, 1986) over redefinition of these criteria (for example, Trochim, 2000) to demands for entirely new standards (for example, Stenbacka, 2001; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001). The criteria chosen for assessing

the quality of this study (interpretivist research on the effect of communication activities in the context of organisational change) are illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Quality criteria used in this study

Traditional (objectivist) quality criteria	Quality criteria used in this (interpretivist) study
Generalisability	Transferability
Internal validity	Neutrality
Construct validity	Construct validity
Reliability	Consistency (with research situation)
	Ethicality

Each criterion, including the inappropriateness of the traditional criterion, is discussed below. The measures taken to increase the quality of this study are briefly addressed in this section and elaborated in detail in the section on the respective data collection method or in the section on data analysis.

4.5.1 Transferability

The first criterion to assess the quality of objectivist research is generalisability which is the degree to which the findings from a study would hold for other persons in other places and at other times (Yin, 2003). Generalisability cannot apply in qualitative case study research in the same way that it does in statistical research because the insights generated from interpretivist research have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected than with sample size (Eisenhardt, 1989; Maxwell, 1992; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). Gummesson (2000, p.97) argues that,

as long as you keep searching for new knowledge and do not believe you have found the ultimate truth but, rather, the best available for the moment, the traditional demand for generalization becomes less urgent.

This study sought analytical generalisation. Whereas in statistical generalisation a generalisation is made about a population on the basis of empirical data collected about a representative sample, in analytical generalisation a generalisation is made about theoretical propositions after data have been collected from two or more cases (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). As the findings from a study can be transferred to other situations when salient conditions overlap, the term transferability is used to refer to this quality criterion (Crawford *et al.*, 2000; Hartley, 2004).

Several means were taken to increase transferability. Firstly, careful attention was given to contextual factors in each case study and the influence of contextual factors on the effect of the communication activities used is made explicit in each case study report (for example, Taylor and Trujillo, 2001). Secondly, findings were tied to existing literature in order show how certain conditions overlap with other cases studied. Such tying of the results to the literature is particularly important in research that rests on a very limited number of cases such as this study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). Finally, following the advice of Gummesson (2000), data analysis began during the process of data collection so that it was possible to decide what to collect next and where it may be found in order to achieve the research aims.

4.5.2 Neutrality

The second criterion to assess the quality of objectivist research is internal validity. In his consideration of internal validity, Yin (2003) focuses on the importance of testing inferences made and conclusions drawn to ensure that important variables have not been overlooked. Guba and Lincoln (1989) describe this as credibility or truth value. In rejecting the idea of one identifiable truth, objectivity becomes a position that it is impossible to attain. As negative connotations are often associated with perceptions of subjectivity, Patton (2002) offers the concept of neutrality as a viable alternative. He argues that the researcher needs to understand the world as it is, to be true to its complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and to be balanced in reporting both confirming and disconfirming evidence. Threats to neutrality included bias of the researcher and research participants as well as the distortion that can arise from the researcher-participant relationship.

As the researcher is the most important research instrument in interpretivist research, the nature of the relationship between researcher and research participants require explicit consideration (for example, Glaser, 1992; Gummesson, 2000; Patton, 2002). The roles that can be undertaken by the researcher range from the objective data-analyst through to that of an organisational actor immersed in the stream of events and activities (Gill and Johnson, 2002). In order to understand recipients' perspective of the effect of different communication activities, the role of observer was appropriate. I conducted interviews and observed events in which I did not participate. More involvement in the process would have been problematic because I would have been immersed in the process of change and my reaction to the change might have heavily biased my interpretation of the other recipients' statements. In order to assess the implementers' perspective of the communication process, the role of an organisational actor was appropriate. I participated in meetings related to the planning and evaluation of the communication programmes. Formal and informal contacts with most communication planners were frequent and close.

Because I worked part-time in the change management department, there was the danger of being perceived as one of those who planned the change. Such a perception could have had a negative impact on recipients' willingness to be open and to share their thoughts and feelings. Being aware of this issue when accepting the job, the role of the researcher could be constructed as one supporting the central change management department with regard to communication issues. For example, when participating in workshops with recipients, I was always mentioned as a guest and not as a member of the project team. It was always made clear that I had nothing to do with the planning of the change, although this sometimes made the regular work for the department more difficult.

Several other measures to increase neutrality were also taken. During data collection, I checked back with those interviewed by summarising the key points at the end of the interview and by sending the typed interview to the interviewee. I asked whether I had presented their perceptions adequately and offered to make corrections if necessary. Many interviewees even used the opportunity to double-check information with written sources or with colleagues and gave additional information. Regarding the pre-

understanding of the theory, it was regularly compared with what research participants said. Throughout data analysis, rival explanations were considered and the evidence was checked for congruence – across research participants, across research methods and across cases. For example, as the preference for sharing information via a shared folder on the network drive (Section 6.4.8) could have been a specific characteristic of employees working in IT, additional data were collected in order to find confirming or disconfirming evidence.

4.5.3 Consistency

The third criterion to assess the quality of objectivist research is reliability, which encompasses the concept of consistency in terms of both the ability of measurement procedure to yield the same answer whenever it is carried out and whether another investigator following the same procedures would arrive at the same conclusions (for example, Bryman, 2001; Yin, 2003). This does not offer a useful way of assessing the quality of this study because any attempt to produce a standard set of results which could be reproduced exactly by someone else fails to recognise a fundamental assumption of the interpretivist position: recognition of the influence of the individual researcher's experience, perspective and attributes as well as the role choices that the researcher makes (Denzin, 1997).

Although it would be impossible for another researcher to recreate exactly the same piece of research and produce identical outcomes, consistency still is an important criterion for assessing the quality of interpretivist research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001; Stenbacka, 2001). Consistency, in this context, can be defined as making sense in the light of the available understanding of the situation. The key means to increase consistency is to establish a chain of evidence (Yin, 2003), which provides an explicit link between the questions asked, the data collected and the conclusions drawn. A chain of evidence permits the reader to understand the decisions taken during the course of the research and to verify that they made sense in the light of the available data pool.

Several means were taken to establish the chain of evidence and, thereby, to increase consistency. Firstly, original citations from the interviews, findings from previous research and my own interpretations were integrated into the arguments. Secondly, evidence of a continuous and reflexive movement between explanation and data is provided throughout the thesis. For example, first the structure of communication aims was expanded by integrating findings from the first case study, then these findings were compared with the literature, then the data of the second case study were analysed and then the findings from the second case study were combined with the first case study and with the literature. Thirdly, a case study database was kept to include all the data from the different sources (Yin, 2003). The table of contents of the research databases of all three case studies are provided in appendices F to H. The length of time spent in the field, the number of organisational members studied, the frequency and quality of contacts with informants and the process of theoretical sampling were specified (Taylor and Trujillo, 2001). Similarly, a case study protocol was kept to include the theoretical framework, the field procedures as well as my thoughts and feelings related to the research. Related to the use of a case study protocol was keeping a researcher's diary, as suggested by Robson (2002), which was used to record relevant thoughts, feelings and decisions across case studies. This provided useful information to follow the development of the research over the four and a half years of study. Finally, the quality of the chain of evidence was improved by using the software package ATLAS/ti. Using ATLAS/ti allowed tracking the progress of coding and the process of building the data tree and making memos against nodes reflects the reasoning behind the decisions made and conclusions reached.

4.5.4 Construct validity

The fourth criterion to assess the quality of objectivist research is construct validity, which refers to establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 2003). This is also important in interpretivist research. On a strategic level, Stenbacka (2001) suggests that the interaction between researcher and participants must lead to circumstances that improve the possibility of getting material that provides the information needed to answer the research questions. On a more tactical level, Yin (2003) suggests three tactics to increase construct validity:

- Establish a chain of evidence (already discussed in Section 4.5.3)
- Use triangulation
- Have a draft report reviewed by key informants

Triangulation is defined as ‘a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning’ (Stake, 2000, p.443). Its importance is well documented by social science researchers (Eisenhardt, 1989; Orgland, 1997; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2000). Multiple sources increase the richness of the data and each set of findings is likely to expand or to challenge results from other sets, thereby testing the theories that are emerging and reducing researcher bias (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 1995). Although the different types of evidence are not measuring exactly the same thing, as would be the case in the original sense of triangulation in the context of navigational readings (Blaikie, 1991; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Stake, 1995), multiple sources of evidence are nevertheless useful. They enable us to broaden our understanding and move closer towards the holistic understanding of the phenomenon desired in interpretivist research (Breuer and Reichertz, 2001; Gummesson, 2000). Each set of findings is likely to support or challenge results from other sets, thereby testing the theories that are emerging and reducing researcher bias.

Triangulation was used on different levels and in different ways. The communication process was looked at from the perspective of implementers as well as recipients. Data were collected from recipients on different levels at different locations who were affected by the change in different ways. Multiple data collection methods were used (internal documents, semi-structured and ad-hoc interviews, participant and non-participant observation) and data were collected at different points in time during the communication process. Furthermore, Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that a multiple case study design such as the one chosen in this study offers a form of triangulation itself. Finally, Chenail (1997, p.1) suggests that the circular process of comparing and contrasting the knowledge of the phenomenon that exists within the field, the literature and the researcher’s personal experience forms ‘the triangulatory engine of qualitative inquiry’.

Having a key informant review an initial draft of the report is suggested by several researchers (Crawford *et al.*, 2000; Orgland, 1997; Yin, 2003). This is of particular importance in a situation where no objective truth exists, for example, when different participants have different perceptions of the same event (Yin, 2003). In each case the findings were presented to those involved in planning the communication in order to hear their comments on the findings and a draft of the case study report was sent to a key informant in order to check the accuracy of the facts.

4.5.5 Ethicality

Wells (1994, p.284) defines research ethics in terms of 'a code of conduct of behaviour appropriate to academics and the conduct of research'. Research ethics refers to the appropriateness of one's behaviour in relation to the rights of those who provide access, become subject of one's work or are affected by it (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). Ethical concerns emerged during the planning of the research, while seeking access to cases and to individuals, during data collection and analysis as well as when writing the thesis. These concerns were thought through and, if critical, measures were taken to avoid them. This section covers the reflections on the effect of the research on the interests of research participants.

First of all, the university's code of practice for research involving human participants (Oxford Brookes University, 2003) was followed and the behavioural norms established by the university were not transgressed. By signing the ethical review form for the Business School (Appendix B), I declared to undertake the research with the highest standards of care, consideration and respect for research participants. Furthermore, the formal guidelines and codes of conduct such as those by the university, by the United Kingdom's Social Research Association (2003) or by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2002) helped 'by drawing attention to features of proposed research which are morally relevant but the researcher may have ... overlooked' (Bibby, 1993, pp.50-51). Authors such as Small (2001) and Soobrayan (2003, pp.121-122) argue that a code of ethical conduct developed by some external agency, while useful, is limited because 'there is no objective set of ethical rules, no list of acceptable behaviours and certainly no set of rules that fits all contexts'.

Furthermore, there were ethical issues to consider apart from the formal requirements. Several authors (Coghlan and Brannick, 2001, Hoonaard, 2002; Saunders *et al.*, 2003; Trochim, 2000) argue that key principles in research ethics are not doing harm, not distorting data, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, honesty and the right to privacy. These principles were taken into account when making decisions regarding the conduct of the research. It was clear that “the right of the researched corresponded symmetrically to the duty of researchers to respect that autonomy and never to coerce or deceive’ (McNamee, 2001, p.310).

Informed consent was sought from all recipients. Authors such as Hoonaard (2002) and Saunders *et al.* (2003) suggest using a consent form but this would not have fitted the ‘trust culture’¹ of the case study organisation. Instead, an introductory letter (Appendix A) with information about the purpose of the research, the research process and the use of the findings was sent to potential interviewees who were then phoned and asked whether they were willing to participate in the research. Only then was an interview agreed upon. At the beginning of the interview, consent was asked for again and the purpose of the interview and the topics covered were repeated. Related to the principle of informed consent are so-called ‘member checks’ (for example, Ramacharan and Cutcliffe, 2001, p.363), that is, the discussion of the findings with research participants to make sure that they are faithfully represented. As stated above, the draft report was discussed with the key informant and the interview notes were sent to research participants for review. As the interview notes were sent by email, the research participants could revisit the interview notes in their own time (Forbat and Henderson, 2003). Following the advice of Ramacharan and Cutcliffe (2001), interviewees were actively encouraged to change what had been written.

In the second case study, one exception of the principle of informed consent had to be made. Not all attendees of the three communication activities that were observed were aware of the fact that they were subject to research because the researcher attended the events in his role as a change management consultant who observed the events he had planned. However, this did not influence recipients’ privacy because they knew that several colleagues from the headquarters listened to what they said. Furthermore, when

¹ In German: ‘Vertrauenskultur’

a direct quote was to be used in the case study report, the recipient who had made the statement was asked for permission, either during the event, immediately after the event or, when the person was known to the researcher, by contacting the person later. The employee then had the opportunity to accept, reject or change his or her statement (Hoonard, 2002). Also, the data collected were strictly limited to recipients' perceptions of the communication activity observed whereas statements made with regard to their perceptions of the change were not used because this was felt to be inappropriate without seeking consent before. In other words, the ethical concern that informed consent could not be sought in advance of data collection, which made the three observations 'covert research' (Ramacharan and Cutcliffe, 2001, p.359), was addressed by limiting the type of data collected and by seeking consent afterwards.

The agreed anonymity and confidentiality was strictly observed. Confidentiality was discussed with research participants at several points in the process: in the introductory letter, when arranging the interview, at the beginning of the interview and again at the end of the interview. Furthermore, only the researcher had access to the information provided by research participants. With regard to anonymity, it was not disclosed who said what – neither in the case study report nor when presenting the findings to those responsible – because embarrassment and even harm could have resulted from reporting data that were attributable to a particular individual (Forbat and Henderson, 2003). This was important because authors such as Cooper and Schindler (1998) and Robson (2002) argue that the possibility of attribution does not even have to be clear to be potentially harmful.

It was understood that individuals have a right to privacy and this privacy was not harmed. One implication of this right to privacy is the right of every single employee to refuse to participate in the study or to withdraw from the study. Therefore, interviewees were told that it was alright if they did not answer a question (Cooper and Schindler, 1998). Williamson and Prosser (2002) argue that one benefit of a qualitative research interview is that, when a participant is unhappy with a researcher's question, he or she could stop the interview. With regard to the right to withdraw from the study, one interviewee, for example, disagreed with several statements in the interview summary and said that he did not want to put more effort into providing information. He said that he did not want to talk about the change further. Following the advice of authors such as

Cooper and Schindler (1998) and Robson (2002), his refusal was accepted immediately although it was evident that some of the statements included some pertinent information. Also related to privacy is the right to choose when to participate in the research and not to be contacted at unreasonable times or at home (Saunders *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, interviews were scheduled when it suited interviewees and at the beginning of the interview the time available for the interview was confirmed again because, as Zikmund (2000) argues, it is unethical to attempt to prolong the discussion when it is apparent that the research participant needs to attend to the next part of the day's schedule. Finally, although it was sometimes important to probe interviewees' answers, the right of interviewees not to be asked questions that could create stress or discomfort was respected.

4.6 Data collection

The perspective of two different groups of participants (recipients and implementers) on several aspects of the communication programme (content, process and context) had to be understood. Authors such as Marshall and Rossman (1999), Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) argue that a case study should use multiple data collection methods because no data collection method has a complete advantage over other data collection methods and because different data collection methods are highly complementary. Following this advice, data on recipients' perspective were collected via semi-structured interviews, short informal interviews, non-participant observation of communication activities and analysis of internal documents and data on implementers' perspective were collected via formal and informal dialogues, participant observation of meetings and analysis of internal documents (Table 4.2). This section justifies why, and explains how, the different data collection methods were used and demonstrates how they were complementary.

Table 4.2: Overview of data collection methods²

	Case IT NEW	Case HR NEW	Case FOS
Semi-structured interviews with recipients	<p>11 interviews at 1 location</p> <p>Head of Dep't (1) Group leaders (3) Employees (7)</p> <p>Employees in IT</p> <p>Between 55 and 75 minutes</p>	<p>16 interviews at 3 locations</p> <p>Group leaders (4) Employees (12)</p> <p>Employees in HR</p> <p>Between 45 and 90 minutes</p>	<p>10 interviews at 1 location</p> <p>Team leader (1) Group leader (1) Employees (8)</p> <p>Employees in customer service</p> <p>Between 25 and 65 minutes</p>
Short informal interviews with recipients	<p>12 interviews on 3 organisational levels at 1 location</p> <p>Scheduled (4) During event (2) After event (2) Way to meeting (2) During lunch (1) Way to interview (1)</p>	<p>5 interviews on 2 organisational levels at 3 locations</p> <p>Scheduled (1) During lunch (2) After event (1) Email (1)</p>	-
Observation of communication activities	<p>Road show (1) Dep't meetings (2)</p>	<p>Road show (3) Multiplier workshop (2) HR event (1)</p>	-
Internal documents	32 documents	36 documents	24 documents
Dialogues with implementers	<p>13 dialogues with 14 different implementers</p> <p>Formal (6) Informal (1) Phone call (2) Work meeting (4)</p>	<p>16 dialogues with 21 different implementers</p> <p>Formal (7) Informal (3) Phone call (1) Email (5)</p>	<p>18 dialogues with 9 different implementers</p> <p>Formal (10) Informal (1) Phone call (3) Email (2) Work meeting (2)</p>
Observation of implementers' meetings	<p>8 meetings</p> <p>Meeting of the working committee <i>Communication for IT NEW</i> (3) Meeting of working committee <i>IT Communication</i> (5)</p>	<p>19 meetings</p> <p>Meeting of heads of change management departments (8) Meeting of the working committee <i>Communication for HR NEW</i> (8) Planning meeting RECRUIT rollout (2) Planning meeting HR NEW road show (1)</p>	<p>1 meeting</p> <p>Meeting of project managers (1)</p>

² The table is explained further in the sections on the respective data collection methods

4.6.1 Semi-structured interviews with recipients

This study sought to identify recipients' perceptions of the different communication activities used. Several authors (for example, Bryman, 2001; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002) argue that interviews are an appropriate means for exploring what is in recipients' mind and for finding out things from them that we cannot directly observe. Semi-structured interviews were used because they are most appropriate when the researcher seeks to develop an understanding of recipients' world (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002; King, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Jarrett, 1996; Robson, 2002; Yin, 2003). Structured interviews, even when including open-ended questions, do not enable the researcher to follow up employees' responses but this was necessary in order to understand recipients' perceptions and the reasons for these perceptions (Stroh, 2000). The problem with less structured, or unstructured, interviews would have been that it would have been difficult to gather information about the key topics of interest because it would have been likely that employees had tended to talk more about the change and its impact than about the communication activities. The observations made during this research confirmed this assumption.

A statistically representative sample was not required because this study did not aim to produce generalisations in the same way as objectivist research does. It was, however, important to consider what each interviewee could offer in terms of increasing the understanding of the effect of communication activities. Therefore, not only the choice of case studies but also the choice of interviewees was theoretical (Eisenhardt, 1989) and purposeful (Patton, 2002). This increased the transferability of the findings because the findings are based on interviews with recipients from different organisational levels, geographical sites and, as three case studies were conducted, from different functions (Table 4.2). The criteria for choosing interviewees were generated from the literature. As the phenomenon of interest was the effect of the communication activities used, all interviewees were involved in the process of communication about the proposed change. In all three case studies, employees from different organisational levels were chosen in order to be able to explore similarities and differences with regard to the desired information and the preferred communication activities. Differences between recipients on different organisational levels were expected because information about a change is often cascaded down the organisation from one organisational level to another

and, therefore, recipients on lower levels of the organisation often receive information later than recipients on higher levels or they receive less information (for example, Buchholz, 2002; Quirke, 1996). In the second case study, interviews were conducted with recipients not only from different organisational levels but also from different geographical sites. Different sites used different local communication activities in order to complement the central communication activities. Therefore, it became possible to explore the effects of different combinations of communication activities about the same change.

Interviews were conducted at the time of the introduction of the change because recipients' perception of all communication activities intended to prepare them for the change were of interest. As the time period between the announcement of the change and its intended introduction was up to six months, several measures were taken to prevent or compensate for errors of recall on recipients' part. Firstly, as suggested by Golden (1997), data other than the retrospective data were collected: observation, short informal interviews and documentary evidence. Secondly, informants were motivated to provide accurate information by giving rich explanations of the usefulness of the research (Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Miller *et al.*, 1997). The usefulness of the research to the participants as well as to the organisation could be explained easily because the findings were reported to implementers who could adjust the communication programme on the basis of recipients' perceived lack of information and preferred communication activities. Thirdly, a cross-section of recipients (from different levels, functions and geographical sites) was interviewed in order to be able to check for inconsistencies in statements that could then be followed up (Golden, 1992, 1997; Phan and Hill, 1995). Finally, it was possible to probe when recipients had mixed dates or contents of different communication activities because I was familiar with the details of the communication programmes due to my work in the central change management department of the case study organisation.

In order to identify interviewees, the help of change managers from the different locations was sought. In a first step, they helped with identifying departments and groups on different levels that were appropriate for the study. This was necessary because, as outlined earlier, the intention was to interview several employees on each level. The change managers were familiar with the research and they supported it

because they knew that they would benefit from the findings. Furthermore, they were experienced in qualitative data collection because it was part of their work and it was the basis for defining change management interventions. In a second step, on the basis of the criteria defined for the choice of interviewees, the change managers generated lists with names of recipients who were likely to be willing to participate in the research. Choosing interviewees without the help of change managers was impossible because of a lack of access to employees on lower levels. As the importance of assuring confidentiality and explaining the aims of the research is well established (Gummesson, 2000; King, 2004; Stroh, 2000), the third step included contacting potential interviewees by phone, explaining the research and asking whether they were willing to conduct an interview. During these phone calls, it was checked whether interviewees really fulfilled the criteria for the choice of multipliers. When recipients said that they were interested in an interview, an introductory letter (Appendix A) was sent which, again, explained that their personal view of the communication programme that had taken place was of interest and that the purpose of the study was to make recommendations on what and how to communicate in change projects. In this letter, confidentiality was promised and it was said that feedback to sponsors and key informants would only be given in the form of a collective view of all recipients.

A topic guide (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002), which may also be referred to as an interview guide (Stroh, 2000), was used to provide the necessary structure and to ensure that key areas of interest would be explored. The topic guide was initially developed on the basis of the literature review and the experience of the researcher. Then the advice of King (2004) was followed who argues that the development of the interview guide does not end at the start of the first interview and that it may be modified through use. During each case, the topic guide was specified on the basis of the analysis of the internal documents, the short informal interviews with recipients during the communication process, the observation of communication activities and the dialogues with implementers. Before each subsequent case, the topic guide was refined on the basis of the findings from previous case(s). The use of a shared folder on the network drive, for example, was added to the topic guide after the first case study because it had emerged as a potentially effective communication activity. Table 4.3 lists the topics covered in all interviews, those added on the basis of first findings as well as the topics

covered only with recipients who played an active role in the formal communication programme such as supervisors in the management cascade.

Stroh (2000, p.199) suggests that ‘interviews should try to be made into conversations’. Therefore, the topic guide was not used in a rigid way. Instead, the interviews were allowed to develop so that unexpected themes or ideas could be captured and to allow my understanding and interpretation to be checked in a natural way. In order to make sure that recipients’ statements were understood correctly, I sometimes summarised their point by asking ‘Did I get it right that you ... ?’ and I probed when answers seemed too short or superficial, being aware, however, that probing must not cause bias in responses (Jarrett, 1996). At the end of interview I summarised the key points which were usually agreed upon, and sometimes corrected, by the interviewee.

Table 4.3: Topic guide for interviews with recipients

Topics covered in each interview with recipients
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recipient’s understanding of the change• Communication activities where recipients got the information from• Reasons for the perceived helpfulness of these communication activities• Role of the other communication activities• Recipient’s perceptions of and reactions to the communication activities• Interplay between different communication activities• Additional information that recipients seek/sought about the change• Characteristics of the department, the division, the project and the company• Influence of these characteristics on recipients’ perception of the communication programme• Suggestions on how to communicate differently• Additional comments
Topics added on the basis of first findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Influence of newsletter on use of website• Quality of information in the newsletter• Use of documents in shared folder on network drive• Benefit of multipliers• Effect of explaining benefit of change in different ways
Topics covered only with recipients who were also communicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reasons for communicating the way communicators did• Differences between the information communicators received and the information they forwarded• Reasons for communicating differently

Data in the interviews were gathered through note-taking because the works council, which had to approve of the interviews, only allowed note-taking. This was not a problem because tape-recording and transcripts were not considered necessary for the purpose of this study because the intended analysis was not language-oriented but theory-building. Therefore, the focus of the analysis was not the meaning of words but the identification of connections between social phenomena (Dey, 1999; Stake, 1995). Following the advice of Stake (1995), a facsimile of the interview was written as soon as possible after the interview, while things were still fresh in the mind. The interview notes were sent to the interviewee within one week in order to clarify whether they reflected the interviewee's perspective of the communication programme. It was suggested to make any changes if necessary. The purpose of this procedure was to ensure that recipients' perspective was understood, thereby increasing neutrality and construct validity. The interview summary sometimes even led to follow-up interviews because additional ideas or information had occurred to the interviewee, which they wanted to share. As recipients confirmed that the written notes of the interview reflected their view of the communication programme, the interview notes provided the basis for the use of verbatim quotes in the case study chapters.

Interviews were conducted until saturation had been reached (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1995). Gummesson (2000) argues that the researcher has no need to continue with further interviews when the marginal utility of an additional interview approaches zero. The point of saturation was less difficult to identify than originally expected because rather soon recipients started talking about the same degree of helpfulness of certain communication activities. In the first case study, for example, all interviewees talked about the positive effect of the programme leader's presence at the kick-off event and about the helpfulness of group meetings for asking questions. In the second case study, the perceptions of the interviewees at the second location reflected the perceptions of the interviewees at the first location, despite differences in the size of the location and in the relationship to the headquarters.

4.6.2 Short informal interviews with recipients

Short informal interviews throughout the communication process were one means of triangulation because timely data about recipients' perceptions of the communication programme could be collected. Although authors such as Gummesson (2000) warn that there is a substantial risk that informal methods of obtaining information may lead to superficiality, the variety of these contacts in terms of timing, research participant and topic increased the understanding of the change and of the communication process.

The short interviews took place at different occasions throughout the communication process. An overview of how many interviews were conducted at which occasion has been provided in Table 4.2. Some contacts took place during the observation of communication activities (for example, the information market of the road show HR NEW in the second case study when recipients could discuss the change with representatives from different projects at information stands) or after the observation of communication activities (for example, the second departmental meeting in the first case study). One employee talked about her perceptions of an event while standing in front of a display of the timeline of the project. I had introduced myself and then asked how she found the combination of one-way presentation and subsequent discussion at information stands. Other short interviews took place on the way to or from meetings with implementers. For example, when returning from a meeting with the director of the Plant IT in the third case study, I met an employee who had been interviewed before and he talked about his perceptions of the newsletter that had just been published.

The notes about the conversation were written down as soon as possible after the contact, always on the same day. I was always introduced as a researcher interested in the effect of the communication activities used and recipients were asked for permission when a quote would be used in this thesis. Whereas the notes of the formal interviews were sent to interviewees in order to check whether their view had been written down accurately, the notes could not be sent to the informants who provided information via short informal interviews because this would not have accorded with the way things are done in the case study organisation. Therefore, whenever possible, I asked for permission to use their statements for research purposes during the conversation.

In addition to increasing the understanding of the communication process, the interviews were used to refine the topic guide that would be used during the semi-structured interviews. For example, as several employees criticised the low quality of the information in the newsletter during the short interviews, a specific question about the quality of the newsletter was added to the topic guide.

4.6.3 Non-participant observation of communication activities

‘Observations work the researcher toward a greater understanding of the case’ (Stake, 1995, p.60). Marshall and Rossman (1999) and Remenyi *et al.* (1998) suggest that observation is a valuable way of collecting evidence as it allows the researcher to observe directly the relevant interaction and environmental conditions. Gummesson (2000) and Waddington (1994) argue that a thorough analysis of a particular process requires the use of the researcher’s personal observations that result from his presence in the actual process to be examined. Therefore, key communication activities such as departmental meetings, road shows and workshops were observed whenever possible (Table 4.2). The communication activities that could be observed were identified during the initial dialogues with implementers.

In order to reduce the impact of the presence of the researcher on recipients’ behaviour, the role of the researcher in these events was non-participant, merely observing the communication that took place. The employees who participated in the event were informed before the event that a researcher would attend the communication activity. This was not a problem for them because they were used to the presence of representatives from the headquarters who either provided input for the event or who wanted to learn about a topic.

One aim of the observations was to acquire personal insight into how implementers and recipients interacted and talked about the change in order to increase the understanding of the case as a whole. Another aim of the observations was to identify additional issues for the semi-structured interviews. Mayring (1990) argues that observation is particularly helpful for exploratory purposes and to structure an area that is insufficiently researched. Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.108) specify that findings

from observation are helpful to 'focus data collection more tightly'. During an event in the second case, for example, the presentation was hardly readable and there did not seem to be enough space during the information market. During interviews with recipients from that plant, specific questions were asked about this event in order to find out in how far these technical details had influenced the effect of the event. A third aim of the observations was to find out more about recipients' perceptions of the change and about how the communication activity observed influenced their perceptions. This was achieved by talking to different recipients – during the event or immediately after the event – and by listening to the comments recipients made during question-and-answer sessions or during discussions at the displays of the information market. Furthermore, the opportunity was used to talk to those responsible and to ask for their perceptions of the effect of the communication activity observed.

A basic part of each observation was the description of the observed communication activity along the components of a communication activity identified in the literature review: communicators, recipients, information conveyed, media used, timing in the communication process, possibilities for dialogue and the context in which the event took place. The remainder of the observation was unstructured. The intention was to get as many impressions of recipients' reactions as possible in order to achieve the aims specified above. During presentations, for example, I usually sat in the audience and wrote down recipients' questions and comments. The notes were then compared with what those responsible for the event had documented. During breaks of events, recipients were either approached in order to ask a question or the discussions at information stands were listened to. When possible, notes were made during the observation. If this was impossible, notes were made immediately after the observation, always on the same day. The notes for each observation included what had been observed, statements made by recipients and the aspect of the communication programme to which the statements referred. Furthermore, the learning from the observation was briefly summarised and issues that had to be followed up were highlighted.

4.6.4 Secondary data

Saunders *et al.* (2003) distinguish between three groups of secondary data: documentary data, survey-based data and those compiled from multiple sources. Documentary data can be divided into written material (such as minutes of meetings) and non-written material (such as videos). Survey-based data can be divided into censuses, regular surveys and ad-hoc surveys. Following the advice of authors such as Patton (2002), Yin (2003) and Remenyi *et al.* (1998), a variety of secondary data was used in all three case studies (Table 4.4). 32 documents were used in the first case study, 45 documents in the second case study and 17 documents in the third case study (Table 4.2). These documents were important because they were another means of triangulation.

Relevant documents were identified during initial dialogues with implementers but also during interaction with research participants throughout the process. An advantage of being an employee in the case study organisation was that full access and permission existed to actively search for further documents. Following the arguments of Yin (2003), this is important because systematic searches for relevant documents are important in any data collection plan.

The research methods literature (for example, Denscombe, 2003; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Yin, 2003) suggests a careful evaluation of the appropriateness of secondary data and Forster (1994, p.149) argues that secondary data 'must be contextualised with other forms of research'. According to Denscombe (2003), a particular problem is that secondary data may have originally been collected for a purpose which differs from one's own purpose. Following the advice of authors such as Forster (1994) and Yin (2003), each document was read carefully so that the viewpoints and interests of the authors of the document could be drawn out. It was evident, for example, that the summary reports of local change managers on the status of the communication process might be more positive than reality because the report allowed conclusions regarding their own performance. When necessary, additional dialogues were scheduled with implementers to answer the questions that had arisen from the analysis of the documentary evidence.

Table 4.4: Overview of secondary data used

About the organisation and its people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational reports • Excerpts of employee directory • Corporate website • Corporate newspaper • Sections of business plans • Presentation about corporate goals of cases study organisation • Results of organisation-wide employee attitude survey • Interviews conducted by another master student on effective change communication • Results of an organisation-wide communication audit
About the projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project timelines / milestone plans • Project status reports • Project overviews • Project assignments • Agenda of meetings, workshops, events • Descriptions of the change process • Presentations about the projects (forwarded by key informant)
About communication about the projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication concepts/plans • Concepts for single communication activities / workshops • Minutes of meetings / Workshop documentations • Memos • Email correspondence between communication planners • Results of evaluations of communication activities • Survey conducted by postgraduate student on effects of a road show series • Videos of events
Communication material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project website • Project newsletter (Email / Print) • Frequently asked questions (FAQ) about the project • Presentations held at departmental meetings • Presentations held at events/road shows • Brochures about project • Poster about project • Invitations to events • Feedback forum on project website

Secondary data were used in different ways at different stages of the research project. At the beginning, internal documents were used to understand the intended change and the planned communication activities and to trace back the history of the project. Forster (1994, p.148) argues that the benefit of this way of collecting data is that it 'does not initially involve active intervention in the form of interviews with key (and often extremely busy) personnel'. The time saved through the use of secondary data could be spent on clarifying issues that had not been understood and on hearing implementers' interpretation of what had happened so far and what was planned. Secondary data were also used to help with specifying the topic guide for the interviews with recipients. For example, the benefit of one of the projects was explained in two different ways in two documents. As this could have influenced the clarity of the message, a specific question on the effect of the two different presentations was added to the topic guide. During and after the interviews, the secondary data were used to check the accuracy of primary data. For example, minutes of meetings are usually confirmed by participants within a few days after the meeting. When an interviewee was asked about a series of events which was four months ago, the statement made during the interview could be compared with the minutes of the meeting and, if necessary, it was possible to probe during the interview. This is in line with Forster (1994, p.148) who argues that company documentation 'can help in interpreting informants' 'rewriting' of history in later verbal accounts'. Finally, the primary data were compared with the secondary data in order to triangulate the evidence from the other sources.

4.6.5 Formal and informal dialogues with implementers

Although the focus of this study was on recipients' perceptions of the communication programme, talking to implementers was nevertheless important. In each case, dialogues were conducted with different managers who influenced the design of the communication programme.

Most dialogues with implementers were conducted with the key informant who had agreed to provide the information about the project that was needed. The key informant was chosen on the basis of his or her experience of the topic in question and on the basis of his or her willingness to provide the required information (Morse, 1991). In the first

case study, the key informant was the project manager who was responsible for the coordination of the communication programme. The project leader introduced me at the first meeting of the working committee that was set up in order to design the communication programme. In the second case study, a colleague in the central change management department was responsible for the communication programme. Therefore, he became the key informant. The third case study was accessed via the change manager responsible for the change project. As she was interested in the findings and willing to support the research, she became the key informant in the third case study.

Contacts with the key informant as well with the other implementers took many different forms (Table 4.2). For the formal interviews, the topic guide outlined in Table 4.5 was used.

Table 4.5: Topic guide for dialogues with implementers

Topics covered in each formal dialogue
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aim of the project / Need for the change• Content of the change project• Context of the change project• Timeline of the project• History of the project• Change strategists and implementers• Recipients of the change• Intended effect of the communication programme• Intended message(s)• Planned communication activities (Description of each activity along the components aims, communicator, message, medium, timing, possibilities for feedback and intended audience)
Topics added on the basis of first findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approach to communication in previous projects• Expected benefit of multiplier approach• Criteria for choice of multipliers

The process of preparing, conducting and following up the interview was similar to the interviews with recipients described above. Other dialogues were informal and/or unscheduled and took place during lunch, during breaks of regular meetings or during observations of formal communication activities. In the second case study, for example,

the use of the intranet could be discussed during the lunch break of a workshop intended to design the communication programme. Furthermore, dialogues were not necessarily face-to-face. In the second case study, for example, an implementer was asked about her perceptions of an event and, as she was busy, she sent her perceptions via email. In the third case study, for example, the key informant updated the researcher every other week via phone. Despite the differences in the length and type of the dialogues with implementers, the process of increasing understanding of implementers' perspective was nevertheless structured because detailed notes were made to whom to talk about what. The topic guide used for the formal dialogues was used to check back what else needed to be addressed.

The aim of the dialogues with implementers changed as the communication programme progressed. The aim of the meetings that took place before the beginning of the communication programme was to gain information about the project itself (aims, timeline, history, etc.) and to identify documents providing additional information. The aim of the next (set of) dialogue(s) was to learn more about the communication activities planned. This knowledge was necessary to identify communication activities that could be observed and to define the timing of the interviews with recipients. The aim of the dialogues during the communication process was to learn about the latest developments in the project and in the communication programme and to ask questions that arose during the analysis of internal documents or from the observation of communication activities. The aim of the presentation of the case study report was to correct error in fact and to establish the validity of the data collected.

4.6.6 Participant observation of implementers' meetings

As discussed earlier, observation is a valuable way of collecting evidence. Observation was used as a means for collecting additional data about the reasons for designing the communication programme the way it was done and about implementers' expectations of the effect of different communication activities. In each case, various meetings were observed (Table 4.2).

The main aim of the observation was to better understand the process of communication via the different communication activities. Therefore, notes were made about the reasons for choosing certain communication activities. The notes were structured along the components of a communication activity that were also used as the basis for the observations of the communication activities: communicator, recipient, information conveyed, media used, timing in the communication process, possibilities for dialogue and the context in which the event took place. In addition, implementers' perceptions of the communication activities that had already taken place were of interest. In particular, notes were made about implementers' understanding of which aspects of the communication programme were responsible for which effect.

While I participated in these meetings as an organisational actor, the attendants of the meetings knew that research was conducted on the topics that were discussed during the meetings and that the data would be used for the research. Most meetings were part of a series of meetings so that I had to be introduced only once (for example, by the project manager who was leading the working committee). Other meetings were scheduled in order to discuss a specific aspects of the communication programme and I was invited as an expert for communication in the context of change. In these occasions, I was happy to attend the meeting but it was made clear that the data would be used for this research project.

4.7 Data analysis

There is an increasing body of literature that covers issues of data analysis (for example, Cassell and Symon, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Dey, 1993, 1999; Gummesson, 2000; Stake, 1995; Stroh, 2000; Yin, 2003). 'Despite differences in approach and language, the common emphasis is on how to categorise data and make connections between categories' (Dey, 1993, pp.5-6). The term code can be used as a synonym for the term category (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2002) identify two principal ways of analysing qualitative data: content analysis and grounded analysis. The latter is described as a holistic approach that does not seek to impose a structure but to derive the categories, patterns and concepts from within the data itself.

The exploratory nature of this research and the inductive research approach required such a grounded approach to data analysis. The process of data analysis is illustrated in Figure 4.2 and explained below.

The software package most appropriate to support this study’s grounded approach to data analysis was ATLAS/ti because it was specifically designed for a grounded approach to data analysis (ATLAS/ti, 1997; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002). This fit is important because software packages inevitably reflect the developers’ assumptions about the nature of qualitative analysis (Fielding, 1994; Lissmann, 2001; Muhr and Friese, 2001; Pandit, 1996). In addition, ATLAS/ti was designed for building theory because the software is not only concerned with relationships between codes and data but also with relationships between different codes (ATLAS/ti, 1997; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002). The final decision to use ATLAS/ti was made after three software packages ATLAS/ti, NUD*IST and Ethnograph had been tested with the result that using ATLAS/ti felt comfortable.

Figure 4.2: Data analysis process (using Case Study HR NEW as an example)

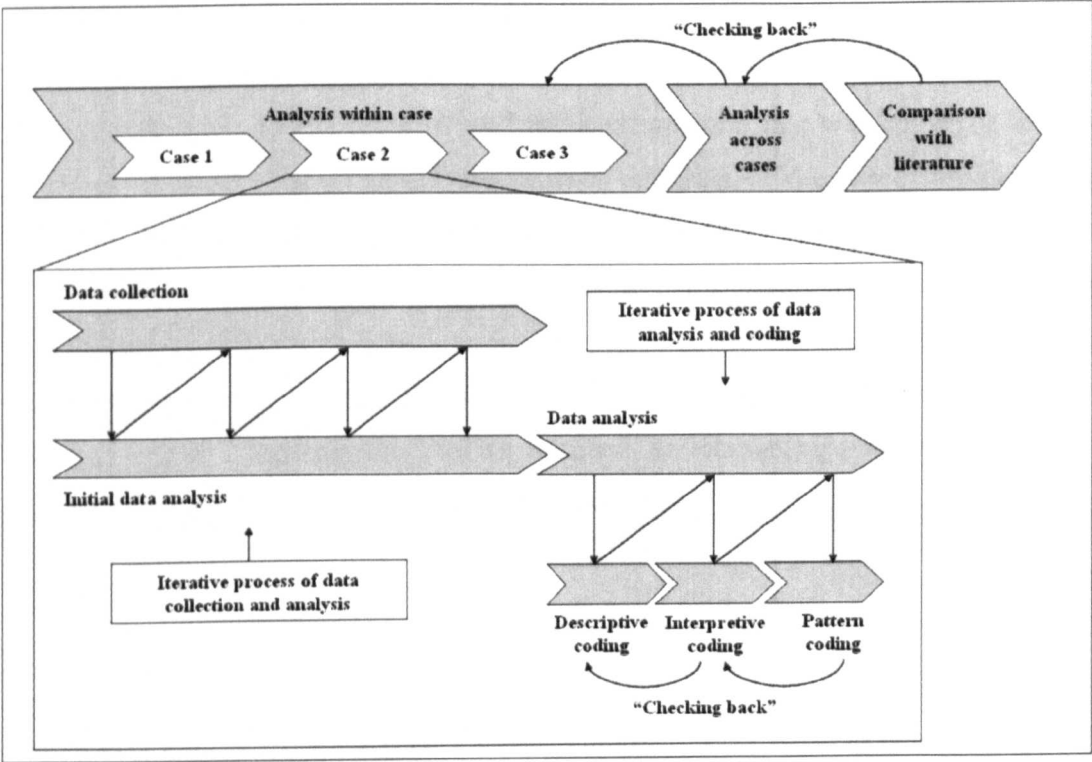


Figure 4.2 illustrates that the process of data analysis within each case can be described along three stages. This three-stage process is based on the distinction by Miles and Huberman (1994) between three classes of codes which they refer to as broad descriptive codes, interpretive codes and pattern codes. The first stage of analysis included the identification of broad descriptive codes which required little interpretation. The descriptive codes were generated by using the functions 'In-Vivo coding' and 'Open coding' in ATLAS/ti. In-Vivo coding was used when the text itself contained a useful and meaningful name for a code. This was the preferred way of coding because the focus of the analysis was on recipients' subjective perceptions of the communication activities. Open coding was used when a statement was considered important but did not include a term that could be used as the name for the code. This was the case, for example, when recipients' used colloquial language to refer to a communicator. The function 'code from list' was used when a recipient referred to a perception that had been mentioned by another recipient. The intention was to ensure that statements referring to similar perceptions were covered by the same code.

On the basis of these descriptive codes a descriptive account of events could be produced: a first overview of the case study. The outcome of this stage of analysis were three lists of descriptive codes: a list of communication activities that had taken place and their specific aspects, an overview of the information that was conveyed and an overview of the effects of the communication programme that were mentioned by research participants (Figure 4.3). The term 'is a' in the brackets behind the codes signifies that the code 'Road show IT NEW', for example, was one of the communication activities that were used. The term 'is part of' signifies that the presence of change strategists, for example, was one part of the communication activity 'Road show IT NEW'. These terms can be attached to relationships between codes in ATLAS/ti in order not to lose track of the relationships.

Figure 4.3: Excerpt from descriptive codes in the first case study ³

```

Communication activity
  Road show IT NEW <is a>
    Presence of change strategists <is part of>
    Possibility to ask questions <is part of>
    Presence of works council <is part of>
  Group meeting <is a>
    Supervisor <is part of>
    Information topical <is part of>
    Information tailored to group <is part of>
  ...
  ...

Information conveyed
  Need for change <is part of>
  Background information <is part of>
  Vision <is part of>
  Goal of change <is part of>
  Impact of change <is part of>
  Change process/Timeline <is part of>
  ...

Effect
  Afraid/Anxious <is a>
  Disappointed <is a>
  Surprised <is a>
  Forward information to customer <is a>
  Seek information actively <is a>
  <is a>
  Use informal communication <is a>
  Uncertain <is a>
  Understand change <is a>
  Feel cared about <is a>
  Perceived danger <is a>
  Engage in dialogue <is a>
  Inefficient <is a>
  Motivated <is a>
  See opportunity for growths <is a>
  See change as chance <is a>
  ...

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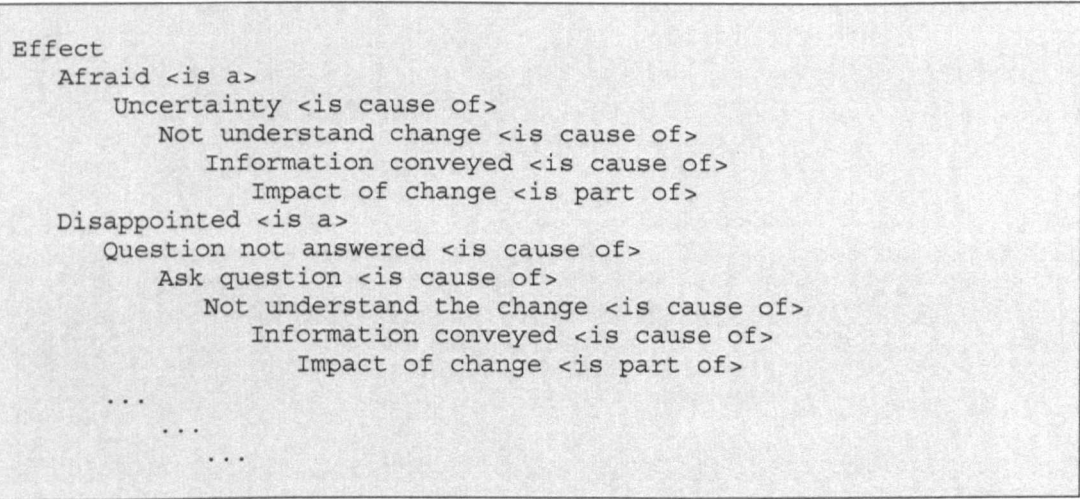
Source: Output of function 'List of codes' for higher-order codes 'Communication activity', 'Information conveyed' and 'Effect' from ATLAS/ti

In the second stage of analysis, an in-depth analysis of the data increased familiarity with both the data and the cases so that it was possible to progress from the descriptive coding to the interpretation of the codes in the context of the communication process as a whole. The outcome of this stage of analysis was the identification of inconsistencies in the codes so that codes were merged, divided or renamed and new codes were created. The use of ATLAS/ti facilitated repeated passes through the data and, thereby,

³ The lists of codes for the three case studies are provided in appendices C to E.

prevented producing superficial accounts of the communication process. The increasing familiarity with the data also allowed the development of an understanding of the relationships between different codes (Figure 4.4). In particular, the relationships between the specific aspects of a communication activity and the different effects could be specified. The terms ‘is a’ and ‘is part of’ in the brackets behind the codes have already been explained above. The term ‘is cause of’ signifies that the code to which the term was attached caused the effect in the line above. For example, ‘uncertainty’ was the reason why recipients became ‘afraid’ and ‘uncertainty’, in turn, was caused because recipients did ‘Not understand the change’. The identification of these relationships was important because it became clear which aspects of the communication programme were responsible for certain effects and follow-up effects.

Figure 4.4: Excerpt from interpretive codes in the first case study



Source: Output of function ‘List of codes’ for higher-order code ‘Effect’ from ATLAS/ti

The third stage of analysis was to search for patterns in the relationships between different codes and to decide which codes to focus on in the thesis. The theory-building features of ATLAS/ti supported the development of pattern codes and of a conceptual structure which fit the data. Figure 4.5 illustrates how the network view available in ATLAS/ti supported the identification of the relationships on which to focus in the thesis. When an effect was considered important (such as the perceived likelihood of success), all other codes related to this effect could be displayed in a network view. The memos capturing the key thoughts regarding the relationships could then be used to

identify the most important relationships. For example, many recipients said that the participation of the works council at the first departmental meeting made them perceive that the change is supported by those who influence its success and recipients perceived the change as likely to succeed. Therefore, this relationship is discussed in the thesis. The discussion of milestones at the departmental meetings, on the other hand, was mentioned by few recipients only and it was a suggestion on how to improve the communication programme. Recipients said that those responsible had not specifically discussed the milestones. Therefore, this relationship is not discussed in detail in the thesis.

Source: Network work view for code 'Perceived likelihood of success' from ATLAS/ti (layout improved for display in thesis)

The three stages of the analysis process did not only occur in chronological order. Interpretive and pattern codes already emerged during the process of considering broad descriptive codes and it would have been artificial and unproductive to ignore these early insights. Consequently, data analysis moved between the three types of codes in an iterative process (Figure 4.2). Such moving between the different classes of codes is in line with Stake (1995) who argues that new meaning can be reached in two different ways – direct interpretation of the individual instance and aggregation of instances until

something can be said about them as a whole – and that a combination of both ways is likely to be most successful in case study research. Moving between the different classes of codes was supported by the use of *ATLAS/ti*. For example, while attaching descriptive codes, a memo could be written quickly about a potential interpretive code and then the attaching of descriptive codes could continue. Before moving to the second stage of the analysis, all memos that had been written during the identification of descriptive codes could be listed easily.

Tesch (1990, p.96) suggests that analysis ‘begins with reading all the data to get a sense of the whole’. Following this advice, all the data were read once data collection was completed. However, analysis began with the initial analysis of each piece of data as it was collected. This ‘familiarisation’ (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002, p.123) was important for identifying first thoughts about key issues and to identify gaps and inconsistencies that could be explored in future data collection. Of course, only when data collection was complete, was it possible to read the whole story. As part of validating the coding process, new codes, relationships between codes and patterns that were identified during the process of analysis were tested across the whole body of data in order to confirm that they are not an idiosyncratic occurrence (Boyatzis, 1998; Hartley, 2004). Finally, the themes and patterns that were identified were compared with the literature in order to refine codes and to look for relationships which may be expected to exist (Figure 4.4).

This process of analysis was undertaken in each case study. In the second and third case study, data were first analysed within the case and then across cases. Comparison of the findings across cases, looking for similarities as well as differences, therefore, was another way of corroborating the findings. Figure 4.2 illustrates that the introduction of theory into analysis is suspended until a holistic understanding of the scene had been developed (Gummesson, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Taylor and Trujillo, 2001), a process that is in line with the interpretivist position.

4.8 Summary

This study was conducted within the subjectivist paradigm, holding an interpretivist philosophical position, and, therefore, focused on the subjective experiences of the persons being studied. The limited nature of previous understanding of the phenomenon lent itself to an exploratory approach in the sense of being open to what was to be found. But the study also was explanatory in that the reasons for the effects of different communication activities were identified. An inductive approach was chosen mainly because fully formed hypotheses could not be developed on the basis of the reported research of others. A multiple rather than a single case study offered greater potential for identifying the influence of different factors and for comparing the influence of these factors in different situations. The cases and persons being studied were chosen strategically on the basis of what they had to offer in terms of answering the research questions. In each case, a combination of data collection methods was necessary in order to fully understand the process of communication.

Analysis began when the first data were collected and lasted until the thesis was almost complete. The process of analysis ensured that codes would be created and evaluated at various levels: single statement, individual interview or observation, within a case, across cases and in comparison with the literature. By using *ATLAS/ti* the mechanical difficulties inherent in qualitative data analysis could be overcome and, therefore, the researcher was free to concentrate to a greater extent on the more creative aspects of theory-building.

Clear criteria along which the quality of the research would be measured were defined and measures to increase the quality of the study were taken along each criterion. These measures included tangible means such as the use of computer software, the creation of a research data base or the use of a researcher's diary as well as less tangible means such as constant reflection on the influence of the researcher on recipients' statements or the influence of pre-understanding on thinking. The less tangible means were made tangible by writing about what was done – in this chapter but also in the case study chapters. The conventions used at the writing up stage of the thesis are explained in the next chapter in order to be able to combine it with an introduction of the cases studied.

5 Introduction to the case studies

In addition to being a way of collecting evidence, case studies are a knowledge generation approach in which telling of the story is key (for example, Stake, 1995; Yin, 2004). Presentation of the story requires arranging the data in an intelligible way and presenting convincing propositions. This chapter outlines and justifies the structure and the focus of the case study chapters and explains the conventions used to facilitate understanding on the part of the reader.

There are a number of ways of presenting research findings and many authors (for example, Pettigrew, 1990; Gummesson, 2000) claim that there is no one best way and that each researcher should find the best way for her/his thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, it was most appropriate to present each case study in a single chapter and in the order in which the case studies were undertaken because the lessons learned from earlier cases determined pre-understanding in later cases. Comparison with the literature and with previous case studies occurs throughout each case study chapter in order to put my insights into the context of the existing understanding of the phenomenon. The structure of each case study chapter is as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Context
3. Recipients' perceptions of the information conveyed
4. Recipients' perceptions of the communication activities used
5. Summary

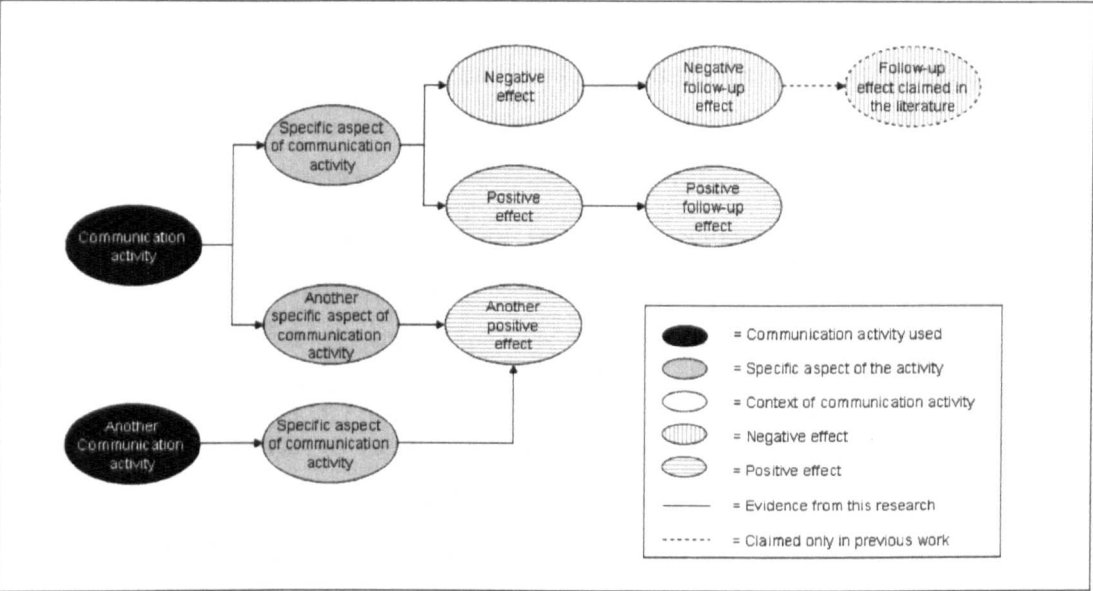
A section on the context of the communication process is necessary because previous work on change communication (for example, Gill, 1996; Lewis, 2000a) argued that an analysis of the communication process needs to consider the context in which communication takes place and that contextual factors need to be included as part of the data that is gathered. The section on the information conveyed is separated from the section on the communication activities used in order to be able to discuss each aspect in sufficient depth. The information conveyed is discussed before the communication activities used because it provides additional information about the change and,

therefore, enables understanding of recipients' perceptions of the communication activities used. The section on the communication activities used is structured along single communication activities because the analysis of a single activity provides the basis for identifying the effect of an activity on the effect of other communication activities as well as for identifying the appropriateness of an activity for conveying certain information. The discussion of specific aspects such as communicator, timing and possibilities for dialogue is integrated into the two sections on the information conveyed and the communication activities used because a main gap in previous work was a lack of understanding of how knowledge about these aspects can be used when choosing and designing communication activities.

In line with the research objectives, the case study chapters focus on recipients' perceptions and not on implementers' intentions. The latter are only addressed when necessary to increase understanding of recipients' perceptions. Furthermore, the chapters focus on the relationships that had not, as yet, been supported by empirical research evidence because the intention of this thesis is to expand the understanding of the phenomenon. For example, recipients' perceptions of backing up the vision with specific goals are discussed in depth (because it was an apparent gap in the literature) whereas the importance of communicating the vision is addressed only briefly (because it had been covered in depth by previous work).

Throughout the case study chapters, diagrams are used to illustrate the relationships found between specific aspects of the communication programme and recipients' perceptions. The diagrams are based on the codes developed in *atlas.ti* but have been clarified regarding the use of symbols and colours. The structure and design of all diagrams are similar in order to enable comparison across chapters and sections (Figure 5.1). The boxes on the communication activities used are solid black, the boxes on specific aspects of a communication activity (such as the communicator or the information conveyed) are solid grey and the boxes on the context are solid white. Positive effects are illustrated by boxes with horizontal lines and negative effects by boxes with vertical lines. Dotted lines and boxes indicate that these relationships are not supported by evidence from the respective case study but by evidence provided in previous work. These boxes are included in order to be able to show how the findings from this research link into the existing understanding of the phenomenon.

Figure 5.1: Key elements of diagrams used to illustrate relationships found



In the summary section of each case study chapter, a table will be used to illustrate the lessons learned from the respective case (Table 5.1). This table is based on the one that has been used in the literature review in order to summarise the gap in the literature.

Table 5.1: Structure of table used to summarise relationships found

Comm. activities used	Timing	Information conveyed	Communicator	Effects
Activity 1	Point(s) in time A	Message A	Person A	Effect A
		Message B	Person B	Effect B
		Possibility for dialogue		Effect C
Activity 2	Point(s) in time B	Message A	Person C	Effect B
		Message C	Person C with Person A	Effect D
				Effect E
etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.

A variety of perspectives was inevitable given the nature of organisational change and the communication programmes considered. As this variety provides a rich source for questioning prior assumptions (Zorn *et al.*, 2000), it is important to use different terms for different groups of recipients. The specific terms are explained in each case study chapter because they depend on the change project. An additional perspective is the one of the researcher, which is not only derived from specific data but also from a general

awareness of a range of data and issues. This personal view is marked clearly as such in the text.

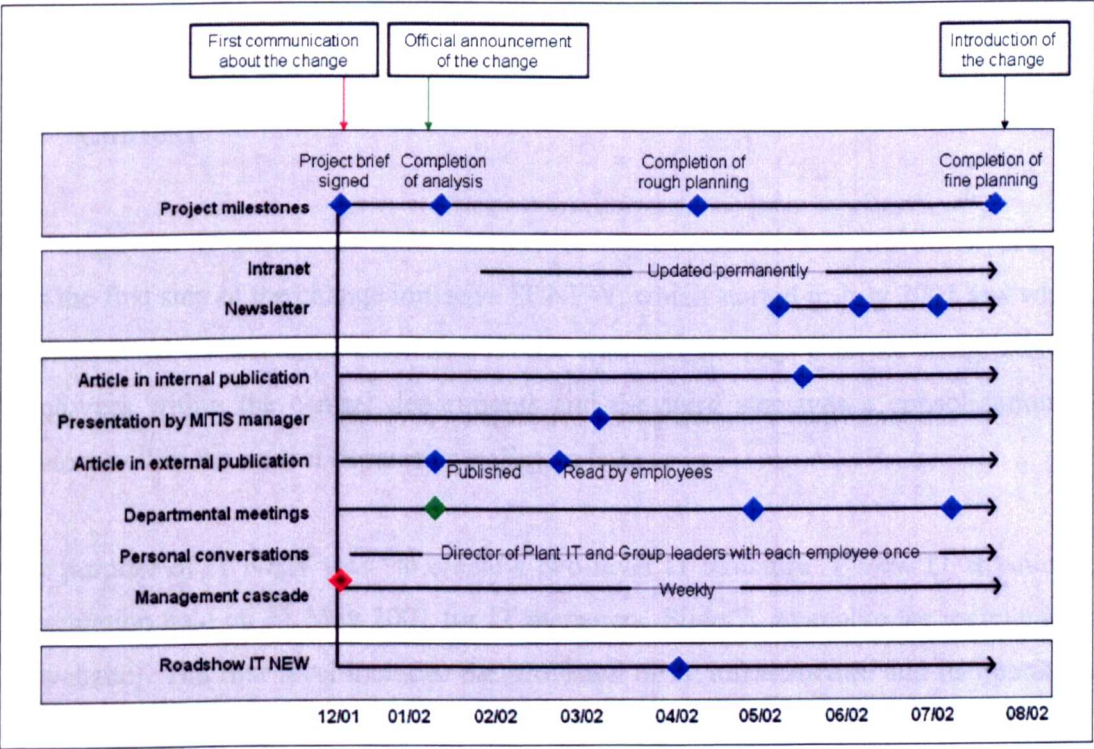
Primary data were collected in German and, therefore, the data included in the case study chapters had to be translated from German to English. Despite differences between German and English (for an explanation of differences between languages see Usunier, 1998), a direct translation of recipients' statements is valid because my approach to analysis is not language-oriented but theory-building, which means that the focus of the analysis is not on the precise meaning of individual words but on the identification of connections between social phenomena (Dey, 1999). When a direct translation from German to English was not possible, for example, when participants used proverbs or colloquial language, the German original is added in order to maintain the integrity of the data. When necessary, I consulted an English linguist in order to clarify the meaning of certain words.

6 Case Study IT NEW

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reports recipients’ perceptions of the effect of the communication activities used to prepare employees working in a local IT department (Plant IT) for the migration to a central IT department (IT Infrastructure Department or IT Applications Department). The communication activities used are illustrated in Figure 6.1. The first communication about the change initiative took place in December 2001, the migration was officially announced in January 2002 and employees started working for the two central departments in August 2002.

Figure 6.1: Communication activities used in Case Study IT NEW



The first section briefly describes the context of the communication process. The next two sections report the findings of the analysis of recipients’ perceptions of the information conveyed and of the channels used. The discussion of aspects such as the timing of communication activities or the creation of dialogue is integrated into these two sections. The chapter concludes by summarising the effects of the communication

programme and the specific aspects responsible for these effects. The terms used to refer to the different groups of people in this case study, which are based on the distinction between different roles in the change processes discussed earlier in this thesis (2.5), are defined in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Terms used to refer to different groups of people in first case study

Term	Definition
Change strategists	Those responsible for planning IT NEW
Implementers	Those responsible for implementing the change
Recipients	Those affected by the change but not involved in its planning
- Director of Plant IT	Director of local IT department
- Group leaders	Direct reports of the director of the Plant IT
- Employees	Employees without supervisory function

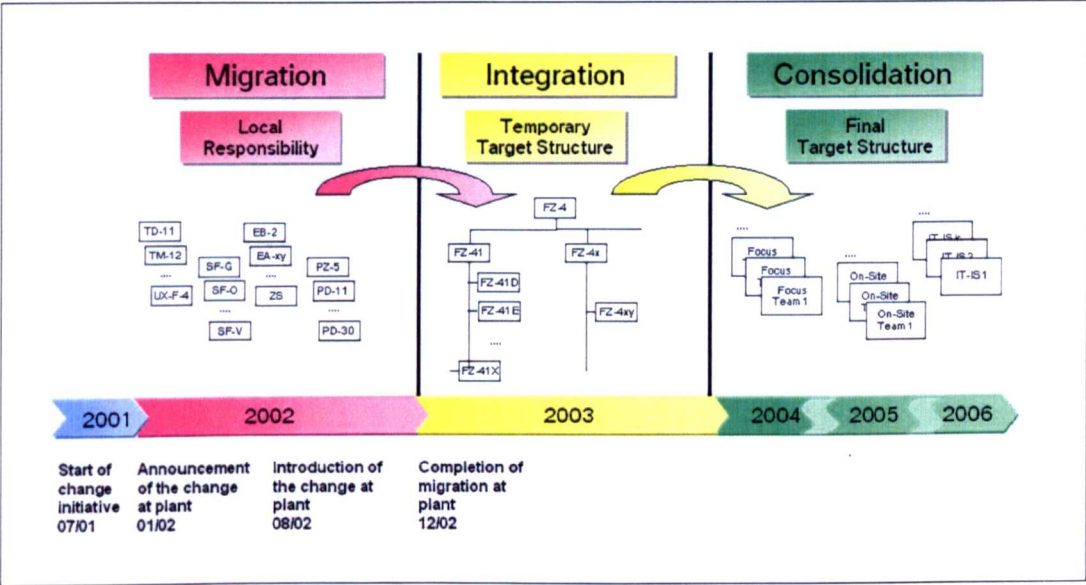
6.2 Context

The migration of employees from the local IT departments to a central IT department was the first step of the change initiative IT NEW, which started in July 2001 and which was expected to last until December 2005. The second step was the integration of employees within the central departments and the third step was a consolidation of services within the central departments (Figure 6.2).

One purpose of IT NEW was “to create a two-level IT structure” (“New IT structure”, Presentation held on 31 May 2001 for IT managers, Slide 7, Available for recipients at IT website). The first level includes the provision of IT infrastructure and its operation by the IT Infrastructure Department. The second level includes the development, implementation and operation of all IT applications by the IT Applications Department. Another purpose of IT NEW was “to standardise the processes within the IT function” (“New IT structure”, Presentation held on 31 May 2001 for IT managers, Slide 7, Available for recipients at MITIS website). Recipients on all levels considered IT NEW as “the biggest shift towards centralisation ever” (Group leader). Service rendering in all

processes was to be improved measurably and “annual cost savings of 100 million euros were to be achieved” (Implementer).

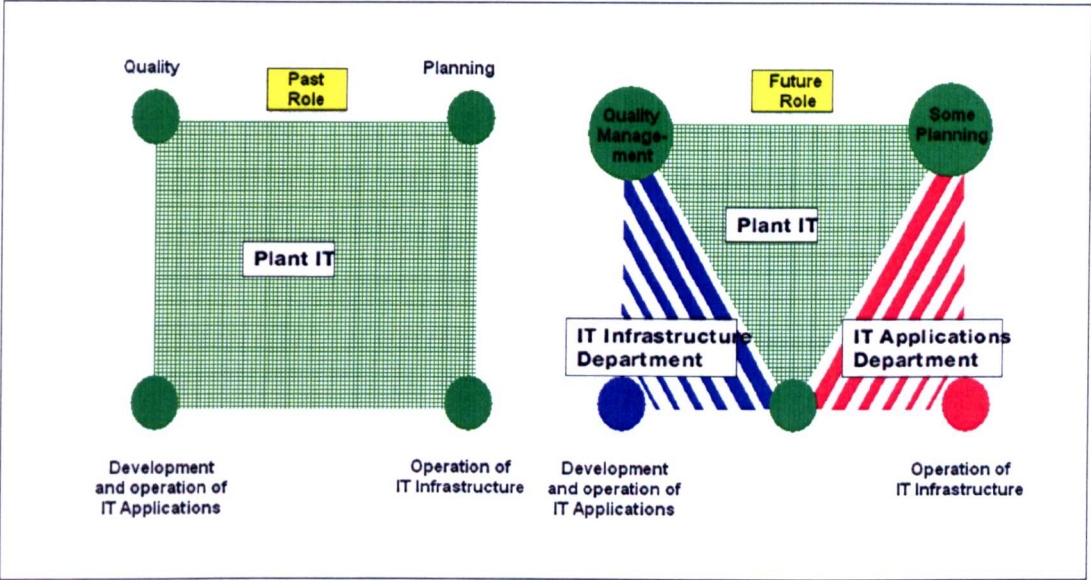
Figure 6.2: Overview of change initiative IT NEW



Source: “New IT structure”, Presentation held on 31 May 2001 for IT managers, Slide 4, Available for recipients at IT website (anonymised)

The creation of the two-level IT-structure was driven by two different projects. The project MITIS (Migration of IT Infrastructure) was responsible for the migration of infrastructure-related tasks from the plants to the IT Infrastructure Department. The project MITAP (Migration of IT Applicas) was responsible for the migration of application-related tasks from the plants to the IT Applications Department. Before the migration, the department consisted of 44 employees and included three hierarchical layers: the director, four group leaders and 39 employees. The personnel statistics of the case study organisation show that one third of the employees remained in the plant, one third moved to the IT Applications Department and one third moved to the IT Infrastructure Department. The migration of employees to the two central departments was combined with a reduction of the responsibilities of the Plant IT. Before the migration, the Plant IT was responsible for IT infrastructure, IT applications and the interface to the process partners in the plant. After the migration, the Plant IT was no longer responsible for the development and operation of IT applications and for the operation of IT infrastructures. The degree of planning IT-related issues was also reduced (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Old and new responsibilities of the Plant IT



Source: Presentation held at first departmental meeting, 22 January 2002, Plant IT meeting room, Slide 4

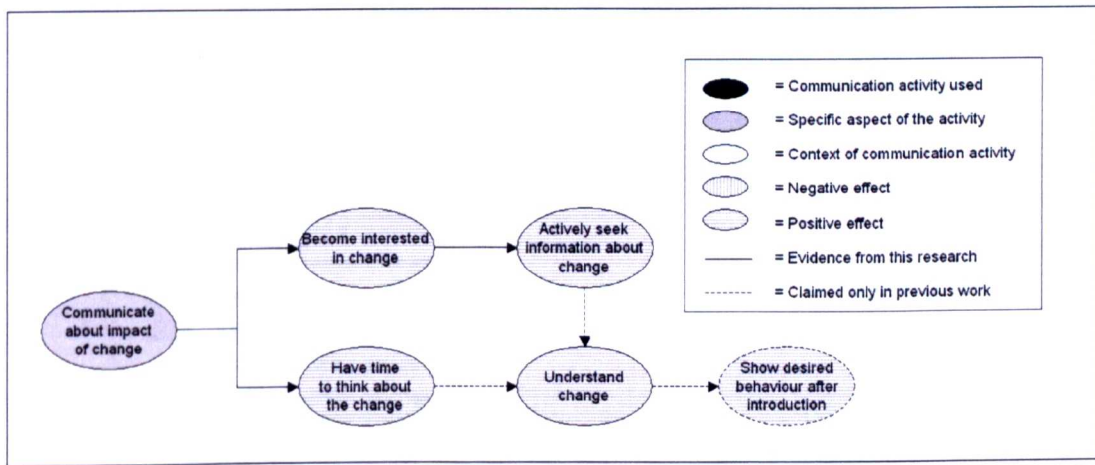
6.3 Information conveyed

6.3.1 Impact of the change on the individual recipient

The evidence from this case supports the claim widely made in the literature that information about the personal impact of the change is important (for example, Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a). Recipients wanted to know how the change would affect their work and their life and they wanted to know about the assignment of tasks to the new departments. This is reflected in statements such as “The relevance of the information for my own work is most important” and “I want to know how a change affects my work. What changes for me? My task? My location? My manager? I want to know everything about it” (Employees). The special interest in the assignment of tasks can be explained by the fact that IT NEW was a restructuring and the assignment of tasks determined who would work where with whom. Provision of information about the impact of the change created interest in the change and increased active seeking of information. “I listen more actively if they are talking about my topic – networks and personal computers – and I am willing to look things up to understand it better” was the statement by one of the employees which was representative for the other employees.

Timely information about the impact of the change also gave recipients sufficient time to think about the change and its impact on their life. One employee stated, for example, “Timely communication means that I can deal with the change: How am I affected and how do I want to react?”. Figure 6.4 illustrates that both having the time to think the change through and actively seeking information are considered determinants of the accuracy of recipients’ understanding of the change (Mohr, 1997).

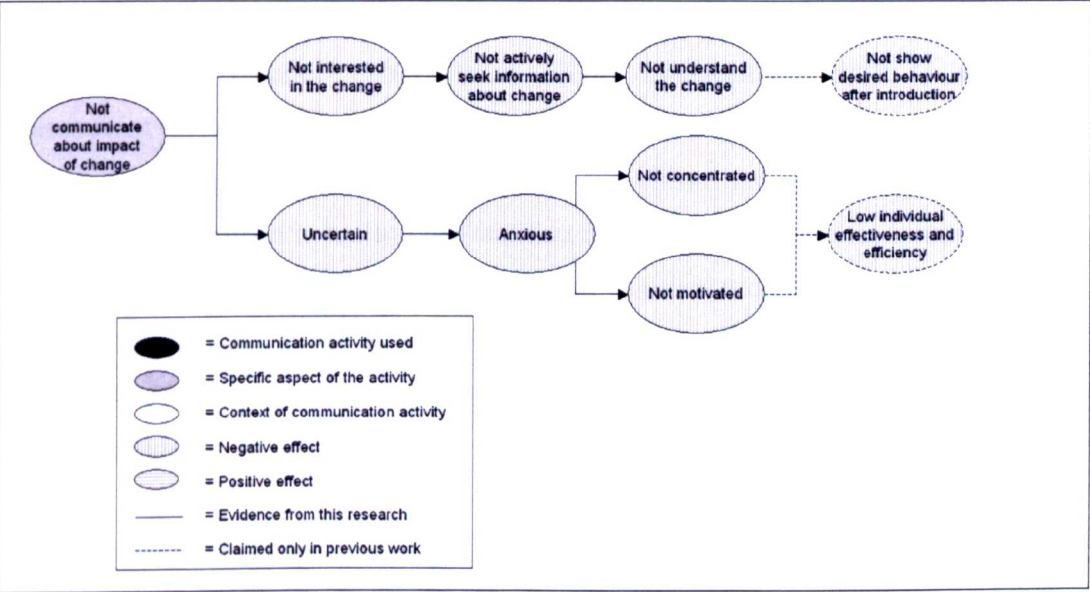
Figure 6.4: Positive effects of communicating the impact of the change



The lack of timely information about the impact of the change led to a lack of interest and to a less accurate understanding of the change. One of the employees, for example, explained that, “because of the lack of information, I am not able to assess the relevance of the project. Therefore, my interest gets lost. And the lack of interest, in turn, led to a lack of knowledge because I did not look for information anymore”. Recipients on all levels said that the lack of timely information about the impact of the change also caused uncertainty and anxiety among employees. “There was anxiety because we did not know whether we would have to complete an unpleasant task at an unpleasant location” (Employee). “There was anxiety ... Implementers had to do something” (Group leader). The anxiety caused by recipients’ uncertainty regarding the impact of the change caused additional problems in that some employees, though not the majority, felt distracted from their work and had difficulties focusing on their regular tasks. One of these employees said during our interview “I was less motivated” and “I could not concentrate”. Group leaders confirmed that, “until they told us what the change was about, some employees could not concentrate on their regular work anymore” (Group leader). Knowledge about these negative effects is important because previous work (for

example, Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002) claims that emotional and cognitive distractions are a main reason why organisational effectiveness is reduced during the change process (Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: Negative effects of not communicating the impact of the change



The anxiety triggered by recipients' uncertainty regarding potential layoffs was reduced during the road show, when the director of the central IT Department officially denied rumours regarding layoffs. He explicitly said that "nobody will be laid off" (Observation of road show IT NEW, 26 April 2002) and employees believed him. Those employees who had been afraid of losing their job before the road show felt much better after the road show. One of them said "That statement was very important. Some of us had really thought that there would be layoffs. But his explanation was plausible" (Employee). But the anxiety triggered by recipients' uncertainty regarding their work remained after the road show. One of the employees said "We knew from December 2001 that there would be a change project. But we did not know what would happen and how we would be affected" and one of the group leaders explained "It was unclear for a long time who would work where but this is important to know because there will be much less anxiety if employees know that they don't have to change locations". It is difficult to say whether the group leader was right in his assumption that uncertainty and anxiety would have decreased if recipients had been told how they would be affected but, given the positive effect of conveying disconfirming information

in response to rumours about layoffs, it is very likely that information about the assignment of tasks would have had a similarly positive effect on recipients' anxiety.

6.3.2 Specific Information

Previous work (Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2003; Quirke, 1996) claimed that recipients not only want to understand the impact of the change but also the need for change, the benefit of the change, the vision and the change process. But previous work rarely emphasised the fact that information about these issues should be specific in order to achieve desired effects such as orientation or uncertainty reduction. In this case study, recipients' preference for "specific", "detailed" and "deep" (Employees) information was the most important issue with regard to the characteristics of the message.

The importance of communicating the vision (Fairhurst, 1993; Lewis, 2000a, 2000b; Reger *et al.*, 1994; Young and Post, 1993) had been discussed in the literature in depth. The evidence from this case study supports the claim that communicating the vision gives orientation and helps recipients with making sense of the change. A common perception among employees was that the vision of an effective two-level IT structure "was helpful because we were reminded of the importance of IT NEW for the productivity of our company" (Employee). But the evidence also shows that recipients did not consider the vision as sufficient to be oriented. "They don't seem to have a scenario of the future" (Group leader). Similarly, one of the employees stated "What I am looking for, and what is missing so far, are tangible aspects. 'It becomes better' or 'It becomes nicer' is not helpful" (Employee) and another employee expressed the desire to break down the vision into tangible goals. He explained

They talk about cost reduction and synergies through standardisation, centralisation and increased cooperation. Aren't there any tangible goals? ... A goal is more concrete, specific and shorter-term. A vision is more abstract, less tangible, farer away and longer-term.

The importance of goals had been discussed in the general management literature (for example, Gallagher *et al.*, 1997) and in the change management literature (for example,

Carnall, 2003; Hayes, 2002) but it appears as if the question of when and how to communicate about goals had been widely neglected in the change communication literature with two exceptions. Respondents in a study by Lewis (2000a) said that it is important to discuss the specific goals of a change initiative and Klein (1996) claimed more widely that communicating specific goals is important in order to ready recipients for a change. The evidence from this case study supports both claims in that evidence for the negative effect of not communicating specific goals is provided. For example, recipients considered the following statement, which the MITIS project leader had made during a meeting of the MITIS project team, as helpful: "Everything remains at least the same. Many things become better" (Reported by an employee and confirmed by the project leader). The statement provided orientation, which is reflected in statements such as "We didn't know what would happen. IT NEW is a big change. But we believed the MITIS project leader. He was the former director of our department. His statement gave some foothold at the early stage" (Employee). But when specific information was not provided after two months, recipients on all levels came to consider the project leader's statement as valueless. "I do not like these theses and slogans if they are not backed up with data. The facts belong on the table" (Group leader). As slogans were not backed up with specific information, recipients did not understand the goals and they became almost angry.

All they said were buzzwords such as 'We must improve' or 'We have to optimise'. That is a matter of course. Those are no helpful statements. That is a zero-information.⁴ These things can also be used for a speech in an election campaign. Those are sales message. You could fill a talk show with these statements (Employee).

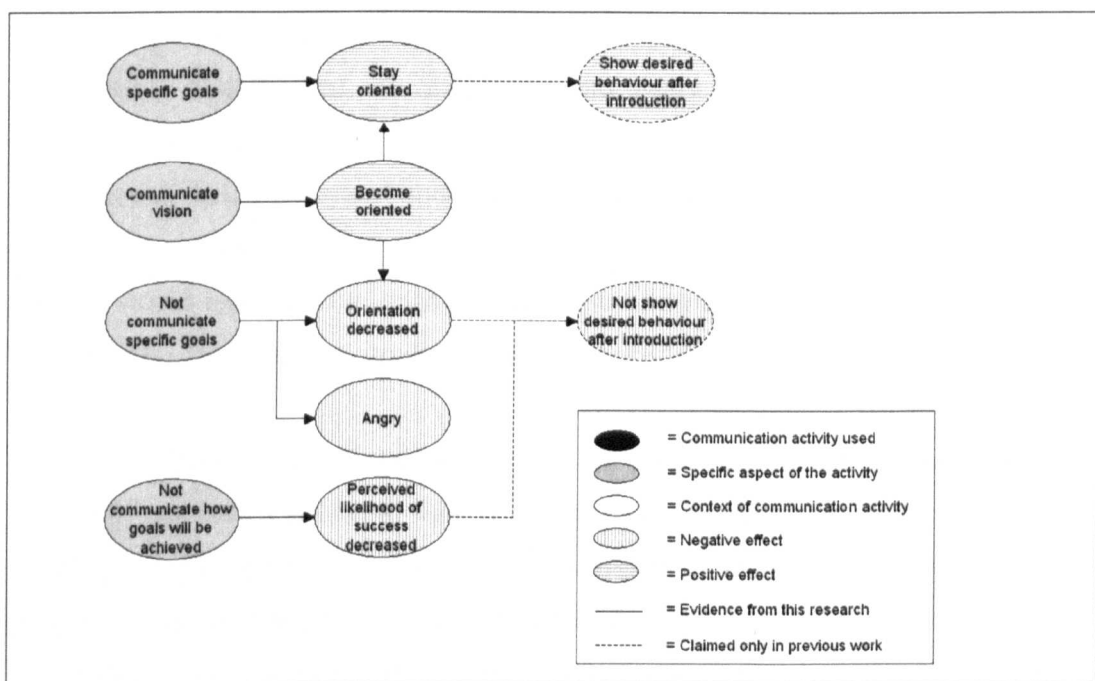
Furthermore, recipients not only wanted to understand the goals, they also wanted information about how the goals could be achieved. "Those responsible must show a concrete way how it works." (Employee) As something tangible was missing from their perspective, recipients did not believe in the likelihood of success. "It is not visible how the goals can be achieved. There is little butter by the fishes⁵. I miss, I want and I need something tangible" (Group leader).

⁴ In German: "Das ist eine Null-Information"

⁵ German Proverb: "Wenig Butter bei die Fische"

The previous paragraphs have shown that communicating the vision of the change is important, but not sufficient, to provide orientation for employees. Figure 6.6 illustrates the negative effects that occurred in this case study because communication about the vision was not followed up by information about specific goals and about how those can be achieved. It is widely argued in previous work (Armenakis and Harris, 2001; Kotter, 1995) that a lack of orientation and a lack of belief in the likelihood of success of a change is likely to prevent recipients from adopting the desired behaviour.

Figure 6.6: Effects of (not) communicating about the vision and goals



The effect of a lack of specific information on recipients' perceptions of the likelihood of success also became visible with regard to the benefit of the change. During the road show IT NEW one employee asked those responsible to explain the benefit of IT NEW in three short sentences but nobody on the podium provided a satisfactory answer (Observation of road show IT NEW, 26 April 2002). Those sitting next to me shook their heads in reply and one of them said: "I cannot believe it."⁶ The employee who had asked the question complained immediately after the event "That was again little tangible. I don't see how the reorganisation will be beneficial" and another employee

⁶ In German: "Das gibt's doch gar nicht"

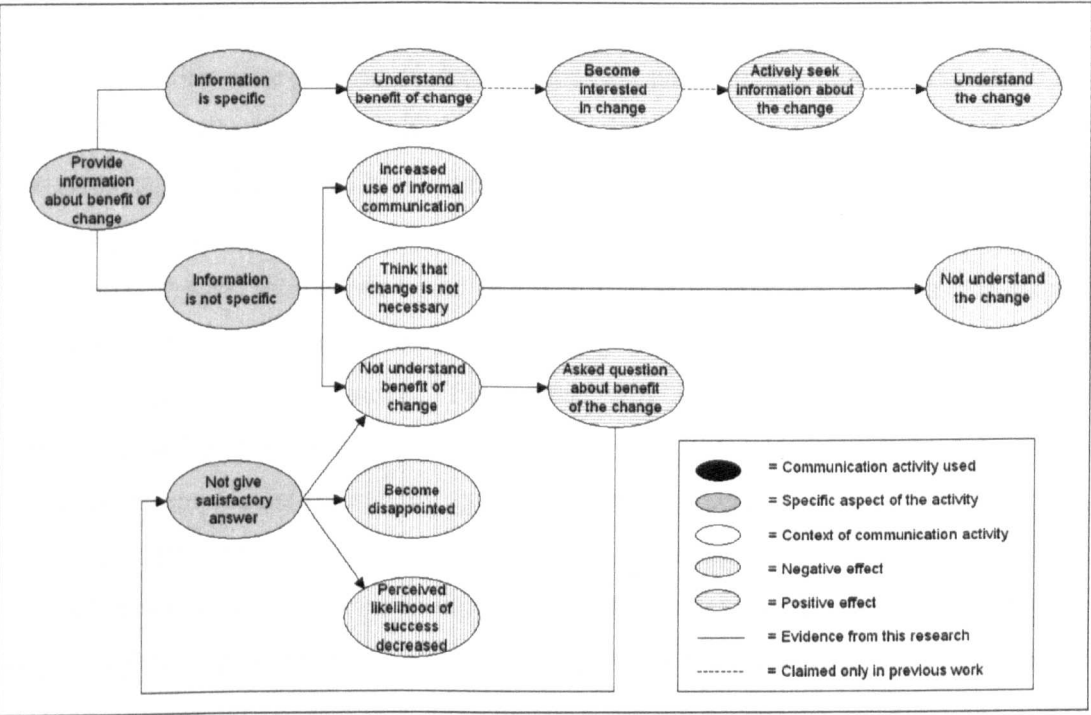
“had the impression that they don’t know it themselves”. The negative effect of a lack of specific information was increased by the fact that recipients had contradicting information. “The director of the IT infrastructure department said that the desired cost reductions should be visible by 2006 but to my knowledge the costs for network connections, for example, will be three times higher than they are now” (Employee). Because of the lack of specific information from implementers, recipients came up with their own explanations. According to previous work (for example, Glover, 2001), these explanations are often more negative than reality and this was also the case in this situation. A common perception among recipients was “Some of my colleagues feel as if the whole thing is an attack of prosperity⁷. Now that we have overcome the last crisis, we have got the time and money for new experiments” (Employee). Recipients consequently doubted that the change was necessary. One of the employees stated during the interview “Do we need all this?”. The three group leaders knew about the inaccuracy of their employees’ understanding but did not have the knowledge to convey the necessary information. They complained “More specific information from formal sources would have reduced many misunderstandings. ... But those responsible just don’t provide the facts to contradict our assumptions” (Group leader).

A general effect of a lack of specific information was an increase in the use of informal sources. Recipients considered this as “a necessary complement to formal sources” (Employee) and they perceived it as helpful because it reduced their uncertainty. Much previous work on change communication (for example, Axley, 2000; Harshman and Harshman, 1999) claimed that informal messages are often less accurate and more negative than formal messages. The evidence from this case study partly contradicts this claim because, whereas the information about network costs was indeed wrong (discussed earlier in this section), recipients at different levels said that “informal channels had similar content” (Group leader) and that “the information received via informal channels often was true” (Employee). The accuracy of these statements could be confirmed by the researcher who could compare recipients’ with the content of the official communication activities.

⁷ In German: “ein Wohlstandsanfall”

Figure 6.7 illustrates the effects of (not) communicating specific information about the benefit of the change as well as the effects of (not) providing satisfactory answers to recipients’ questions about the benefit of the change. In order to increase clarity, the fact that the questions were asked at the road show (communication activity) and that those who answered the questions were change strategists (communicator) are excluded. The effects of these aspects are pursued in the section on the communication activities used.

Figure 6.7: Positive and negative effects of (not) providing specific information



6.3.3 Final Decisions

Implementers in a study by Lewis *et al.* (2001) concluded from their experience not to communicate too many details during the decision-making process because too much information is likely to increase confusion. In this case study, implementers provided a lot of information during the decision-making process, but recipients preferred only information on key decisions and how these affected them. Recipients were “interested in decisions that have been made” and they were “not interested in what has not been decided yet” (Group leader). “They don’t have to tell us in the first place, if they change it afterwards” (Employee). The provision of too much information during the decision-

making process led to information overload and, consequently, “confusion”, “uncertainty” (Employees) and “abeyance”⁸ (Group leader). One employee explained this in detail:

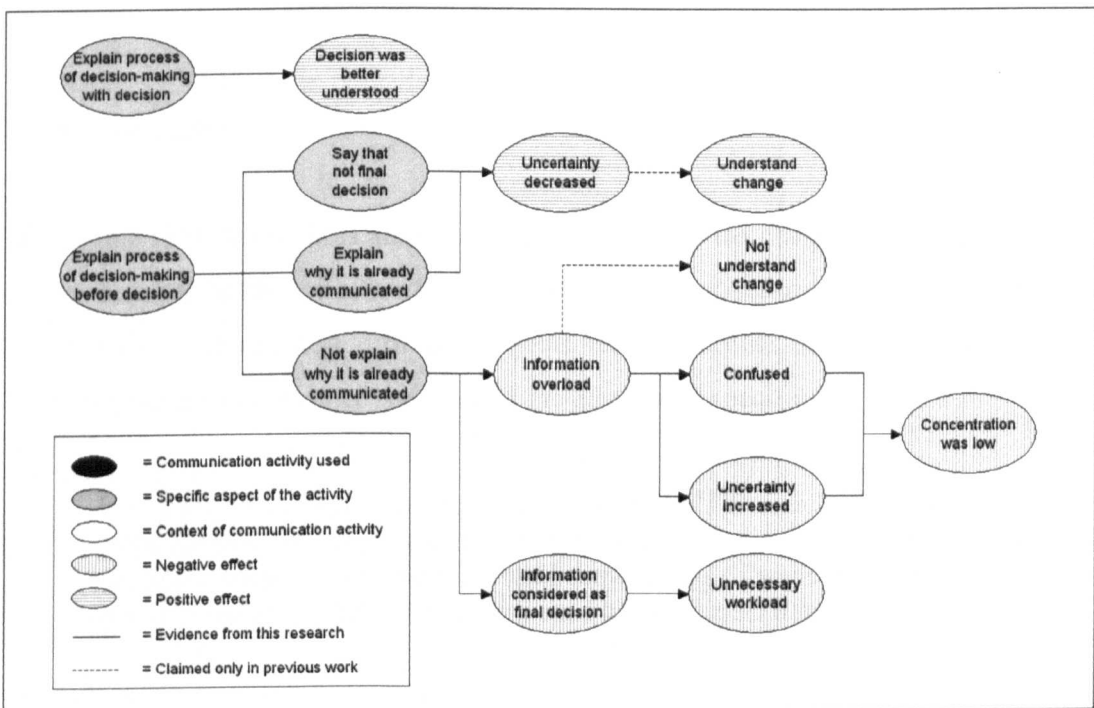
At some points I felt like we received too much information. We were over-informed. We were informed about all kinds of steps and processes but not about decisions. I became confused and did not even know anymore who was responsible for what.

Part of the confusion was caused by the fact that recipients were not used to receiving information during the process of decision-making because past change projects in the case study organisation had rarely done this. In the past “a small team of chosen senior managers sat together in a small room for several weeks and defined what the future would look like” (Implementer). A common perception among recipients was that, in this project, “those responsible acted differently than in previous projects. No project has been rolled out to employees like that. They didn’t lock themselves up in a small room this time” (Group leader). The reason why implementers wanted to inform employees earlier and more regularly was the organisation’s shift towards a greater focus on its employees (Corporate goals, Presentation available at corporate website, accessed on 10 June 2002). The intention of providing information during the process of decision-making was to give recipients’ time to think about the change and to integrate them into the planning process – if only through being informed (Observation of second meeting of working committee Communication for IT Migration, 21 February 2002). Recipients acknowledged the change in communication, which is reflected in statements such as “I was surprised that they communicated so openly and that so much information was forwarded to us” (Employee), but they were still confused. The understanding of the research of the case as a whole suggests that the problem was that the change in approach to communication and its purpose were not explained. This would be in line with Gill (1996) who concluded from her case study that changes in the way implementers treat recipients need to be part of the change message because, if recipients understand the intention, they are more likely to act accordingly.

⁸ In German: “Schwebezustand”

As implementers provided large amounts of information and frequently revised the information, several recipients started thinking that “those responsible spun round” and they concluded that “if the project is as uncoordinated as the communication about the project, then this project won’t be successful” (Employees). But the decrease in the perceived likelihood of success was not the only negative effect. Recipients considered the information received as final decisions, which led to unnecessary work. The employee with whom the last interview was conducted confirmed what previous interviewees had said with regard to misunderstandings caused by the communication of details before the final decision had been made: “Sometimes we started working on the basis of detailed information which we considered a final decision. Then we found out that it was not. This led to additional work that could have, no, should have been avoided”. Figure 6.8 illustrates the negative effects when too much information was conveyed before the decision was made and when implementers did not explain that the information provided was not yet a final decision.

Figure 6.8: Effects of communicating the process of decision-making



Despite recipients' preference for being informed about final decisions, they still wanted information about the process of decision-making. However, they wanted the information at the point in time when they were informed about the decision. Recipients

wanted an overview of the process that led to the decision in order to better understand the decision (Figure 6.8).

If only the decision is communicated, it is often difficult to understand why the decision has been made. Important are the decision and the process of decision-making. The process ... that is ... key thoughts, vertices, controversial subjects ... details would be boring (Employee).

Recipients only wanted to be informed about the process of decision-making before the decision was made when they had received informal information about an issue of interest. They then wanted implementers to communicate the options available, to state when the final decision would be made and to comment on (confirm or disapprove) the information they had. "Those responsible should say that things may change and why. This should be made very clear to all those affected. And once the final decision is made, they should inform us about the decision" (Employee). It is important that implementers make clear that the information provided is not yet a final decision in order to prevent the unnecessary work discussed above.

6.3.4 Big Picture

During the first two months after the announcement of the change most recipients did not understand the change as a whole. Recipients received information about the change but they did not know how different projects were connected. A typical statement was "The big picture was missing" and one of the employees specified:

We received information about the projects MITIS and MITAP and about the plans for our own department. We knew something was happening. But we did not know what. It took too long until they told us 'This is the way the project is going to work'. A short overview would have been sufficient.

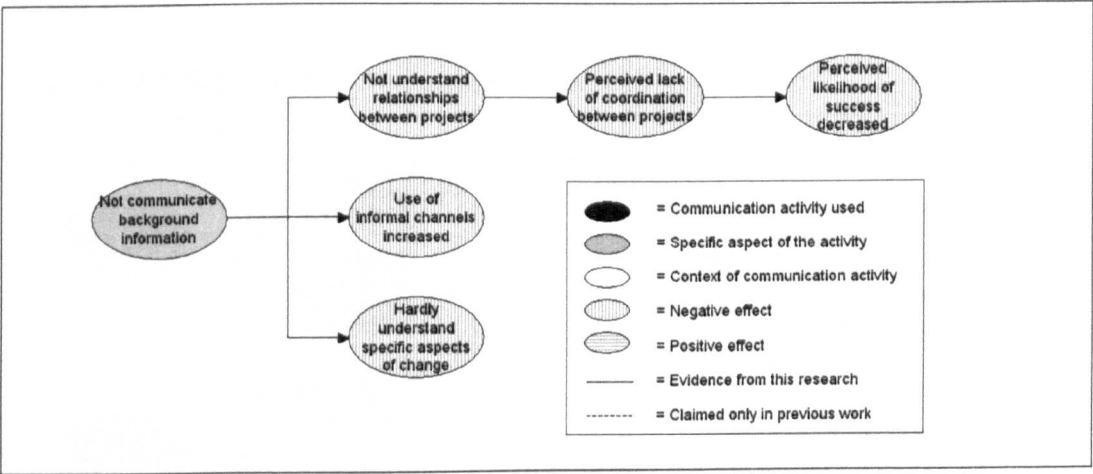
One effect of the lack of understanding of the big picture was that recipients perceived a lack of coordination between the different projects and concluded that this influenced the likelihood of success of the change initiative. "It seems like several people work on IT NEW without knowing about each other. How can it work?" (Employee) But the reality was that the projects were coordinated. Recipients just could not see the

connections because they did not have enough background information. Another effect of the lack of recipients’ understanding of the big picture was an increase in recipients’ use of informal channels.

Bringing together the bits of information to form a coherent whole was highly dependent on informal communication. I looked at the information I had. I figured out what was missing. And then I talked to my colleagues in order to make sense of the bits of information I had (Employee).

A third effect was that recipients’ lack of understanding of the big picture influenced their understanding of specific aspects of the change. For example, as implementers omitted to provide information about the situation in other plants, recipients concluded from their knowledge about increased costs for network connections that the change would not be beneficial. In implementers’ hindsight more background information should have been provided because “employees had only begun to accept the change when they realised that certain inefficiencies at each plant were necessary in order to increase the overall efficiency of IT” (Implementer). Figure 6.9 illustrates these three negative effects and the negative follow-up effects. The findings show that communicating the big picture is important as a framework into which specific information can be integrated and as a basis for understanding specific aspects of the change.

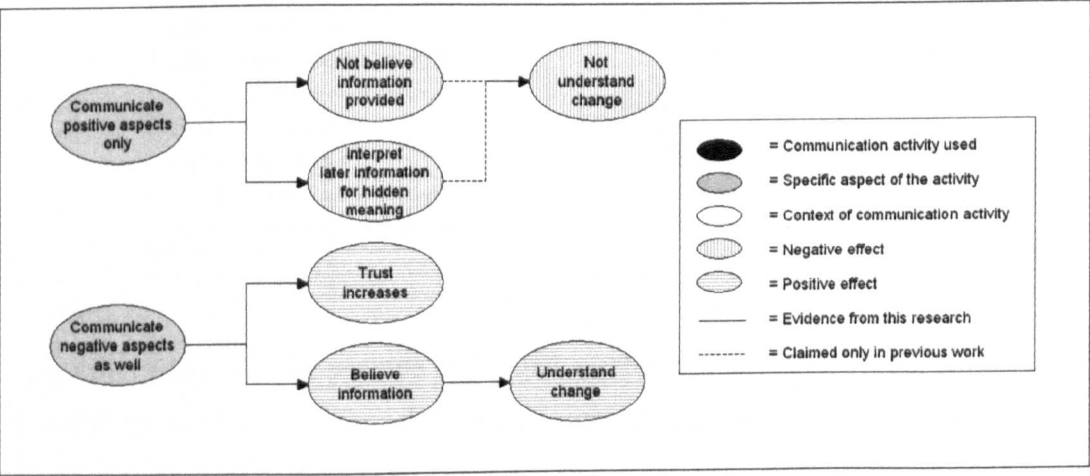
Figure 6.9: Negative effects of not communicating background information



6.3.5 Realistic Information

Previous work (for example, Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2001; Quirke, 1996) suggests that negative effects of the change and difficulties regarding the implementation of the change should also be communicated. The evidence from this case study supports this claim by demonstrating two effects of choosing not to communicate negative aspects (Figure 6.10). Recipients on all levels would have desired more realistic information because they did not believe the overly optimistic information provided by implementers. “Those responsible should have presented more realistic information. The information became much less believable because they presented positive aspects only” (Employee). Group leaders knew that their employees did not believe some of the information conveyed by change strategists and one of them concluded during our interview that “those responsible could have increased clarity and trust if they had communicated negative aspects as well”. Conveying unbelievable information is problematic because unbelievable information is unlikely to increase the accuracy of recipients’ understanding (Harshman and Harshman, 1999). Furthermore, the provision of unbelievable information may lead to the problem that recipients are more likely to interpret future messages for hidden meaning because recipients ask themselves why management should tell the truth next time (Lippitt, 1997; Quirke, 1996). Finally, if recipients perceive formal communication as unbelievable, this is likely to contribute to the increased use of informal communication channels (Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999).

Figure 6.10: Effects of (not) communicating realistic information



6.4 Communication activities used

6.4.1 First information about the change

Most employees first heard about the change in December 2001 when supervisors forwarded a presentation they had received from the director of the Plant IT. The presentation provided a brief overview of the need for IT NEW, its main objectives and the general timeline. “This was even before the departmental meeting on 22 January” (Employee). A positive effect was that forwarding the email confirmed employees’ view that their supervisors would forward any information that was relevant for them, which made them feel comfortable. “I knew they would inform us”, said one employee during our interview, and another employee said “Our supervisors took care of us”. The negative effect was that recipients knew a change was about to come but they did not have any specific information, which caused uncertainty and uneasiness.

I knew that I am affected. But I did not have any specific information. Then I began brooding over the change and I asked the normal questions: Will I have the same job after the change? Will I be in the same position? But we did not receive more specific information about IT NEW at our plants before the departmental meeting (Employee).

Figure 6.11: Effects of the informal announcement of the change

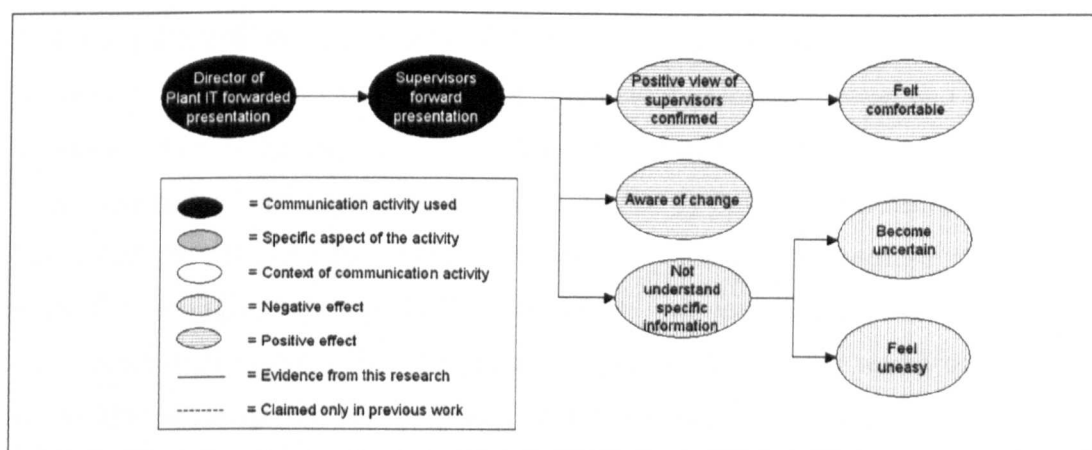


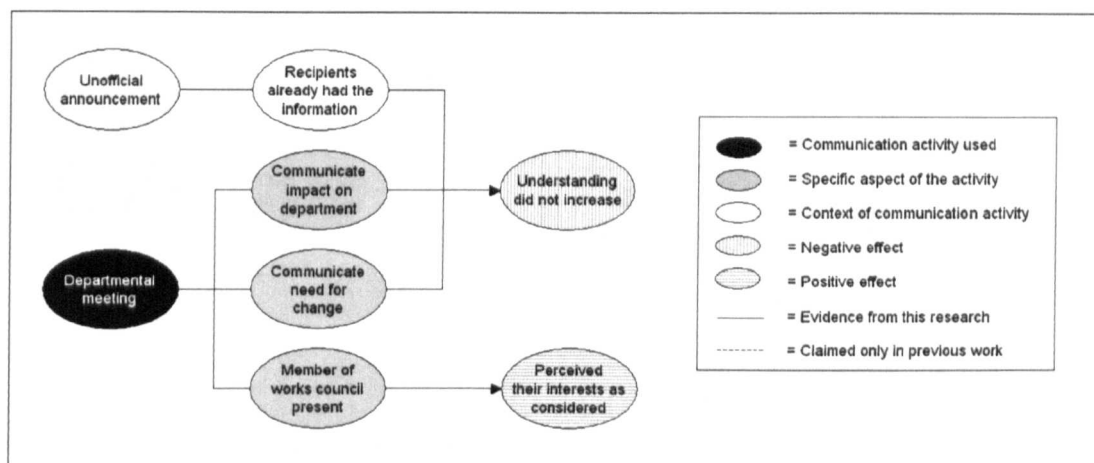
Figure 6.11 illustrates the positive and negative effects of forwarding information about IT NEW to employees before the official announcement of the change. The negative effects support the claim made by Smeltzer (1991) that distribution of information about

a change before its official announcement is very likely to cause problems. Furthermore, the fact that the first information about the change was not the official announcement was a first indicator that the communication programme lacked structure in general. One of the implementers admitted that “nobody pulled all the strings” and recipients on all levels considered the whole communication process as uncoordinated, using terms such as “chaotic” (Group leader) or “not coherent” (Employee). The negative effects also support the claim made in previous work (for example, Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; MasterMedia, 2000) that the adoption of a structured approach to the design and management of change communication is likely to increase the effectiveness of the communication programme. This suggests that, in the future, communication planners should design integrated communication programmes and make sure that the different communication activities fit together.

6.4.2 Official announcement of the change

The official announcement of the change took place during a meeting of the whole department on 22 January 2002. The Director of the Plant IT said that departmental meetings were usually intended to inform all employees about IT-related news and important corporate issues but, during this meeting, he explained the need for IT NEW and how it would affect the department (Presentation held at first departmental meeting, 22 January 2002, Slide 2). Recipients did not consider the announcement as very helpful because they already knew most of the information. One employee said during our interview “Everything they said at the departmental meeting, I knew before. It should have come earlier.” This supports evidence provided by Smeltzer and Zener (1992) who found that the official announcement can become meaningless because of extensive unofficial messages (Figure 6.12). From recipients’ perspective, the only value added of the departmental meeting was the presence of a member of the works council who stated that the change had been discussed with the works council. Recipients interpreted this positively because, “whenever the works council is involved, this is usually a sign that the interests of employees are considered” (Employee).

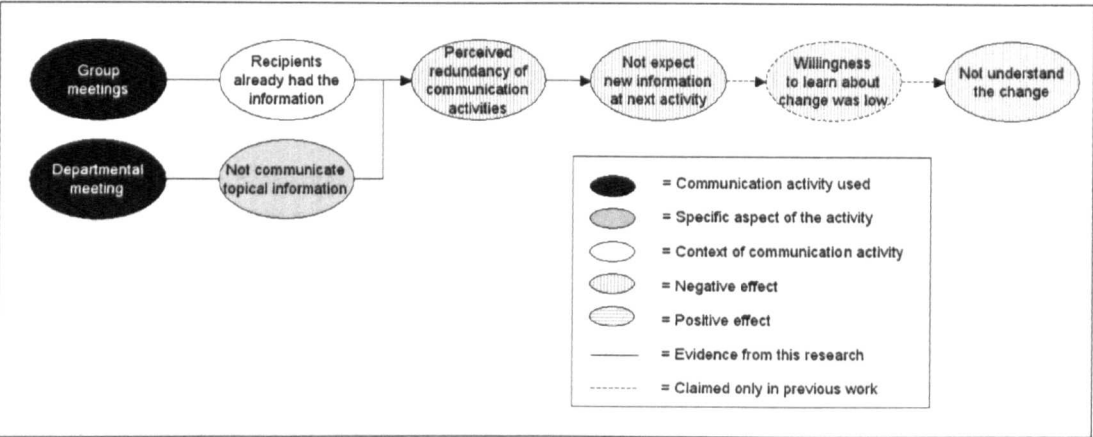
Figure 6.12: Effects of the first departmental meeting



Two more departmental meetings took place on 16 May and 17 July 2002 but neither group leaders nor employees considered these two meetings as necessary communication activities. One employee said that “The departmental meetings cannot provide topical information because they only take place every three months. Therefore, they are hardly necessary” and another employee complained “During the last two meetings, I heard nothing new about the issues I was interested in but I received a lot of information about issues that I was not interested in”. A common conclusion by employees was “There is some redundancy in the communication activities” (Employee).

In addition to the problem that individual communication activities are less effective in an uncoordinated approach, the lack of coordination also led to the problem that recipients “did not expect to receive new information during the next communication activity” (Employee). This was problematic because previous work (for example, Pfannenberger, 2003; Streich *et al.*, 1997) argues that willingness to learn about the change is an important factor influencing the speed at which the accuracy of recipients’ understanding of the change is increased. This is supported by work in cognitive psychology on the role of expectation and attention on human information processing (for example, Gavin, 1998). Figure 6.13 illustrates the negative effects caused by a lack of coordination between communication activities and the resulting redundancy of communication activities.

Figure 6.13: Negative effects of a lack of coordination of communication activities



Coordination between communication activities could have increased the effectiveness of departmental meetings as well as the effectiveness of the communication programme as a whole because different communication channels would have complemented each other. For example, as topical information was presented by group leaders during group meetings, the director of the Plant IT could have reported on the achievement of key milestones and explained the next steps. This way the information would have been new and recipients’ preference “to receive the information from face to face” (Employee) also would have been considered.

6.4.3 Road show IT NEW

The road show IT NEW on 26 April 2002 was the first face-to-face communication about the migration organised by the change initiative itself. The purpose was “to directly provide IT employees with necessary information about IT NEW” (Observation of second meeting of working committee Communication for IT Migration, 21 February 2002). Recipients considered the road show an important event in the communication process, labelling it “good” or “a good thing” (Employees).

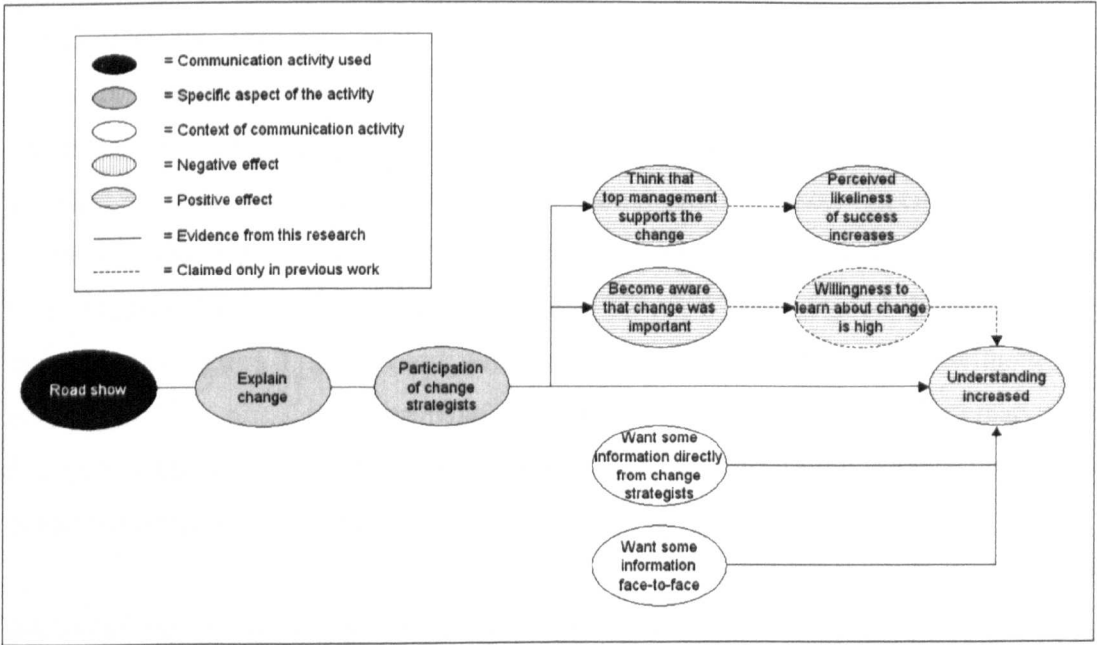
Previous work (for example, Klein, 1996; Mast, 2002a) argues that visible top management support is an important success factor in change communication and the director of the Plant IT also assumed that “employees want to see that top management supports the change”. Indeed, the participation of the directors of the two central IT

departments was a key success factor. “The most positive thing was that those responsible were present. I appreciate personal presence. That is very important for me” (Employee). One of the group leaders specified

The road show was a must – with these persons. If the directors of the two central departments had not come, they could have cancelled the whole thing. ... It is also a question of the value that is attributed to a person. If I see that someone takes the time to explain something to me, than it must be important to him.

In addition to getting to know change strategists, recipients on all levels wanted to receive at least some information directly from change strategists. Some recipients highlighted what was missing: “Some links between us and the board of management were missing” (Employee). Other recipients emphasised what was good: “Employees sometimes need the original statements of those responsible”⁹ (Group leader). The positive effects of change strategists’ presence at the road show are illustrated in Figure 6.14.

Figure 6.14: Positive effects of change strategists’ presence at road show



⁹ In German: “Die Mitarbeiter brauchen die Aussagen manchmal im O-Ton”

Recipients on all levels would have preferred receiving information from implementers earlier. In their opinion, the first face-to-face communication with implementers should have taken place earlier than 26 April 2002, which was three months after the change had been officially announced and four months after it had first been communicated about. Typical statements were “The road show should have come earlier” and “If those responsible don’t speak, there will be rumours” (Employees). This supports the claim made in previous work (for example, Bernecker and Reiß, 2003; Klein, 1996; Quirke, 1996) that face-to-face communication with implementers is necessary early in the change process. It is difficult to say what would have happened if a face-to-face meeting with an implementer had not been scheduled before the road show on recipients’ request (discussed in 6.4.6).

Recipients also perceived the road show as helpful because they could ask questions about anything that had remained unclear so far. A common perception was “There was dialogue. Very good. We could ask questions” (Group leader). Fifteen questions were asked at the end of the road show (Observation of road show IT NEW). As group leaders knew about employees’ preference for asking questions during group meetings, they had expected fewer questions. They explained the unexpected high number of questions by the provision of relevant information in advance of the event. A typical statement was “I am sure that, without this knowledge, there would have been fewer questions” (Group leader). More questions were considered a good thing, in this context, because recipients’ understanding could be increased. Recipients indeed considered it as very helpful that they had enough information about IT NEW before the event because they could think of questions in advance. “It was good that we already had some knowledge. I do not know whether I would have asked a question without this knowledge. That was a real advantage” (Employee). This indicates that the creation of dialogue is not only a matter of choosing the right communication activity but also a matter of combining communication activities.

While the importance of top management visibility and the possibility to ask questions had been highlighted in previous work (for example, Klein, 1996; Mast, 2002a), the importance of providing information in advance of an event in order to increase its effectiveness had received little attention but, again, this was very important to group leaders and employees. “It is very important to have detailed information in advance.

Without previous knowledge, part of the effect of an event would fall flat¹⁰” (Group leader).

One reason why the road show was less effective than it could have been was that change strategists did not answer an important question that recipients had expected an answer to. Many employees had not understood the need for IT NEW until the road show and, therefore, they expected this issue to be addressed during the road show. When the need for change was not explained (Observation of road show), recipients came up with their own inaccurate explanation such as “layoffs” and “attack of prosperity” (discussed in 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 respectively). Some recipients thought that the change was unnecessary and that it was only pursued because the company was well off and, therefore, “some money had to be spent on something” (Employee). Furthermore, recipients who had not yet understood the need for change became disappointed. “Our expectations were not fulfilled. That was a little bit disappointing” (Employee). “They provided only statements again. The situation still was not clear. There was hardly any tangible information” (Group leader). This can be problematic because disappointment, it is argued in previous work (Kiefer, 2002; Mast, 2002a; Orgland, 1997), is likely to decrease the likelihood that recipients adopt the desired behaviour.

¹⁰ In German: “verpuffen”

Figure 6.15: Effects of dialogue during road show

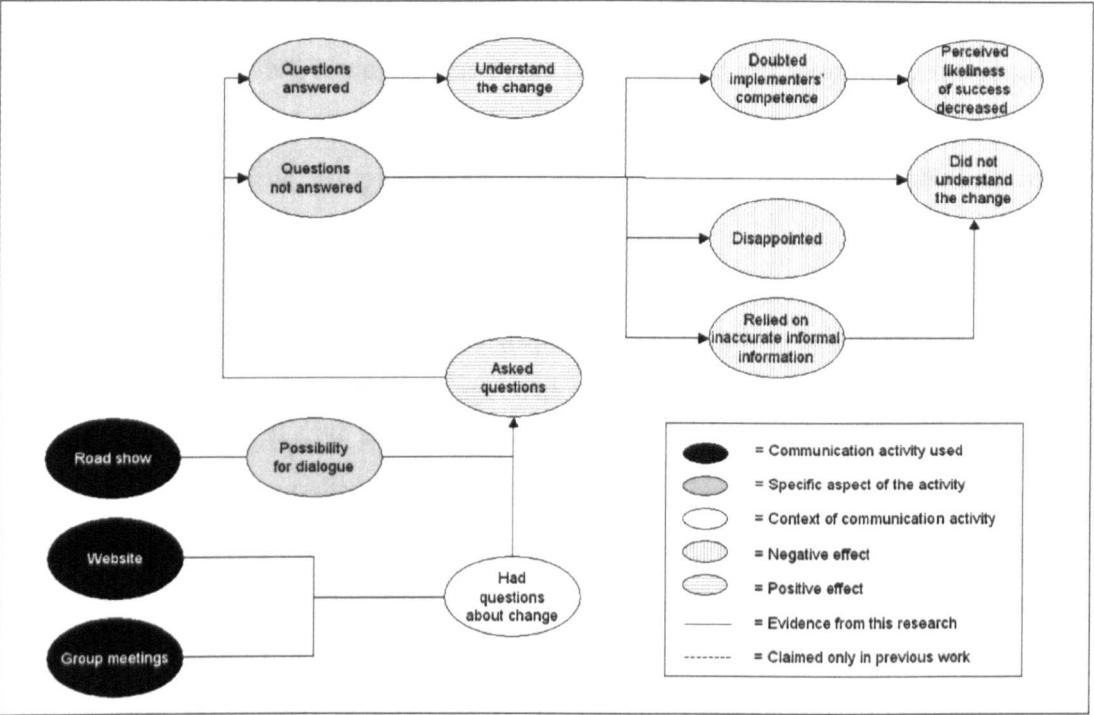


Figure 6.15 summarises recipients’ perceptions of the effect of (not) answering their questions. Whereas it is impossible to say what the effect would have been if the need for change had been explained during the road show, it is likely that an explanation of the need for change at this event would have reduced some of the negative effects (such as inaccurate speculations) and that the disappointment caused by not explaining the need for change would have been prevented. This finding also supports the claim made in previous work that recipients should understand the need for change (for example, Day and Jung, 2000; Mohr, 1997) and it shows that it is important to seek information on recipients’ desires with regard to the information conveyed about the change.

6.4.4 Management cascade

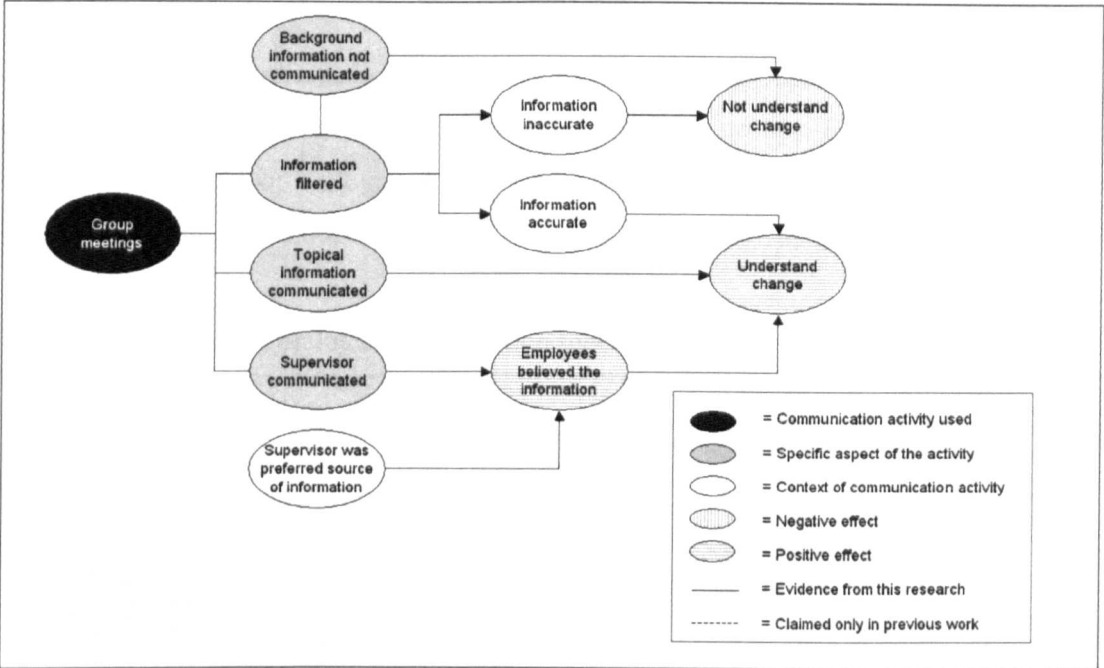
The director of the Plant IT Department usually met with his four group leaders on Thursday morning (called Plant IT Circle). The Plant IT Circle was less relevant with regard to communication about IT NEW because the focus was on “the operation of information technologies in the plant” (Director of the Plant IT). As one group leader was a member of the extended MITIS project team and another group leader was a

member of the extended MITAP project team, group leaders were able to inform each other about the status of the change. Therefore, the fact that only a small amount of time was dedicated to IT NEW during the Plant IT Circle did not negatively influence the accuracy of group leaders' understanding of IT NEW. One group leader said "Our colleagues informed us", implying that the two colleagues who were members of the project teams passed on topical information informally.

Each group leader usually met with his employees on Thursday afternoon (called group meetings). The aim of group meetings was to inform employees about work-related issues and important events in the company. Part of the one-and-a-half-hour meetings was information and discussion about IT NEW and its impact on the department. Employees perceived group meetings as the most important communication channel. Group leaders commonly reported that they had spent several group meetings talking "about nothing but IT NEW and its effect on our department and on my employees". One of them stated that he "felt as if the change became clearer and clearer for employees with each group meeting".

A main reason for the effectiveness of group meetings was that group leaders focused on the information that was relevant specifically to their group. A common perception among employees was "my group leader needs to filter the information that is important for us" (Employee) and for some employees provision of information that was relevant for the group was sufficient. One of these employees, for example, stated "I hear about the important things in our group meetings and I do not need to know the rest". Another reason for the effectiveness of group meetings was the role of the direct supervisor as communicator. Although recipients wanted to get to know change strategists, their direct supervisor was the preferred source of information. "I want to receive important information from my supervisor. ... I would have been annoyed if I had not received the information from my supervisors before the road show" (Employee). The importance of the group leader as communicator even increased when supervisors forwarded the presentation about IT NEW before the official announcement of the change (6.4.1). Figure 6.16 illustrates the positive effects of group meetings on recipients' understanding of the change. The reasons for the negative effect are discussed below.

Figure 6.16: Effect of group meetings on recipients’ understanding

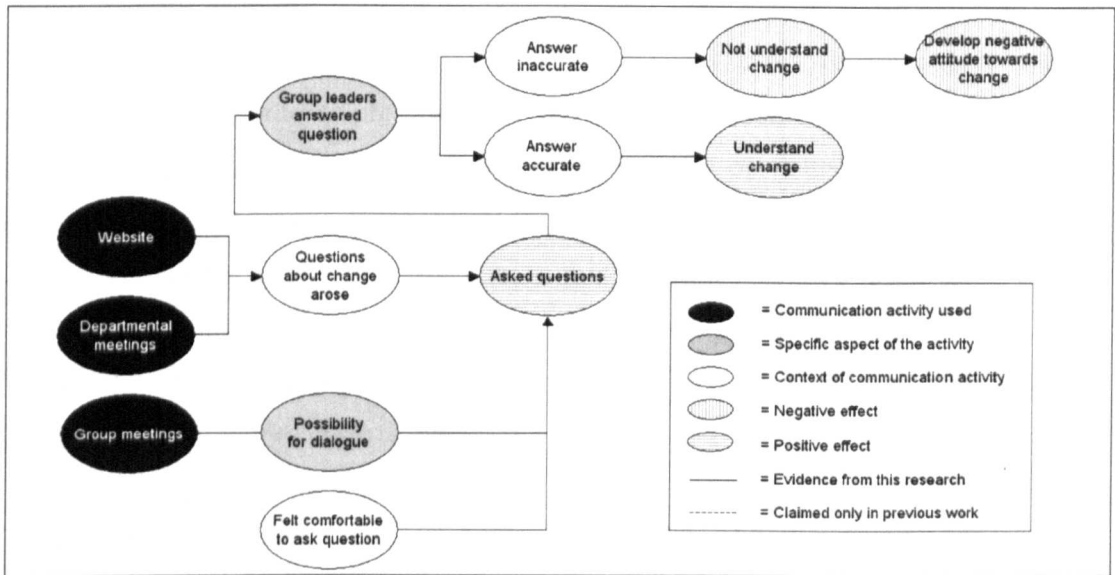


The evidence suggests that group meetings (face-to-face communication in a small group) were not only related to the road show (face-to-face communication in a large group) because they provided information before the road show (6.4.3) but also because recipients attached different roles to the two communication activities. They wanted to receive topical information from their supervisors and they wanted to receive information about strategic issues such as the need for change or the benefit of the change from change strategists. This elaborates on an earlier finding (6.3.4) insofar as the required background information should be communicated by change strategists, whereas supervisors should focus on the impact of the change on the group and on topical information.

Group meetings were also the preferred situation for asking questions about IT NEW and its impact on the department. Recipients talked with their supervisors about the information received via other channels such as the road show, departmental meetings or the website. One employee said “Group meetings were more appropriate to ask specific questions than departmental meetings” and another employee said “When I found something interesting in the intranet, I mentioned the issue during our group meeting in order to find out whether it was relevant to me and to our group”. Recipients would have liked to “talk with those responsible” even more instead of “being

informed” (Employee). This supports the claim of Mast (2002a) that face-to-face channels are likely to be more effective for answering recipients’ questions than electronic and print channels and that meetings in small groups are likely to be more effective for answering questions than events with large groups. Figure 6.17 illustrates the positive effects of dialogue during group meetings. The reasons for the negative effects are discussed below.

Figure 6.17: Effect of dialogue during group meetings on recipients’ understanding



Despite the fact that group meetings were the preferred and most effective communication activities, several barriers to effective communication were present. Quirke (1996) argues that messages are likely to be altered at a refractive layer, which was also the case in this case study. Group leaders filtered the information on the basis of what they thought recipients would like to know. The assumption of one of the group leaders, for example, was “Recipients only want to know facts. When? Which new task? Where?” but the assumption was wrong because it has been shown in Section 6.3.4 that recipients needed some background information in order to be able to understand the impact of IT NEW on their work. Furthermore, group leaders sometimes had an inaccurate understanding of a specific topic, which led to the problem that they did not contradict employees’ inaccurate understanding regarding this topic, which then led to a negative attitude towards the change on recipients’ part. Section 6.3.2 has shown that recipients’ incorrectly assumed that IT NEW would not be beneficial because they knew that the costs for network connections at their plant would increase. The following

statement made by one of the group leaders shows that these two barriers were intensified because group leaders did not receive appropriate support.

From my perspective, they [implementers] should anticipate typical questions during change efforts and have the answers ready. One question could be 'Today I work on UNIX. We won't have that in the future. What happens to me?' Implementers need to offer help. Which measures are available to prepare people for new tasks? I was not happy with their service.

These findings support the claim made in previous work (for example, Quirke, 1996; Townley, 1994) that supervisors need to be prepared intensively for their role as communicators. In order to provide support, implementers could have provided answers to critical questions, as requested by group leaders, or distributed slide sets for presentations during group meetings. Authors such as Mast (2002a) argue that slide sets reduce the number of aspects of the change that communicators on lower levels do not understand. Implementers even could have trained group leaders and/or project members in presenting the most important aspects about IT NEW as a whole and the migration of employees in particular.

In addition to their contribution to the creation of dialogue, group meetings were also important in that they fulfilled recipients' desire to participate in the planning of the change. Employees perceived it as very helpful that their group leaders had told them that they could influence how they would be affected by the change. Several employees said something like "We were asked by our supervisors 'Think of the direction into which you want to develop'. I found that very good" (Employee) and one employee stated more generally "I consider participation in a project as important. If one participates, one accepts the project more quickly and one can support it". The interesting finding was that supervisors' decision to talk with their employees, instead of talking to them, increased recipients' perceptions of having participated. This difference between reality and perception is important because previous work (for example, Mast, 2002a; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002) argues that perceptions of participation are likely to increase recipients' acceptance of the change. The fact that the actual degree of participation was very limited, because an analysis of employees' skills was the main factor in defining who would complete which task in the future (MITIS Overview, Presentation held at 11 March 2002, Available on the MITIS website,

Accessed on 22 April 2002), did not cause any difficulties and recipients even knew about it: “We were told that a temporary assignment existed and that this assignment was expected to be implemented” (Employee).

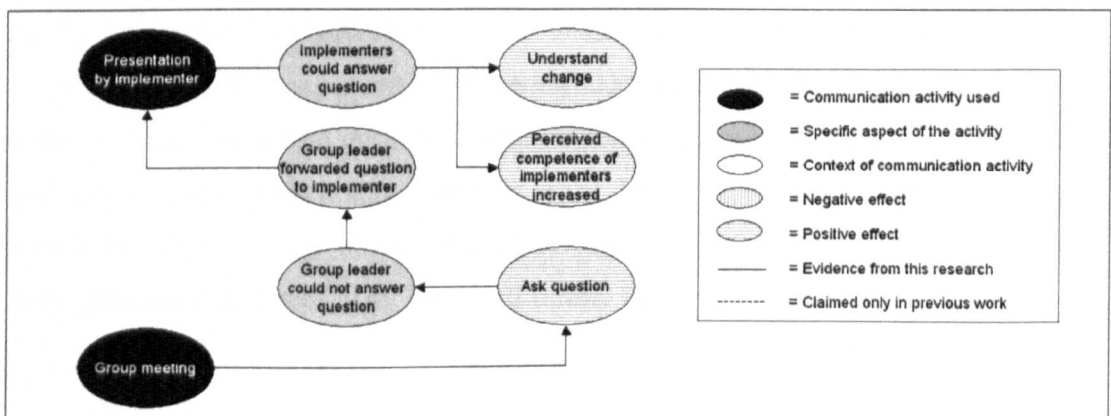
6.4.5 Presentation by representative from IT Infrastructure Department

[In February 2002] two of my employees came to me and asked whether they could have a presentation about the goal and status quo of IT NEW. They had heard a lot and they wanted a formal statement by one of the colleagues from the IT Infrastructure Department. So I forwarded this request to my supervisor [the director of the Plant IT] who, in turn, forwarded it to those responsible at the IT Infrastructure Department (Group leader).

On 22 March 2003, a MITIS manager held the presentation about the status quo of IT NEW that recipients had requested in February 2002. Despite the time gap between the question (request) and the answer (presentation), recipients were satisfied because the MITIS manager had addressed the issues that were important to them but that they had received contradicting information about. Employees said that the presentation increased their understanding of the change and their perception of change strategists’ competence (Figure 6.18).

The representative gave a rough overview of the migration. That was very helpful. We had so much information. We knew something but everything was so unstructured. Different people had different information. We had also heard something from colleagues at other plants. We even thought ‘Those at the headquarters don’t know it themselves’. Afterwards the aims and process of the migration were much clearer (Employee).

Figure 6.18: Positive effects of forwarding and answering employees’ questions



This is a good example of an effective flow of information up and down the hierarchy and a good example of a quick and flexible reaction to recipients' needs. It shows that a lack of understanding on group leaders' part does not necessarily pose a problem because group leaders can find other ways to answer recipients' questions. However, it is another example of the lack of coordination that has become visible throughout the chapter. Recipients' questions were answered in this situation, because of their own and their supervisors' initiative, but there are many reasons why it might not work in other situations. For example, recipients may not know whom to ask or supervisors may not know to whom to forward the request. In order to increase the likelihood of an effective flow of information, communication activities need to be coordinated and the process of answering recipients' questions needs to be defined and explained to all those involved in the management cascade.

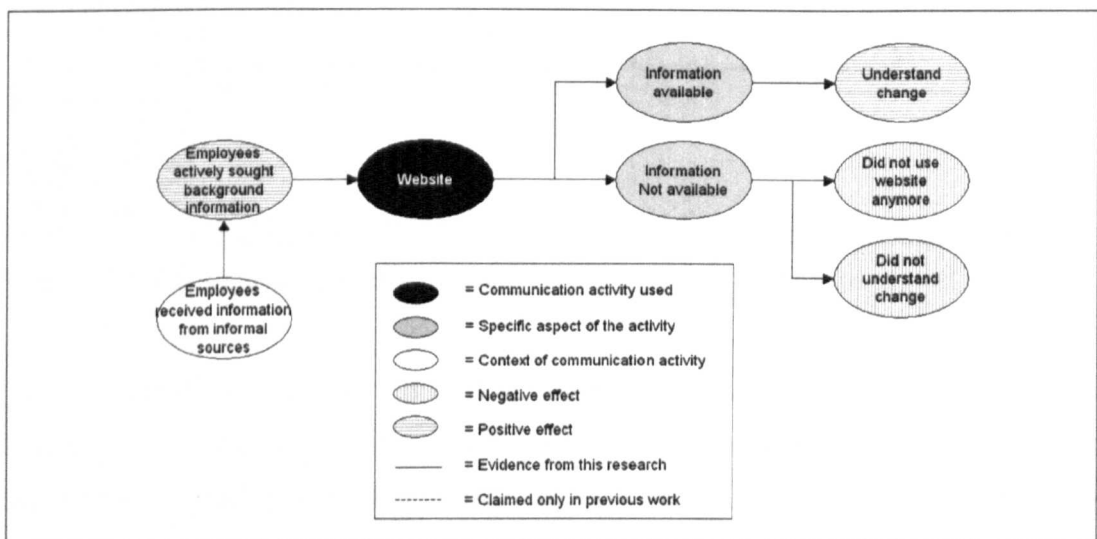
6.4.6 MITIS and MITAP websites

The websites of MITIS and MITAP were launched in February 2002 but recipients across all levels did not use the intranet frequently. Typical statements from recipients were "I did not use the intranet" (Group leader) and "The intranet? No!" (Employee). Even the director of the Plant IT said during our interview "I rarely browsed the websites of MITIS and MITAP". Although the usage statistics confirm that the usage of the websites was indeed low ("Web-trends MITIS" and "Web-trends MITAP", Access on 1 August 2002), recipients sought at least some information on the websites, which becomes visible throughout this section.

At the beginning, in February 2002, the main content of the websites were current versions of project assignments and review documents. The websites only came to include "frequently asked questions, an overview of planned communication activities and a description of each subproject" in April 2002 (Implementer). This was a main reason for the low usage of the intranet. A common perception was "They created a homepage and then it took very long until further information followed" (Employee).

Recipients mainly sought information about the background of IT NEW and about the relation between different projects on the websites but their desire was not fulfilled. “The projects should have been presented in the intranet as a whole and the following questions should have been answered: Why is the project necessary? What is the project doing? What are key milestones? Who is responsible? What is the desired outcome?” (Employee) The reason why recipients accessed the intranet was that they had received a lot of information from informal sources (Figure 6.19). Given recipients’ desire to receive the information and given the fact that most recipients usually used the intranet frequently, which is reflected in statements such as “usually I use the intranet very often” (Group leader), it is very likely that recipients would have accessed the desired information in the intranet. This confirms the claim made by Bernecker and Reiß (2003) that the intranet can be an important channel for providing background information.

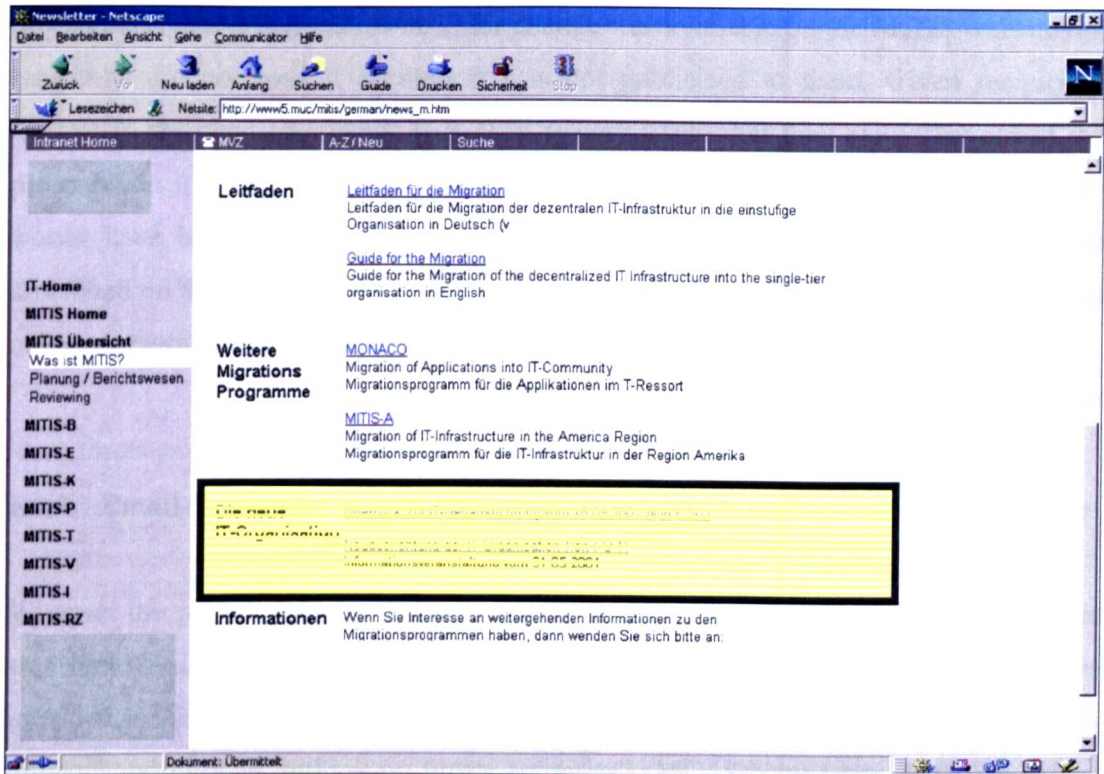
Figure 6.19: Effects of the (lack of) availability of information on the websites



The fact that recipients perceived a lack of information about IT NEW as a whole, however, does not mean that the desired information was not available. The problem rather was that recipients did not find the information. Firstly, recipients had to seek information about IT NEW at two different websites, MITAP and MITIS, because a website about IT NEW as a whole did not exist. Secondly, information about IT NEW was difficult to find on these websites. On the MITIS website, for example, an overview of IT NEW was only available in the form of two presentations in PDF-format (marked

with a box in Figure 6.20) and the links to these presentations were at the bottom of a list which was twice as long as illustrated in Figure 6.20.

Figure 6.20: Information about IT NEW on the MITIS website



Source: MITIS website, Screenshot made on 16 May 2002 (anonymised)

Much of the discussion above is related to the question whether implementers should “push” information to recipients – sent or present the information directly – or enable recipients to “pull” information – store the information in a way that recipients can access it. Clappitt *et al.* (2000) argue that the key to success is a combination of channels that enable implementers to push certain key messages and channels that enable recipients to pull other information. Mast (2002a) argues that the possibility to provide information that recipients can pull whenever they want is one of the advantages of the intranet. The evidence from this case study supports this claim. Employees agreed with the group leader who stated “Many employees actively sought information in the intranet”. A prerequisite for pulling information, however, is the availability of the desired information and the possibility to find it. Recipients said “I must be able to recognise where to find information about the issues I am interested in” (Group leader). The evidence above has shown that, in this case study, it was too

difficult to find the information, which reduced the effectiveness of the intranet as a pull-channel. The fact that recipients did not read much of what was published in the intranet supports the claim that pushing important information is a prerequisite for effective change communication (Clampitt *et al.*, 2000; Mast, 2002a). For example, a presentation that explained the need for change was available on the MITIS website but recipients did not read it because it was not publicised to them. Given recipients' interest in the need for change (6.3.2), it is very likely that they would have read the presentation if it had been sent to them. An alternative to publicising the information would have been sending a note which said that a presentation was available for download on the MITIS website. An appropriate way for doing so would have been the newsletter which was sent to all IT employees.

6.4.7 Email-Newsletter

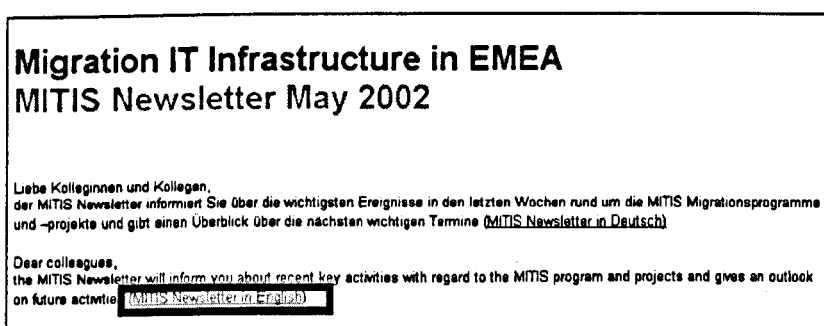
Whereas the project MITAP did not publish a newsletter, the first MITIS Newsletter was sent to all employees working in IT in May 2002. The monthly newsletter was intended to "inform" employees "about recent key activities with regard to the MITIS projects and give an outlook on future activities" (MITIS Newsletter, May 2002, first paragraph) but the newsletter did not play an important role in the communication process and it did not achieve the desired effect, which was "keeping people informed about the change" (Implementer). One employee said "I did not know a MITIS newsletter existed", another employee said "I do not read it because I already have the information" and the other participants browsed through the table of contents of the newsletter but only read one or two of the issues that were presented.

The reasons for only reading information about a few issues differed. One typical statement was "I do not need to know the details" (Employee). This reflects recipients' desire to receive information about the individual impact of the change (6.3.1) and information about the goals and benefits (6.3.2) instead of details about peripheral aspects of the change. Another typical statement was "I do already receive so many other emails" (Employee). This supports the claim that, when designing the communication programme, existing communication practices should be considered (Barrett, 2002; Bernecker and Reiß, 2003; Smeltzer, 1991). Some recipients just did not

consider emails as an appropriate means for conveying information about a change because they considered emails as a key means for getting their work done. A third reason for not reading the newsletter, which was also mentioned by several recipients, was that “the important things have already been explained during group meetings” (Group leader). This once more highlights the importance of coordinating communication activities.

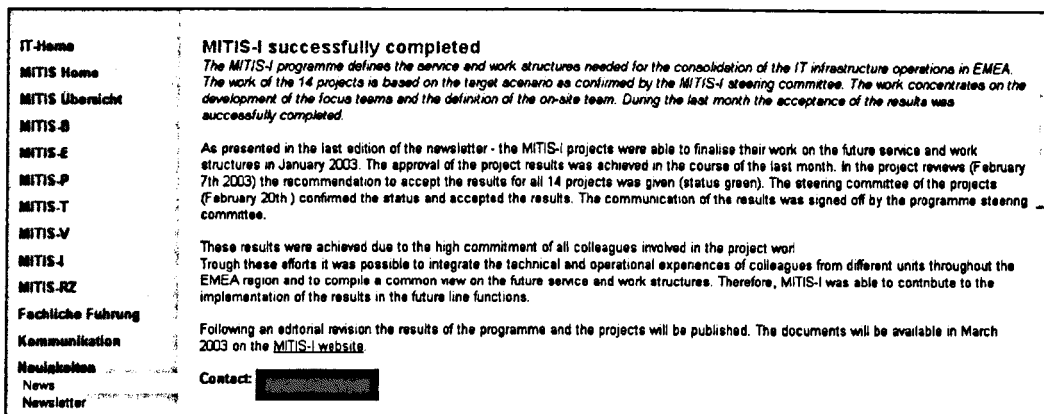
An effect that was unanticipated by implementers was that the newsletter increased the use of the MITIS website. Whereas recipients rarely used the intranet on their own initiative (6.4.6), recipients on all levels read more once they were in the intranet for some other reason, for example, when reading the table of contents of the newsletter. One of the employees said “I always have a brief look at the MITIS website after browsing the newsletter” and the director of the Plant IT said during our interview “When I was there anyway, I usually read a little bit”. The newsletter increased the use of the website because the newsletter was displayed as a page on the MITIS website (Figure 6.22). Once a month, an email was sent to all employees, saying that the new newsletter was displayed on the MITIS website. Recipients could click on a link in the email (Figure 6.21) and they were directed to the newsletter on the MITIS website. In other words, the newsletter not only publicised information to recipients, the newsletter also directed recipients to the information that was available in the intranet.

Figure 6.21: Email with reference to MITIS Newsletter



Source: MITIS website, Screenshot made on 16 May 2002 (anonymised)

Figure 6.22: MITIS Newsletter



Source: MITIS website, Screenshot made on 04 March 2003 (anonymised)

6.4.8 Shared folder on network drive

Whereas previous work had discussed the role of the intranet (for example, Bernecker and Reiß, 2003; Mast, 2002a) and the role of publicly accessible project documentation (Englert and Dielacher, 1996), the role of shared folders on the network drive had not been addressed. A shared folder on the network drive is closely related to the intranet insofar as it is a medium on which relevant documents can be stored but it is different from the intranet insofar as each presentation stored on the departments' network drive is specifically relevant to the employees in the department. Recipients considered it "very helpful" that most presentations held at their department – "presentations about our department's projects, information presented by the team members of MITIS and MITAP, results of the employee survey and so on" (Employee) – were stored in a shared folder on the network drive and that the presentations were accessible to every employee working in the department.

Recipients even perceived the shared folder on the network drive as helpful with regard to receiving answers to their questions. As discussed above (6.4.5 and 6.4.6), recipients did not always want to have their questions answered immediately and personally. It was sufficient when they were told that a presentation on the issue was available in the shared folder on the network drive. One of the employees explained this in detail during our interview.

It was good that project members came to our group meetings and explained the status quo of the change projects. But sometimes we just could not follow. Each of us had different questions because we had different pre-knowledge and we completed different tasks. Therefore it was very helpful that we could look at the presentations again in the shared folder on our network drive. Many questions were answered by looking at these presentations.

Figure 6.23: Positive effects of the shared folder on the network drive

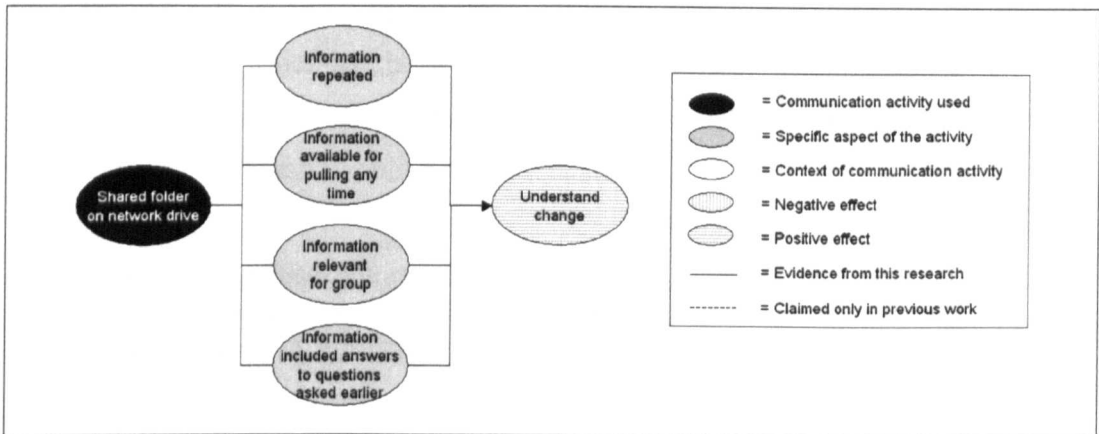


Figure 6.23 illustrates the positive effects of the shared folder on the network drive on recipients' understanding of the change. These findings suggest that communication planners recommend to peripheral departments the use of a shared folder on the network drive in order to store presentations about the change relevant for a specific group of recipients. The findings also confirm previous evidence regarding the positive effect of repetition on recipients' understanding of the change (for example, Klein, 1996; Young and Post, 1993) and regarding the importance of allowing recipients to learn about the change at their own speed (for example, Carnall, 2003; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002). Another benefit of a shared folder on the network drive is that it is easy and cheap to set up.

6.4.9 Articles in internal and external publications

Two articles were published about developments in the IT function of the case study organisation. In January 2002, the director of the IT Infrastructure Department published an article about developments in the IT function in the trade magazine *Chief Information Officer*. In July 2002, an article was published in the company publication.

Both articles were written for a broader audience, the former for an external audience and the latter for all internal employees.

Authors such as Englert and Dielacher (1996) suggest using external communication material internally in order to further recipients' understanding and the director of the Plant IT said during our interview that "an article in an external publication can also serve the purpose" of showing employees "that top management supports the change", the importance of which has been discussed above (6.4.3). But implementers did not officially communicate to all IT employees that the article had been published, which the director of the Plant IT could not understand:

If something about the restructuring of the IT is published in an IT journal, why isn't it displayed in the intranet? I mean, employees are interested in what the director of the IT Infrastructure Department says.

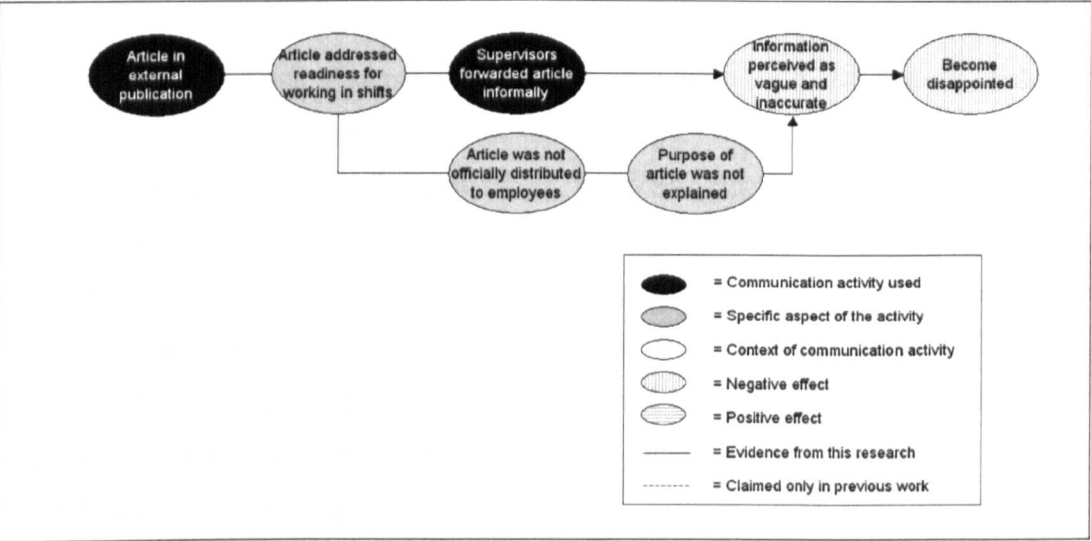
The effect of not communicating that an article had been published became visible six weeks later when the article was discussed among employees after group leaders had received the article and forwarded it to their employees. "Here in the plant, the article led to disappointment. ... These articles are rather damaging if they are formulated that vague and if information is left out, which probably has to be the case when writing for an external audience" (Group leader). The reason for disappointment on all levels was the following statement that the director of the IT Infrastructure Department had made in the article: "IT employees are not only difficult to find. They are also not used to working in shifts." (External publication by the director of the IT Infrastructure Department, 2003, second paragraph) Recipients perceived the statement as being inaccurate:

The director of the IT Infrastructure Department criticises that the readiness for shift work still has to be created. That may be true for the central departments but here in the plant we already work like this. ... We even agreed to be on stand-by on a rotating basis in order to make sure that the assembly is running and that [the product] can be produced (Employee).

Whereas the disappointment caused by the perceived inaccuracy of the director's statement certainly could not have been prevented, the negative effect might have been less intense if implementers had officially forwarded the article to all IT employees and

explained its purpose. For example, they could have said that external articles are necessary in order to attract IT talents and to satisfy the information needs of shareholders and that certain generalisations are necessary in these articles in order to meet the audience’s expectations. This is another example of the negative effect that a lack of coordination between central and peripheral communication activities can have on recipients’ emotions related to the change and related to those responsible for the change.

Figure 6.24: Negative effects of the article in the external publication



Regarding the article in the company publication, it can be said that recipients did not consider it as very helpful. “The article did not include any new information. I think they want to inform the other employees about what’s going on in IT” (Employee). The main reason for the low helpfulness of the article was indeed that it was not intended to prepare IT employees for the migration but to “inform all employees about developments in the IT function” (Implementer). However, it is likely that a positive effect could still have been achieved if implementers had used the article in order to explain to all employees how important the IT function was for the case study organisation.

6.5 Summary of findings from Case Study IT NEW

The findings from this case study can be grouped into three sets. The first set of findings relates to the influence of specific aspects of the communication programme (causes) on recipients' perceptions and reactions (effects) and thereby addresses the first two research objectives. The second set of findings is about the interdependence of different communication activities in causing certain effects and answers the third research question. The third set of findings regards the relationships between different effects and answers the fourth research question.

The first set of findings is summarised in Table 6.2. The table is based on Table 3.3 which was used to illustrate the gap in the literature. The table includes the lessons learned regarding the appropriateness of different communication activities for achieving certain effects and regarding the specific aspects that need to be considered in order to achieve these effects. The specific aspects included in the table either existed as success factors, as barriers or as missed opportunities. Success factors are specific aspects that were actually present and had a positive effect (such as the presence of change strategists at the road show), barriers are specific aspects that were actually present and had a negative aspect (such as the repetition of general information at departmental meetings) and missed opportunities are specific aspects that implementers or recipients considered as potentially effective but that were not used in this case study (such as publishing answers to questions on the website). Barriers and missed opportunities are integrated into the table in a way that demonstrates their relevance as factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme.

Table 6.2: Lessons learned from Case Study IT NEW

	1	2	3	4	5
	Comm. activities used	Timing	Information conveyed	Communicator	Effects
A	Road show IT NEW	Once (at beginning)	Need for change, vision and key milestones	Change strategist	Become interested in change / Seek information actively / See that senior managers support change
B			Impact of change on location	Senior local manager	Aware of change / Attentive
C			Question and answer session (Questions must be answered)	Change strategists + Senior local manager	Understand change (If not answered: Become disappointed / Doubt implementers' competence / Use informal communication)
D			(Any information)	Works council	Employees perceive their interests as considered
E	Department meetings	Regularly (Every 3 months)	Interpretation of information from road show	Senior local manager	Understand change / Become less uncertain
F			Impact of change on location		
G			Milestones reached		Oriented
H			Topical information (Recipients should not have the information yet)		If recipients have information: Perceive redundancy / Not expect new information at next activity / Less attentive
I			Possibility to ask questions	Senior local manager + group leaders	Understand change / Perceived competence of implementers increased
J	Presentation by implementer	Once (On request)	Overview of the change	Implementer	Understand change / Less uncertain
K			Possibility to ask questions		
L	Group meetings	Regularly (Weekly)	Impact of change on group	Group leader	Understand change / Become less uncertain / Feel comfortable
M			Interpretation of information conveyed via other channels		See that change progresses
N			Topical information		Less uncertain
O			Discussion of change		Understand change
P	Article in company publication	Once	Background information	Project manager	Recognise importance of IT and own job
Q					
R	Article in trade magazine	Once	Overview of change	Should be officially forwarded by implementers	Understand change (purpose of article must be explained)
S	Website	Always accessible	Background information (Information must be found)	Project manager	Understand change (otherwise stop using website)
T			Topical information (Must be regularly updated)		See that change progresses
U	Email-Newsletter	Regularly (Monthly)	Topical information	Sent and answered by project manager	See change progresses
V	Shared folder on network drive	Always accessible	Repetition of background and topical information	Stored by local manager	Understand change
W			Details about specific aspects of change (tailored to location)		

Grey cells = Findings that confirm a claim made in previous work

White cells = Findings that either contradict previous work or that had not been addressed specifically in previous work

Grey cells indicate findings that confirm a claim made in previous work, whereas white cells indicate findings that either contradict previous work or that had not been addressed specifically in previous work. The number of grey cells indicates that several findings and claims from previous work could be confirmed. The number of white cells indicates that several aspects of the communication programme apparently had not been addressed in previous work or, at least, had not been discussed in relation to another aspect, which often was the more interesting finding in this case study. Previous work (for example, Pfannenberger, 2003) claimed, for example, that a benefit of a website is that it is permanently accessible but previous work did not specify that the provision of topical information on the website can make recipients perceive the change as progressing (Row T). The discussion of the contribution of certain specific aspects of the communication programme to the realisation of certain effects is a set of findings in itself because much of this had rarely been discussed in this depth in the context of a specific change project.

The second set of findings is related to the interaction of different communication activities in causing certain effects. Group meetings were the most preferred channel and the most effective channel. As predicted by previous work (for example, Arndt and Deekeling, 2000; Klein, 1996), the central benefits were that the direct supervisor was the preferred communicator and that recipients preferred to ask their questions during group meetings. The main limitation of the communication via the management cascade, which seems to occur frequently in organisational practice (Quirke, 1996; Townley, 1994), was that support had not been provided for group leaders on which information to convey and how to convey the information. This suggests that a communication activity for supervisors should take place before the use of the management cascade. Another finding regarding the use of the management cascade was that recipients' questions neither had to be answered personally nor immediately. It was sufficient, for example, when group leaders referred to a presentation in the shared folder on the network drive or when group leaders forwarded a question to the director of the Plant IT who forwarded the request to a MITIS project leader who then held a presentation to answer the questions.

The road show was less effective than the group meetings but it still had its benefits. In particular, recipients could seek answers to their questions from change strategists, from managers at their location and from the works council. This partly contradicts the claim made in previous work (for example, Mast, 2002a) that large events are less appropriate for creating dialogue. The reason why recipients asked comparatively many questions during the road show was that information had been provided via other communication activities before so that recipients could think of questions in advance. Another relationship between communication activities regarded the departmental meetings. Their key limitation was that recipients had already received much information via other communication activities. Therefore, they perceived a redundancy in communication activities and they did not expect to receive new information at the next communication activity. Consequently, they became less attentive. Whereas previous work on learning had emphasised the importance of attention (for example, Gavin, 1998), the interesting finding is that earlier communication activities can negatively influence the level of attention at later communication activities.

Compared to the potential that previous work (for example, Hoffmann, 2001) claimed for electronic communication activities, the website and the email-newsletter were relatively ineffective, which was mainly due to recipients' lack of interest in the information conveyed. However, the fact that recipients actively sought information on the website after the departmental meeting during which the change was announced demonstrates that a website can play the supportive role claimed by Bernecker and Reiss (2003). Recipients even stated that a website is particularly appropriate to follow-up the announcement of a change if it provides structured background information about the change. Both the website and the shared folder on the network drive provided a platform with information that recipients could access whenever they wanted to and, therefore, both communication activities are appropriate to supplement different face-to-face activities such as events or presentations. A relationship between the two online communication activities was that the way the newsletter was published increased the use of the website, a relationship that had been widely neglected by previous work. Print communication was hardly used by implementers and recipients did not perceive the lack of print communication as problematic.

The main finding of this case study was the realisation that understanding the likely effects of different communication activities may be even more important to the design of a communication programme than expected. Although academic and practice-oriented work (Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; Mercer, 2000) considered clarity of the communication aims as a prerequisite for an effective communication programme, the focus often was on which effects to achieve, neglecting the interdependence between different effects. The findings from this case study, however, emphasise that it is important to achieve certain effects before other effects in order to create positive synergies and to avoid negative side-effects. For example, forwarding a presentation about IT NEW at the very beginning of the communication process created awareness of the change which, in turn, led to interest in the change. This made recipients seek information actively. They started using the website and they read the first newsletter with interest. From the perspective of the communication activities used, this relationship suggests that pull channels are little helpful unless interest in the change has been created.

All effects found in this case study are listed in Table 6.3. The effects found are grouped along the categories of aims identified earlier in this thesis (3.4). Given the importance of the concepts of awareness, understanding and acceptance, they are not included in a category but listed separately. The category "Perceived events" has been expanded to "Cognitions" because it is more encompassing and because it can include effects such as the perceived likelihood of success or the perceived accuracy of the information. Otherwise, too many aims would have been outside the categories. All effects found contributed either directly or indirectly to influencing the behaviour that recipients would adopt after the introduction of the change. The relationships found between the different effects are discussed in an integrated way and across case studies in Chapter 9.

Table 6.3: Effects found in first case study

Effects found in first case study	
Aware of change	
Understand change	
Accept change	
Cognitive states	Believe information
	Concentrated
	Expect new information at next activity
	Information overload
	Interested in change
	Look for hidden meaning
	Oriented
	Perceive information as inaccurate
	Perceive lack of competence of implementers
	Perceive lack of coordination/redundancy of activities
	Perceive likelihood of success
	Perceive own interests as considered
	See that change is supported
	Perceive managers as trustworthy
	Uncertain/Confused
Emotions	Angry
	Anxious/Afraid
	Feel comfortable/safe
	Disappointed
	Motivated
Behaviour	Ask questions/Engage in dialogue
	Complete unnecessary tasks/inefficient
	Seek information actively
	Use informal communication

Whereas the findings from this case study provided novel insight into the relationships between different effects and the resulting interdependence between different communication activities, a second case study was conducted to expand the understanding of the phenomenon because two case studies allow comparison between the cases. The importance of the context in which communication takes place (for example, Mohr, 1997) also suggests that the findings of a study become stronger when the effect of a communication activity can be analysed in different contexts. In order to ensure comparability between the two case studies, access to a second case study with similar characteristics was negotiated at the same point in time when access to this case study was negotiated.

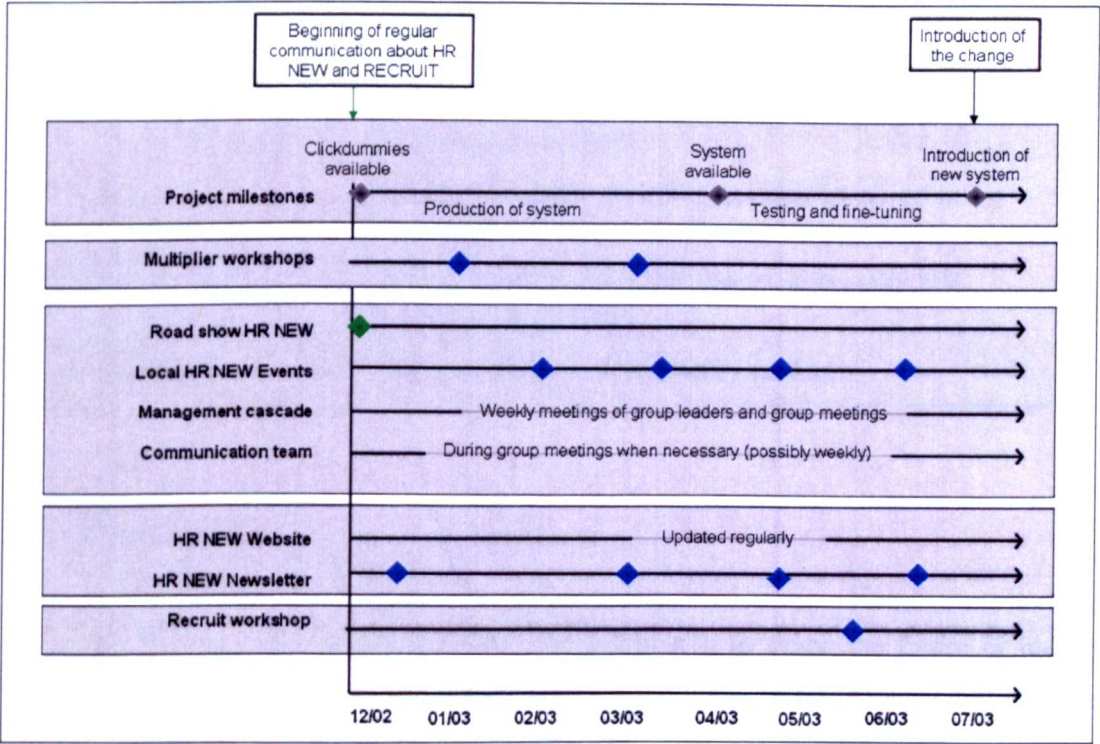
Although the general approach to research required being open to whatever there was to be found in the second case study, several foci for the second case study could still be derived from this first case study. First of all, the relationships between all effects found would be explored. The relationships found in the second case study would then be compared with the findings from this case study. Furthermore, the interdependencies between all communication activities used would be explored and it would be explored whether these interdependencies could be explained by the relationships between the different effects. Comparing the interdependencies between communication activities found in the two case studies would then increase understanding of how to create synergies between communication activities. Finally, a second case study would allow an exploration of the role of effects and communication activities that were not present in this case study.

7 Case Study HR NEW

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reports HR employees’ perceptions of the effect of the communication activities used to prepare them for the introduction of a new recruiting process and new recruiting technology. The change was planned and implemented by the project RECRUIT which was part of the change initiative HR NEW. The project started in July 2001 and regular communication began in December 2002, which was six months before the intended introduction of the new technology. Communication about RECRUIT was closely linked to communication about HR NEW because RECRUIT was the first project to be implemented. Figure 7.1 illustrates the communication activities used to prepare employees for the introduction of the the new recruiting process and new recruiting technology.

Figure 7.1: Communication activities used in Case Study HR NEW



The first section briefly describes the context of the communication process. The next two sections report the recipients’ perceptions of the information conveyed and of the

channels used. The discussion of aspects such as the timing of communication activities or the creation of dialogue is integrated into these two sections. The chapter concludes by summarising the reasons for the effects of the communication programme.

The terms used to refer to the different groups of people in this case study, which are based on the distinction between different roles in the change processes discussed earlier in this thesis (2.5), are defined in Table 7.1. A special characteristic of this case study was the use of 40 ‘multipliers’. The local implementer and the multipliers at each location were responsible for the local communication activities at this location. A distinction between central and local implementers is made only where necessary.

Table 7.1: Terms used to refer to different groups of people in second case study

Term	Definition
Change strategists	Those responsible for planning HR NEW
Implementers	Those responsible for implementing the change
- Central implementers	Those responsible for the change as a whole
- Local implementers	Those responsible for the change at their location
Multipliers	The HR employees from different locations who were chosen and prepared to support the introduction of the change at their location
Recipients	The HR employees who were neither involved in the planning of the change nor its implementation
- Group leaders	The leaders of the different groups within the HR department at a location
- Employees	Employees without supervisory function

7.2 Context

The overall aim of the change initiative HR NEW was to shape the future of human resource management in the case study organisation. The changes occurred on three levels and were described as follows on the HR NEW website (Site “What does HR NEW do”, Accessed on 30 June 2003):

Creating new HR processes:

- Simplifying and standardising both processes and rules
- Reducing the requirements for coordinating all matters and seeking approval
- Relieving associates in HR Management of operative tasks and enhancing their function in shaping work processes and providing advice
- Giving managers greater responsibility in taking their decisions
- Giving associates greater responsibility on their part

Creating new interaction channels between HR departments and other departments:

- Optimising the interaction of associates, managers and HR departments
- Offering web-based HR applications for simple and intuitive use
- Restricting the flood of information by way of personalisation
- Providing fast and simple access to information and applications

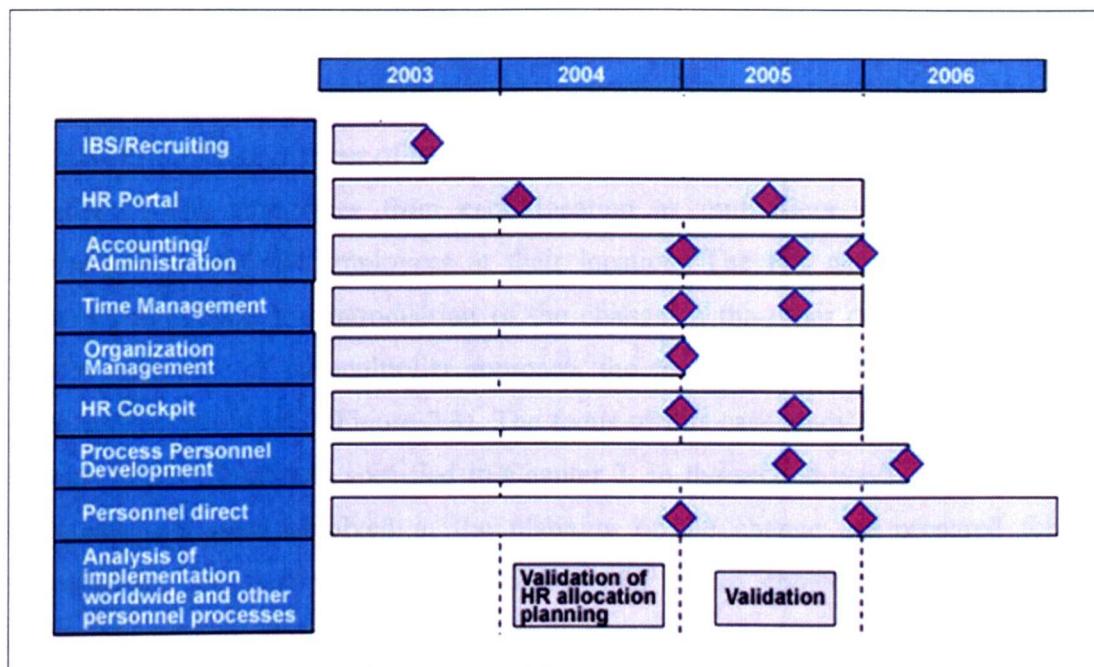
Replacing core technologies:

- Replacing the existing software packages by the integrative SAP HR standard software
- Introducing associate and manager self-services (e.g. online-ordering of stocks, web-based time management, access to personnel statistics online)

Change strategists claimed that all employees in the company could benefit from the change. “Regardless of where you work and which function you have: You can benefit from HR NEW because, in the future, everybody within the company can use the processes and technologies introduced by HR NEW in one way or another” (HR NEW website, Site “Your Advantages”, Accessed on 30 June 2003). Whereas change strategists admitted that employees “may be required to acquire new skills or knowledge”, the website clearly stated that “HR NEW is not a rationalising programme seeking to make jobs redundant” (HR NEW Intranet, Site “FAQ”, Accessed on 30 June 2003). In other words, whereas there was no negative impact such as job loss, reduced responsibility or reduced payment, many aspects of employees’ working life (such as tasks completed, information technology used or colleagues worked with) would change.

The change initiative consisted of many different projects, each optimising one or more HR processes, technologies or means of interaction with employees. Different projects were implemented at different times (Figure 7.2). The new recruiting process was the first process to be optimised and the new recruiting technology was the first new technology to be introduced.

Figure 7.2: Overview change initiative HR NEW



Source: HR NEW website, Site “Timeline”, Accessed on 15 April 2003

The project RECRUIT was considered necessary because change strategists perceived the old recruiting processes and tools as having several weaknesses such as a lack of standardisation or manual comparison with data from other software (“Introduction of the standardised recruiting process”, Presentation held for Board of HR Directors, 17 September 2002, Slide 3). The aim of the project was to overcome these weaknesses by introducing changes on the level of the process, the technology and the means of interaction between HR department and employees. In the presentation “Project RECRUIT” (held at first multiplier workshop, 16 January 2003, Slide 8) the intended changes were described as follows:

Changes in processes:

- Standardisation of recruiting processes across all locations
- Different roles with regard to accessing applicant data
- Professional services for the other departments and for applicants
- Complete recruiting process from job specification to HR committee of the works council

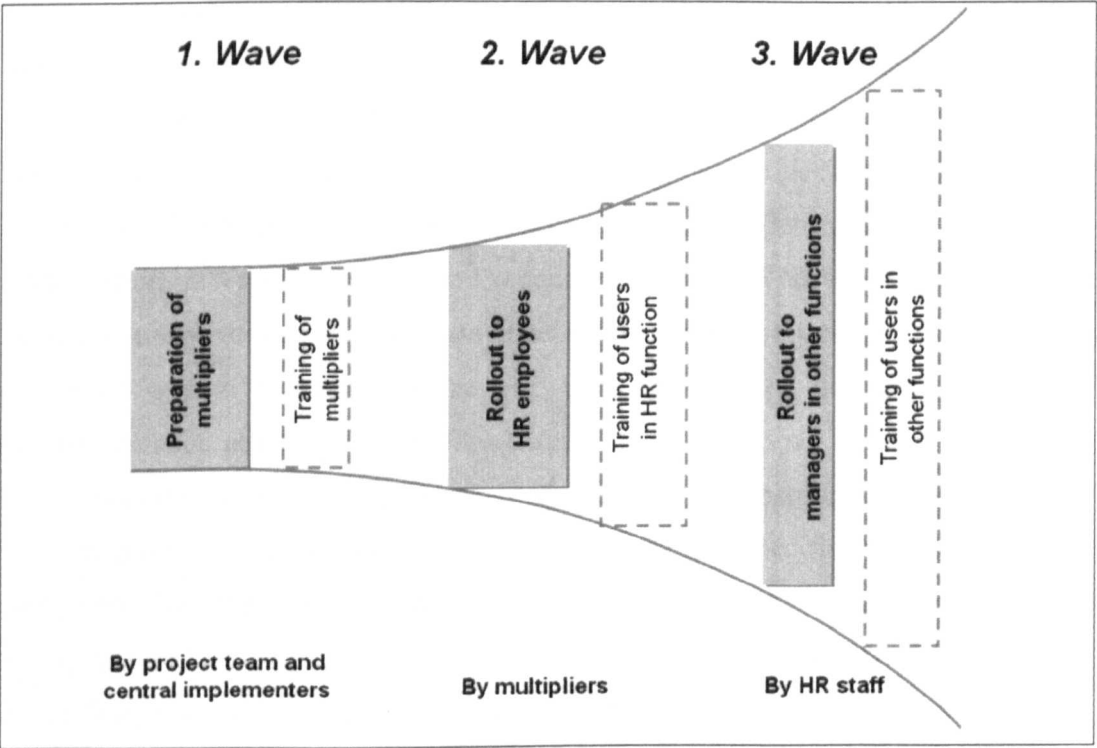
Changes in technology:

- Technical support during selection process: applicant pool with automatic matching between job specification and applicant profiles
- Multiple languages
- State-of-the-art technology

- Changes in interaction channels:
- Modern and dynamic interface to applicant via business-to-employee portal

Because of the large number of recipients, change strategists decided to prepare a small number of HR employees from each location as multipliers who supported the preparation of the HR employees at their location. The HR employees were then expected to support the introduction of the change in the other departments at their location. Because of the multiplier approach, the communication process occurred in three consecutive waves (Figure 7.3). The focus of this case study is the second wave because it fits the criteria specified in Chapter 2. In the second wave, HR employees who have not been involved in the planning of the change are prepared for its introduction. The first wave is discussed insofar as the choice and preparation of multipliers influenced the other HR employees' perceptions of the information received from multipliers.

Figure 7.3: Multiplier approach in Case Study HR NEW



Source: “Documentation of second multiplier workshop”, 31 March 2003, Slide 9

7.3 Information conveyed

7.3.1 Impact of the change initiative HR NEW and its projects

The aspect of the change that recipients mainly desired information about often was the impact of HR NEW. This could have been anticipated because it had been claimed by previous work (for example, Larkin and Larkin, 1994, 1996) and it had been present in the first case study. As the focus of the project RECRUIT was more on the technology used than on the tasks completed, and as recruiting was only one part of most recipients' jobs, the impact of the change initiative HR NEW was mainly determined by its other projects. But recipients' perceptions of the impact of HR NEW still need to be discussed because, as the following sections will show, recipients' perceptions of the other projects influenced their perceptions of the communication about RECRUIT.

Implementers made very clear that RECRUIT "is the first part of a strategic change" because they were convinced that employees "have to understand the big picture in order to be able to understand the project RECRUIT" (Implementer). Whereas implementers had accurately recognised that "employees want to understand the big picture" (Observation of Working Committee Communication for HR NEW, 15 April 2003), they had also accurately assumed that "employees are not knowledgeable about HR NEW" (Implementer) and that "there are big uncertainties among employees" (Observation of Working Committee Communication for HR NEW, 15 April 2003). In particular, recipients had an inaccurate understanding of the project HR DIRECT which developed a new structure for the HR function. One of the employees stated "Communication about HR DIRECT is insufficient"¹¹. We do not know at all what the new structure will look like. Maybe the project is not far enough but we want to know what we have to expect of the future". Another employee specified that they were not sure "how close the new structure would be to a call centre" which was important to know because "nobody here wants to work in a call centre". Recipients were afraid of losing their jobs or, at least, the kind of job they liked. A common perception among group leaders was that, because of this lack of understanding of the new structure, "there was a certain amount of uncertainty" (Group leader).

¹¹ In German: "Die Kommunikation über HR Direkt ist nicht sehr glücklich"

At one location, change strategists addressed employees' concerns regarding potential negative effects during the road show HR NEW. The director of the central HR department said that "There will neither be an electronification of the HR function nor will there be a soulless HR department" (Observation of road show HR NEW, 12 December 2002) and later in his speech he emphasised that employees' jobs were not at risk. The three employees from this location who mentioned this issue during the interview believed the change strategist, typical statements being "They said that there would be no layoffs and I believe that" and "Fear of layoffs was reduced" (Employees). When asked why they believed the information, one of the three employees simply said "I trust those people" and another employee explained "Such a statement made by a manager in our organisation can be considered as true". This explanation is supported by the literature on trust (Kramer, 1999; Mishra, 1996; Meyerson *et al.*, 1996), according to which the knowledge that a person occupies a particular role in the organisation is an important basis of trust. This form of depersonalised trust can be referred to as 'role-based trust' (Kramer, 1999, p.578) because it is not the person in the role that is trusted so much as the system of expertise that produces and maintains role-appropriate behaviour of role occupants (Meyerson *et al.*, 1996).

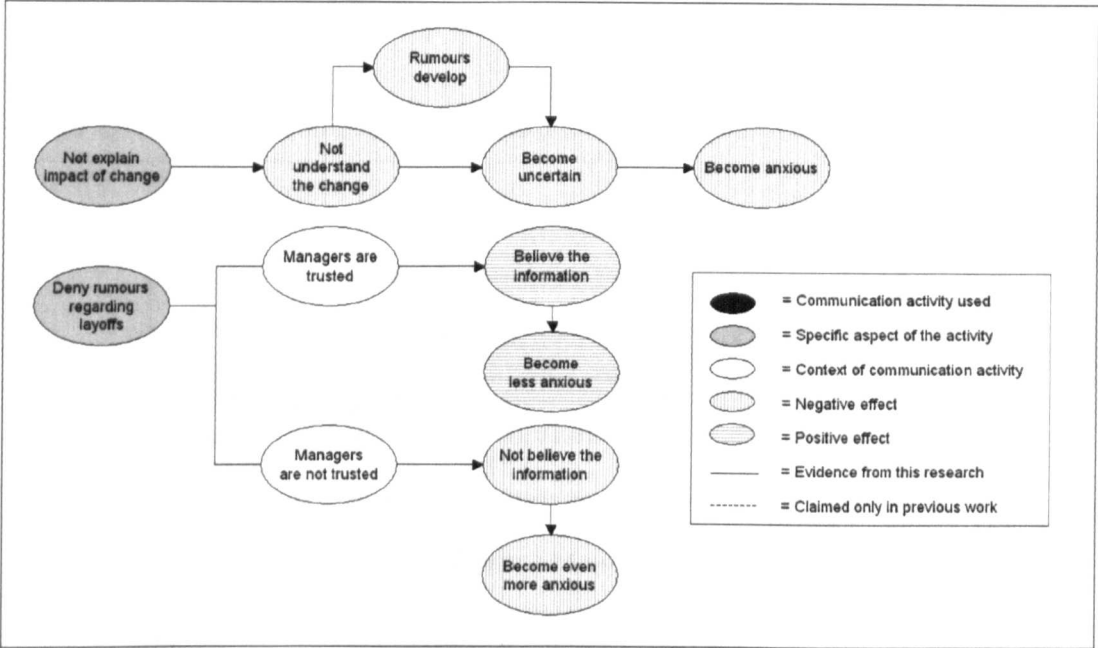
At another location, change strategists also addressed rumours about layoffs during the road show but the effect was different. At this location, "anxiety remained" (Employee) because recipients did not believe the information. Recipients were convinced that "some things were smooth talking" and that the statement that HR NEW is not a cost reduction programme "is a downright lie" (Employee). There was no evidence that the lack of believability of the information was related to differences in the way recipients at the first location and recipients at the second location trusted change strategists on the basis of their role. Rather, recipients did not believe the information because the statement that HR NEW was not a cost reduction programme did not fit their perceptions of how decisions are made in the case study organisation. One of the employees, for example, said that "the management board has approved a sum which is astonishing for the HR function" and that "they only do that if they receive a return on their investment". This knowledge about the ways things are done in the organisation made him conclude that "HR NEW will certainly reduce costs". His explanation is supported by Kramer (1999) who argues that recipients' tacit understandings regarding

organisational practices provide an important basis for inferring whether others in the organisation can be trusted. This form of depersonalised trust can be referred to as 'rule-based trust' (Kramer, 1999, p.579) because formal and informal rules capture much of the knowledge that employees have about such tacit understandings (March, 1994).

The difference in recipients' perceptions of the denial of rumours regarding layoffs shows that it is not sufficient to address recipients' concerns because the desired effect is only achieved if recipients believe change strategists. Whereas previous work (Broadfield, 1997; Klein, 1996; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) had claimed that the trustworthiness of the communicator is an important determinant of the credibility of the message, little specific evidence had been provided in the context of organisational change. Although Horbury (1996) found that a lack of trust in the organisation's management team resulted in the failure of the change message to be received, she did not specify why employees did not trust the management team. Figure 7.4 illustrates the negative effects of not explaining the impact of the change and emphasises the influence of recipients' perceptions of change strategists' trustworthiness on the effectiveness of addressing rumours.

The positive effect of employees' awareness of the impact of HR NEW was that employees became interested in the change and that they wanted to know more about the change. A perception that was shared by recipients on all levels was that "Everybody is affected by HR NEW" and that "Everybody occupies oneself with HR NEW" (Employee). As the new recruiting process and the new recruiting technology were implemented first, the interest in the change initiative HR NEW included interest in the project RECRUIT.

Figure 7.4: Influence of trust on effectiveness of addressing rumours



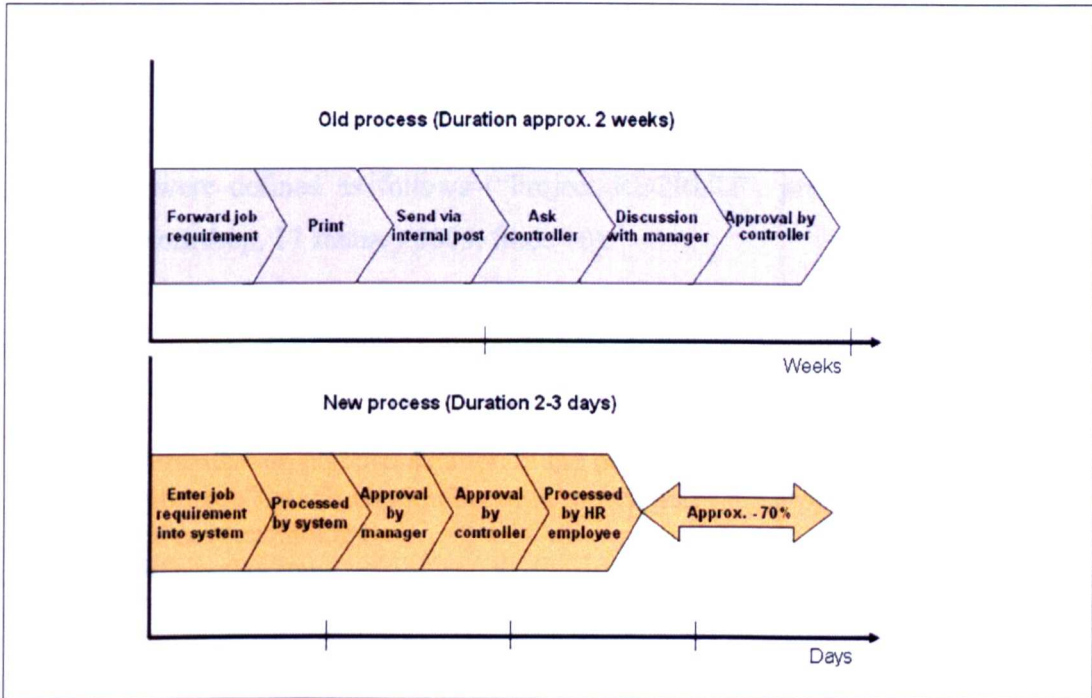
7.3.2 Benefit of the new recruiting process and technology

Implementers decided that “any message about RECRUIT should be a message about the benefit of the new process and technology” because they were convinced that “this increases employees’ willingness to change which, in turn, increases their willingness to learn the new technology” (Agreement at meeting of working committee Communication for HR NEW, 4 November 2002). Therefore, any presentation about RECRUIT included either a table or a diagram illustrating the benefit of the new recruiting process and technology (Figure 7.5).

The evidence suggests that the communication activities were worth the effort because all employees were convinced of the benefit of RECRUIT. A common perception by employees was that “RECRUIT is one of the important aspects of HR NEW. They have already improved the old software a lot but the new system is a much bigger jump. It will be the benchmark in recruiting technology in Germany” (Employee). It needs to be said, however, that it must have been relatively easy to convince employees of the benefit of the change because the old technology was perceived as wanting. One

employee, for example, stated “I see much room for improvement” and another employee emphasised “The time of the old system has passed”¹².

Figure 7.5: Example of slides used to illustrate benefit of new recruiting process



Source: “Project RECRUIT”, Presentation held at first multiplier workshop, 16 January 2003, Slide 17

7.4 Communication activities used

7.4.1 Multipliers

As discussed earlier in this thesis (3.8), opinion leaders are considered as having a potentially important role in the process of communicating about a change. Whereas the British and American literature (for example, Quirke, 1996; Rogers, 1995) focuses on existing opinion leaders and less on the purposive development of new multipliers, in the German literature authors such as Mohr and Woehe (1998) and the consulting firm Umsetzungsberatung (2003) recommend actively developing multipliers who can influence the other recipients’ attitude towards the change. The difference between

¹² In German: „Die Zeit des alten Systems ist abgelaufen”

opinion leaders and multipliers is that multipliers are especially prepared for their role in that they are offered a chance to experience the change before the other recipients do, thereby developing a favourable attitude towards the change (Mohr and Woehe, 1998). In this case study, multipliers were expected to complete several tasks. Relevant for the purpose of this thesis, however, was that multipliers were expected to play an active role in communication activities such as events and the management cascade and thereby support the introduction of the change. The responsibilities and tasks of multipliers were defined as follows ("Project RECRUIT", presentation held at first multiplier workshop, 17 January 2003, Slide 10):

- Fine-tuning of the central rollout plan
- Developing the local rollout plan and monitoring the implementation at the location
- Communication and presentation of the new process and the new technology
- 'Diplomatic' intermediation between the views of the project team and the users of the new technology
- Sell the technology

As the benefit of opinion leaders is their ability to influence other individuals' understanding and acceptance of an innovation or an organisational change (Pfannenberger, 2003; Quirke, 1996; Rogers, 1995), the success of the multiplier approach depends on who is chosen as a multiplier. 80% of the multipliers were recruiters from the central or local recruiting departments and 20% came from other functions in HR. A common perception among implementers and multipliers was that this combination was important because "the recruiters are the experts" whereas "the other HR employees usually have a better connection to their colleagues" (Multiplier). Using only recruiters as multipliers would have been problematic because, as several local implementers said, "some employees in HR perceive recruiters as those introducing a new technology that they do not want" (Local implementer). Therefore, the other recipients would not have perceived multipliers as one of them and, consequently, a main benefit of opinion leaders would not have been achieved (Rogers, 1995; Derieth, 1995).

Multipliers were chosen in different ways at different locations. Usually the head of the HR department of the location asked specific employees whether they would like to

become a multiplier and employees usually said yes because “employees knew that participation in such work groups is honored” (Local implementer) and because it is “a welcome change from the normal job” (Multiplier). These factors were important in order to increase the willingness to become a multiplier, which is argued to be an important determinant of the effectiveness of multipliers (Mohr and Woehe, 1998). At one location, the two multipliers were chosen “because our supervisor wanted the persons to become multipliers who had to use the technology first” (Multiplier). This choice was practical and it was helpful in the context of this case study. However, not choosing multipliers on the basis of their skills could have been problematic because, as Mohr and Woehe (1998) emphasise, multipliers need to be able to present complex information in a way that recipients understand, they need to create enthusiasm for the change and they need to be perceived as competent partners who can answer the other recipients’ questions.

Table 7.2: Aims of the multiplier workshops

Aims of the first multiplier workshop	Aims of the second multiplier workshop
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The multipliers have a clear understanding of the new recruiting process: Background and aims, connection to HR NEW, process models and tools.- The multipliers get to know the new tool, thereby realising its benefit and the resulting changes for the users.- The multipliers understand the importance of their role in the rollout and the tasks they have to complete.- All multipliers have a process model for the rollout at their location.- The multipliers have a clear assignment for the planning of the rollout at their location.- The multipliers consider themselves as part of a community with change managers and the project team: a community that takes the responsibility for the rollout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The change managers and multipliers have optimized their specific rollout through exchange of best practices and lessons learned with their colleagues.- The change managers and multipliers, jointly, have identified potential demand for support throughout the rollout.- The change managers and multipliers know the toolkit and know how to use it.- The multipliers know the presentation for the other units and have had first experiences in presenting it.- The change managers and multipliers know the interventions (arguments of the benefit, etc.) available for addressing potential barriers and objections.- The multipliers feel confident enough in order to tackle the next steps.

Source: “Lessons Learned from multiplier workshops”, Presentation held for Board of HR Directors, 7 April 2003, Slides 22-23

Two two-day multiplier workshops were conducted on 16/17 January and 24/25 March 2003 in order to prepare multipliers for their role. The first workshop focused on clarifying the role of multipliers and creating understanding of the change. The second workshop built on the first workshop and focused on preparing multipliers for carrying the change into the HR departments (Table 7.2).

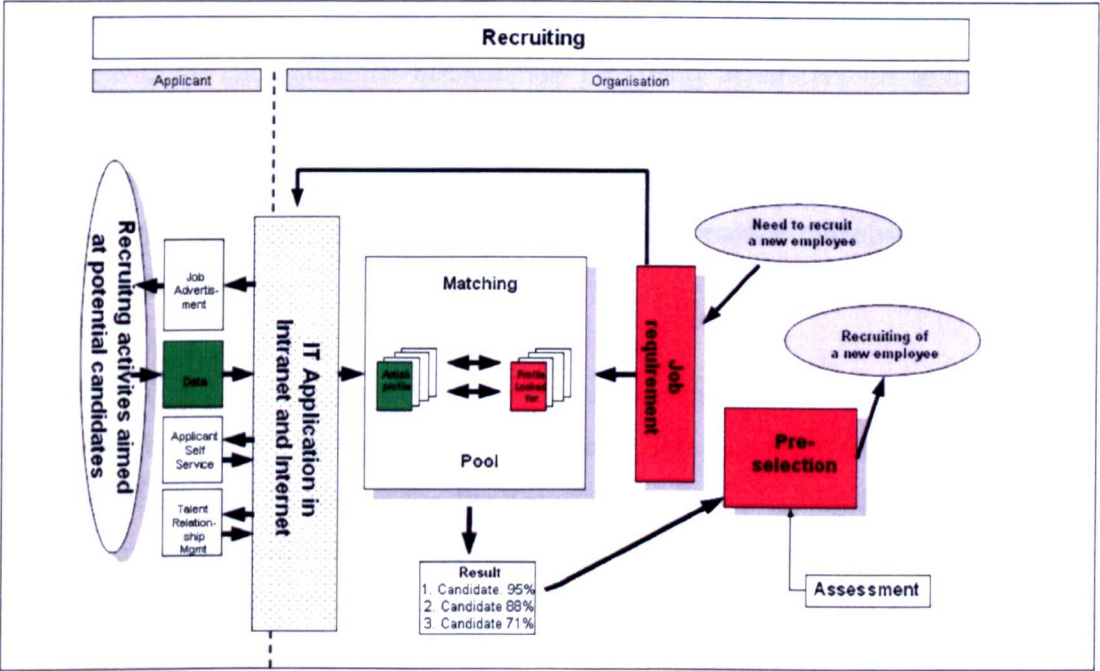
Multipliers said that, when they received the invitation to the first multiplier workshop, they “did not know what was ahead”. They only knew that they had to “convey some thing some how some when to the colleagues in HR” (Multiplier). Although one aim of the first multiplier workshop was to explain the role of the multipliers, several multipliers complained that “the roles and responsibilities were still not clear after the first workshop” and that too many questions had not been answered: “What exactly am I supposed to do now? How does the process continue? Who must contact whom to make what arrangement?” (Multipliers). This lack of understanding of their role was problematic because multipliers doubted that they knew enough to fulfil their role effectively. One of the multipliers even asked “How is this going to work?”. The main reason for why some multipliers had not yet fully understood their role was because they had not understood the support that would be provided by other people. A workgroup that identified lessons learned from the rollout process found that two important aspects that needed to be clarified soon were “clarification of different roles ” and “more exact information about what is provided” (“Results of work groups of second multiplier workshop”, Presentation compiled by external change management consultants and sent to implementers on 4 April 2003, Slide 10). One multiplier explained this in detail:

It would have been important to communicate early what is provided by the central change management department. We had already collected first ideas for a presentation and for the design of an event, and then we found out that these things are provided for us. We had even collected ideas about a training concept and made appointments with colleagues to discuss this further. This double work could have been avoided (Multiplier).

In addition to understanding their role, it was important that multipliers understood and accepted the new process and the new technology because they had to promote it to

their colleagues in the HR departments. One way to achieve this aim was explaining the new process by means of illustrations (Figure 7.6). Six multipliers mentioned the use of illustrations and they all perceived this as very helpful because “the overviews of the new recruiting process made the complexity of the process understandable” (Multiplier).

Figure 7.6: Example of slides used to explain new recruiting process



Source: “RECRUIT”, standard presentation, provided by central implementers for communication about RECRUIT, available from 1 April 2003, Slide 14

Another way to make multipliers understand and accept the new process and technology was through the use of learning projects so that multipliers could experience what it would be like to be an applicant, a recruiter, an HR employee and a manager in another department. In the learning project called ‘fishing for applicants’, for example, multipliers were given instructions how to play the different roles in the recruiting process and they were given tools with which to play the roles. Most multipliers considered the learning project as very helpful. A typical statement was “The fishing of applicants was good. We talked about this long after the workshop. It even helped when communicating the new technology to the other departments” (Multiplier). Two multipliers, however, considered the learning project as not necessary and one of them

even said that such projects are “a waste of time” because he had already understood the process and “there were so many other things to do”.

Draft versions of the new technology were a third way to make multipliers understand and accept the new process and technology. These “click-dummies” had a temporary design and some functions did not yet work. All multipliers said that the benefit was that they could see the screens and learn about the most important functions. One multiplier had already said during the workshop that “it is important that we can practice with the click-dummies because now I do really understand the technology and its benefit” (Observation of first multiplier workshop, 17 January 2004) and the other multipliers repeated this view during the interview. A typical statement was “It was important that they had computers so that we could practice ourselves whenever we wanted” (Multiplier).

An effect that was not specifically aimed at was multipliers’ perceptions of who supported the change. Multipliers said that the presence of the director of the change initiative, the project leader and the director of the central recruiting department showed that the change was important and that multipliers were important. This could have been predicted on the basis of previous work (for example, Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996) but multipliers also wanted to know whether the director of the local HR department and the works council supported the change. One of the multipliers said during the first workshop: “How could this work if the works council and the head of the HR department don’t support it?” A workgroup that identified best practices among the different rollout plans identified the following two prerequisites for a successful rollout: “senior HR managers stand behind the change” and “the works council is involved and committed” (“Results of work groups of second multiplier workshop”, Presentation compiled by external change management consultants and sent to implementers on 4 April 2003, Slide 12).

Finally, multipliers needed to learn the skills required for a successful multiplier approach. The provision of a toolkit (Figure 7.7) was an important means to achieve this aim. The toolkit was “intended to support you [multipliers] in completing your task in that it provides important information for your workshops and additional support that may be relevant in relation to the rollout as a whole” (RECRUIT Toolkit, available from

24 March 2003, Slide 2). Most multipliers said something like “The toolkit was very good” (Multiplier) and they also stated their positive opinion towards the benefit of the single tools. Typical statements were “The standard presentation was very helpful”, “The detailed suggestions for the workshops in the HR departments ... saved a lot of time” and “The FAQ were very helpful” (Multipliers). Only one multiplier complained that the toolkit was too detailed. She said “Do they think that we have got nothing else to do?”. When confronted with this statement by the author, one of the implementers said “To be honest, we had expected more such comments because the toolkit was designed to provide support for different situations but many recipients may not face several of these situations”. Therefore, it is very likely that the reason for the complaint was not the size of the toolkit, but rather an inaccurate understanding regarding the use of the toolkit.

Figure 7.7: Table of contents of RECRUIT toolkit

Toolkit		
Table of Contents		
1	Information about the toolkit	3
2	Overview of rollout of project RECRUIT	6
3	My role as a multiplier	7
4	Training measures	8
5	Workshops in HR departments	9
6	Events in other departments	30
7	Presentation for other departments	41
8	Guideline how to use clickdummies	42
9	Likely questions and appropriate answers	43
10	Comparison of old and new recruiting process	63
11	List of contacts	148

Source: RECRUIT Toolkit, available from 24 March 2003, Slide 3 (anonymised)

Multipliers also considered it as very helpful that they could practice the application of the tools, a typical statement being “The second workshop was better. We got the toolkit and we practiced the application of the tools” (Multiplier). Different multipliers used different examples to express the perceived benefit of being able to practice the application of the tools. One multiplier, for example, said “I find it difficult to hold a presentation without detailed preparation. It was, therefore, very important for me that I

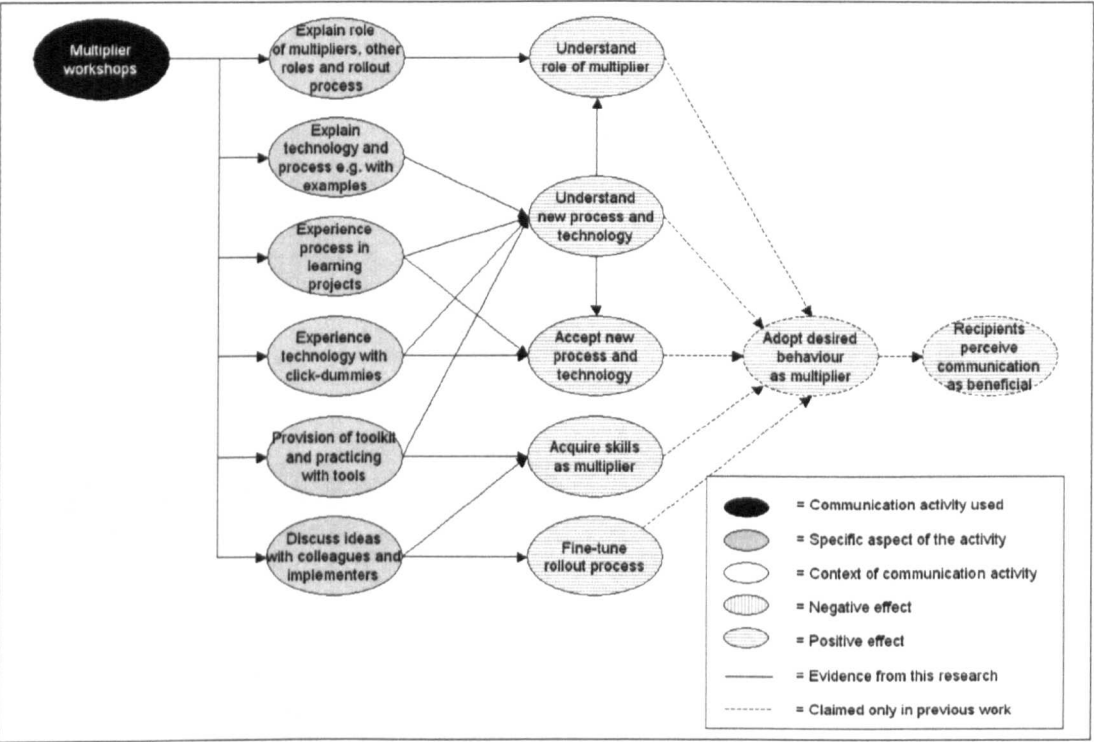
could hold the presentation during the workshop and that I received feedback from the other multipliers". Applying the different tools not only increased familiarity with the tools but at the same time increased understanding of the new process. This is indicated by the fact that many multipliers articulated the opinion that, "before I had presented the new process to my colleagues and heard my colleagues' presentation, I was not convinced that the whole thing was necessary. But then I realised that it was quite good" (Multiplier).

Several multipliers stated that it was also very helpful that "we shared the experiences with multipliers from other locations" (Multiplier) and that they could ask specific questions. One of the multipliers specified "I could also ask concrete questions that were important for my own work" and concluded that, without these questions, "the workshops in the HR department would not have been that smooth" because multipliers would have been less prepared for presenting the project RECRUIT and for answering recipients' questions. Change managers had anticipated this desire and had organised small workgroups to discuss those aspects of the rollout that multipliers considered important (Observation of second multiplier workshop, 24 March 2004). Dissatisfaction with this approach only existed among those multipliers who already felt ready to work on their rollout plans. One of them complained during a break of the work group "I have said that two days are too long for the workshop. Now we are working on things again that I have already done before the workshop. It would have been better to make sure that everyone is prepared" (Observation of second multiplier workshop, 24 March 2004). It seems, however, as if the complaints are less related to exchange of ideas than they are to the lack of preparation of some colleagues.

It has become evident that the two multiplier workshops played an important role in preparing multipliers for their task. After the workshops multipliers were familiar with the new recruiting process and with the new recruiting technology, they understood the tasks they were expected to complete and they had practiced and fine-tuned the tools that they would use when communicating with the other HR employees. Figure 7.8 summarises the central effects of the multiplier workshops. The dotted lines and boxes on the right indicate that these effects are likely to influence the behaviour that multipliers adopt during the rollout process and their behaviour, in turn, is likely to

influence recipients’ perceptions of the communication activities in which multipliers participate.

Figure 7.8: Central effects of the multiplier workshops



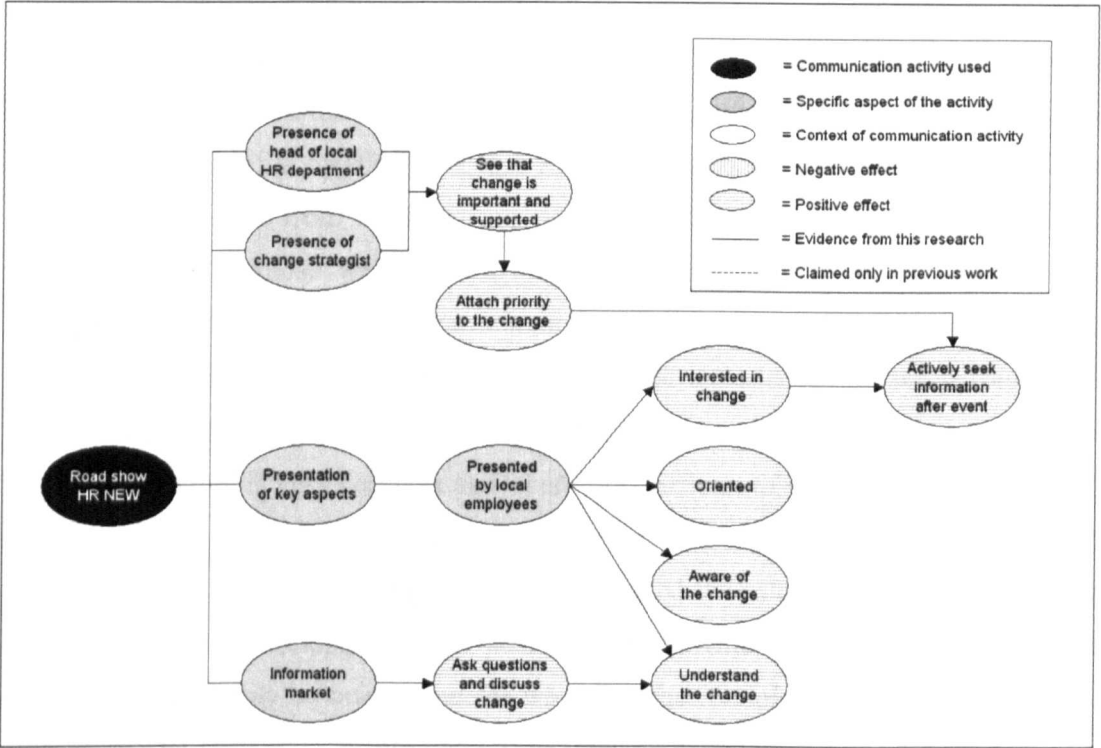
7.4.2 Road show HR NEW

The road show was the kick-off event and the starting point for regular communication about HR NEW. The road show had several positive effects whereas negative effects were not mentioned by recipients (Figure 7.9). The perception “After the kick-off event HR NEW has always been present and bit by bit we have also learned about RECRUIT“ (Employee), which was typical for recipients, indicates that the road show increased recipients’ awareness of the new recruiting process and technology. This was an important effect because, according to authors such as Buchholz (2002) and Rogers (1995), awareness is a prerequisite for understanding a change. Furthermore, the road show created interest in the change so that employees wanted to learn more.

During the road show HR NEW I learned about HR NEW for the first time. I had heard about HR NEW before but during the event I became aware of the fact

that something was coming that affected me. That made me curious. After the event, I sought, and listened to, information about HR NEW more consciously (Employee).

Figure 7.9: Reasons for the positive effects of the road show HR NEW



One success factor of the the road show was the participation of the programme leader and the director of the local HR department. A change manager suggested that “it should already be stated in the invitation that the event would be an interaction between headquarters and peripheral location in order to jointly achieve the aims of the project” (Observation of Working Committee Communication for HR NEW, 18 November 2002) and his suggestion was put into practice. The interaction between those responsible at the headquarters and those responsible at the location lasted until the very end of the event, which was perceived as very helpful. A common perception among recipients was “The participation of the programme leader and the head of our HR department has shown how important the change programme is” (Recipient) and one of the recipients specified “It was interesting when [Head of local HR department] and [Programme Leader] expressed their commitment by skipping rope together and saying that HR NEW is a big step forward for the HR function”. Statements such as the last one confirm the benefit of physically skipping rope together on stage as an additional

expression of their intention to implement the change cooperatively. This provides specific evidence for the general claim that use of metaphorical language (Marshak, 1993) or metaphorical expressions (Heckmair, 2000) can increase the accuracy of recipients' understanding of a change and increase their acceptance of a change.

The cooperation between headquarters and peripheral location was further demonstrated in that employees from the respective location cooperated with project members when explaining the benefits of HR NEW and RECRUIT. A typical statement was "It was good that [Employee from our location] explained the process. She explained it from the perspective of those who have to use the technology - from our perspective" (Recipient). At one location, the participation of the employee from the location was especially effective because he included his personal experience into his presentation. "[Employee from our location] said that, at the beginning, he had been sceptical. He said that HR NEW is very complex and, therefore, difficult to understand. Then he said that, now that he understood it, he considered HR NEW good and necessary" (Recipient). The fact that the employee who presented the information was sceptical at the beginning but developed a more positive attitude when his understanding of the change increased may be one reason for why the other recipients also wanted to learn more about the change, as mentioned above. This explanation is supported by previous work on the use of opinion leaders (Mohr, 1997; Palmer and Fenner, 1999) according to which opinion leaders such as employees from the same group can greatly influence the other recipients' perceptions of a change because opinion leaders are expected to evaluate information in the context of group norms.

Given the responsibilities of multipliers discussed earlier in this chapter (7.4.1), they would have been appropriate to present information at the road show. But the local employees who presented the information at the road show HR NEW were not the multipliers because the second multiplier workshop, after which multipliers were sufficiently prepared to communicate about the project RECRUIT, took place after the road shows. Given the positive effects of the presentations by local employees who were not multipliers, the lack of integration of multipliers into the road show did not appear to limit the effectiveness of the road show. However, the road show would have been an appropriate platform to introduce the multipliers and to explain their role. Although multipliers were only responsible for the project RECRUIT and not for HR

NEW as a whole, it may have been beneficial to introduce them at the road show in order to emphasise the importance of RECRUIT as the first project that would be implemented.

Another success factor of the road show was the combination of presentation and discussion at information stands because it made sure that most employees understood the big picture as well as the specific aspects of the change that they were interested in. “The road show was a large event but it was well designed. Everybody could deal with what one was interested in or one could obtain an overview of the change programme” (Employee). A change manager reported “It was good that we did not go into the details in the presentation because then employees would have been lost” (Email by Change Manager, 19 December 2002) and employees confirmed that the presentation of the key aspects was very helpful, a typical statement being “We learned where the HR function is heading and what the important issues are” (Employee). The information market, during which employees could go to different information stands and talk to those responsible, was perceived as similarly positive. Personal observation by the author confirmed the statement by the local implementer who said “There were many discussions at the information stands. About 150 employees discussed with project leaders and project team members”.

In addition to the discussions during the information market, implementers had expected employees to ask questions during the presentations as well but this was not the case. One employee said “During such a large event no one asks a question” and another employee specified “There are too many people and there is inhibition to ask questions in front of the head of the HR department because one does not want to disgrace oneself”. This confirms the claim of authors such as Mast (2002a) who argue that dialogue is more likely during meetings in small groups than during presentations to large audiences.

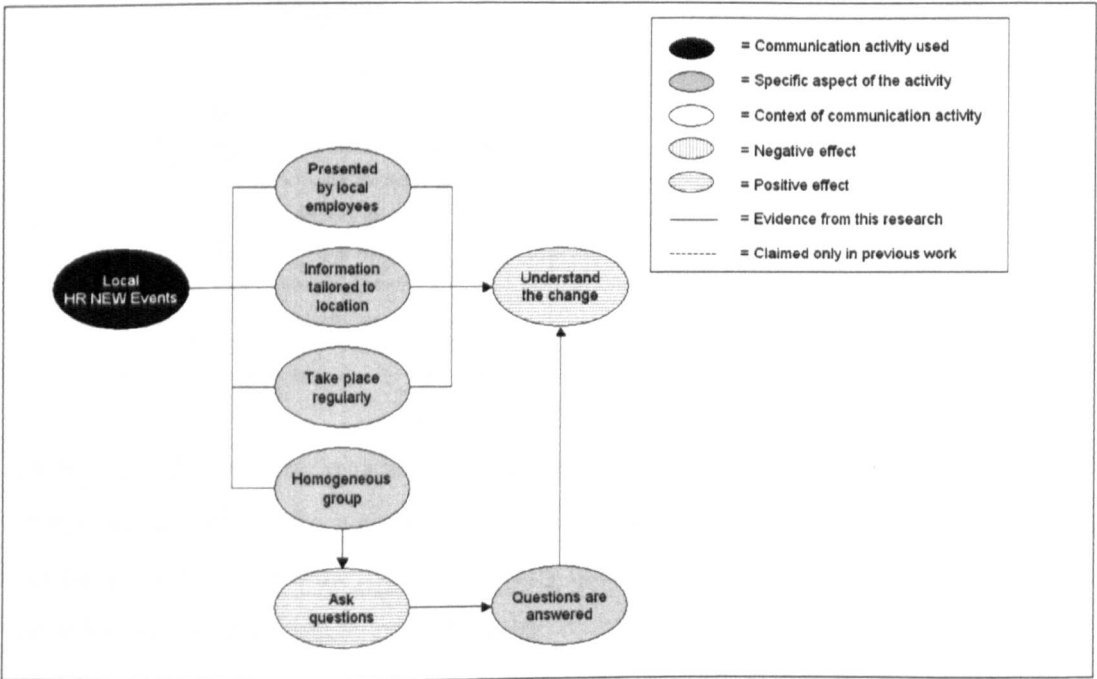
7.4.3 Local HR NEW events

A series of local events which took place every six to eight weeks started after the road show HR NEW. At the beginning of the event, recipients received a brief overview of

where the programme and the single projects stood and then one or two projects were discussed in detail, usually those projects that had reached a milestone. Finally, recipients could ask questions about the two projects or any other aspect of the change. Employees considered these events as beneficial because they were “informed about the key issues” and because the information “usually was directly related to our work area” (Employee). The fact that the local events took place regularly further increased their effectiveness. The majority of employees said that it was helpful to “regularly receive topical information during the one and a half hours of the event” (Employee) and one employee even said “I don’t need more knowledge at the moment”.

The key benefit of the local events was that “no question remains unanswered during these events“ (Employee) whereas a limitation of the road show was that recipients asked very few questions during the presentations. Although the local events also included up to 100 employees, a benefit of these events was that employees knew each other and those holding the presentations well. A typical statement was “The atmosphere was more familiar. I did not hesitate to ask my questions” (Employee). Figure 7.10 illustrates that the local events were an important communication activity with regard to increasing recipients’ understanding of the change. Again, negative effects were not mentioned by the recipients.

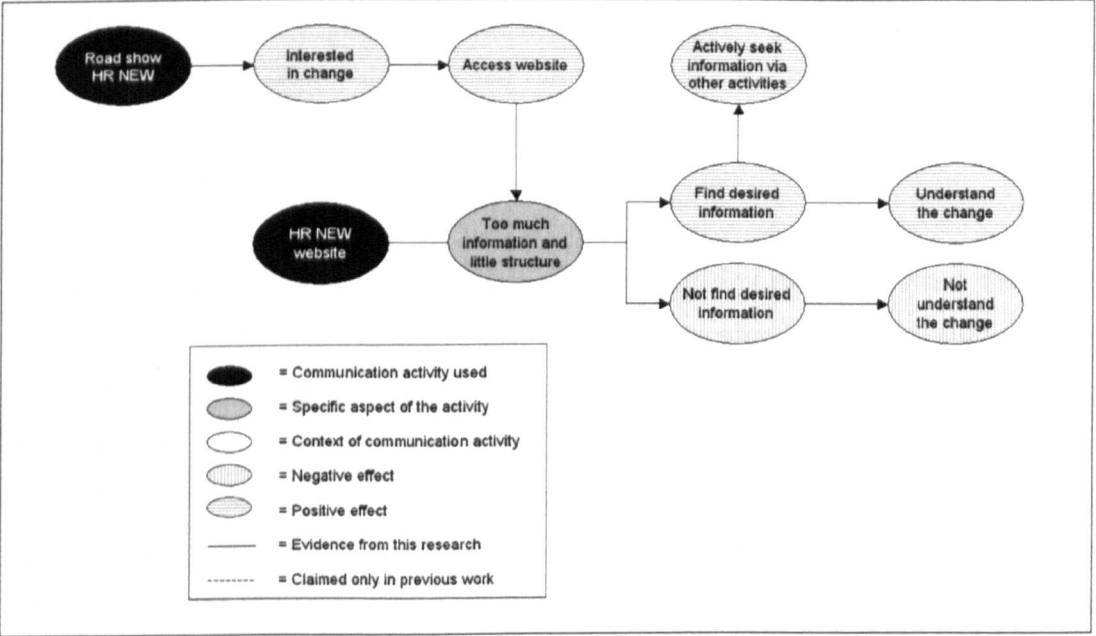
Figure 7.10: Reasons for the positive effects of local HR NEW events



7.4.4 HR NEW Website

The HR NEW website contained information about the programme as a whole and about single projects such as RECRUIT. As the new recruiting process was the first project to be implemented, information about the new recruiting process and technology played a more important role on the website than information about other projects. But the website was considered as less helpful, a typical statement being “I look at the website from time to time but usually I do not have the time”. After the road show, however, when interest in the change had been created, recipients used the website (Figure 7.11). Several employees said something like “After the event I got information from the website” (Employee). This indicates that the website would have been appropriate to satisfy recipients’ desire to learn more about the change after it had been announced during the road show.

Figure 7.11: Interdependence between HR NEW website and other activities



A benefit of the website, which was also present in the first case study, was that, “after having had a look at the website”, recipients “sought more information in the group meetings” because there they “could ask any question” (Employee). A key limitation of the website, as commonly perceived by recipients, was that “there is too much

information in the intranet” and that “one does not find one’s way at all” (Employee). Some recipients added that the use of the website could have been increased if implementers had “introduced a sitemap that provided a clear overview of the content” (Employee).

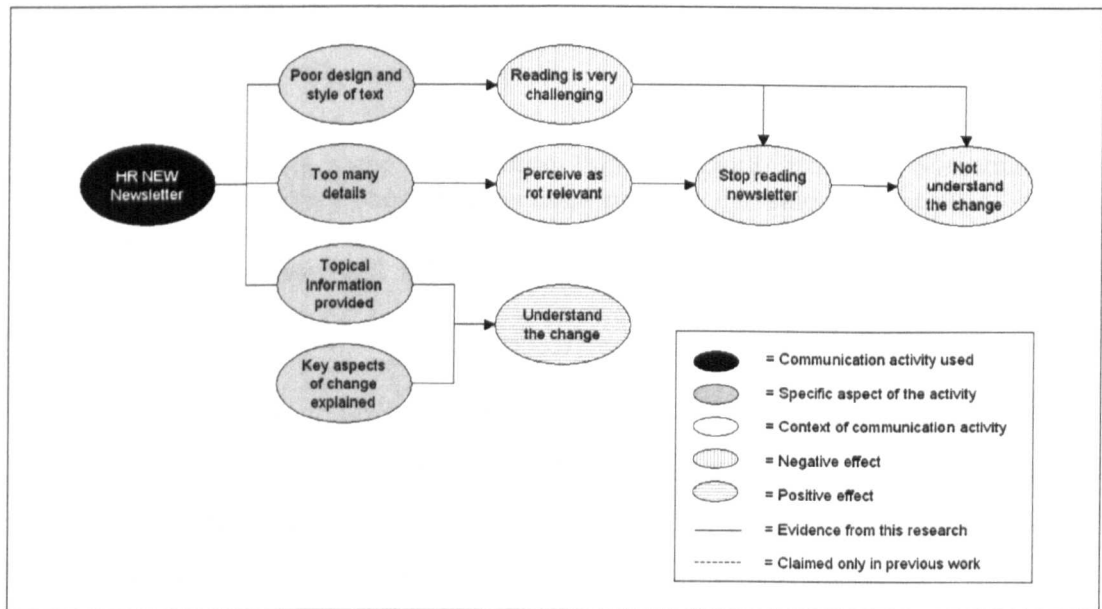
The use of the website also could have been increased if implementers had more often referred to the website because employees considered it as helpful when they were directed towards certain information on the website. A common perception was “I only look at the website when I receive a hint, for example, an email which says that the new newsletter is published. If the hint creates my attention, I will have a look at the site” (Employee). The benefit of referring to the website is supported by the usage statistics of the HR NEW website, according to which in each month the day after the newsletter had been sent always was the day on which the highest number of employees visited the website. One employee specified that he preferred “receiving one hint more instead of one hint less” because that way “it is ensured that I receive the important information” (Employee). This highlights that it is not only important to provide information about the change but also to remind and encourage recipients to access the information.

7.4.5 HR NEW Newsletter

An HR NEW newsletter was published irregularly. The first two newsletters were sent via email to all employees working in HR. The following newsletters were published on the HR NEW website and the email was only used to announce that the newsletter had been added to the website. Although the usage statistics of the HR NEW website demonstrate that between 60 and 75 percent of the employees who received the email accessed the website on which the newsletter was published, the HR NEW newsletter was not perceived as very helpful. The design of the newsletter was one reason for its ineffectiveness (Figure 7.12). Employees complained that “the newsletter has too much text” and that the “design must become more appealing if they want me to read the newsletter” (Employee). Two employees specified that “structuring the newsletter with links and sections so that it is easier to find out where to find the relevant information for oneself” may be helpful (Employee). Another reason for the ineffectiveness of the newsletter lay in the information conveyed.

I do not need many of the details in the newsletter because I do not directly work with these systems. Nobody does. They said that 105 concepts were completed, when certain management meetings would be and where the PCs would be positioned. If such things occur repeatedly and if I feel like the newsletter contains many things that I do not need to know, I stop reading before I have really started (Employee).

Figure 7.12: Benefits and limitations of the HR NEW newsletter



The newsletter increased the effectiveness of group meetings because group leaders based the discussion during the group meetings on what had been officially communicated by the project team. A common perception among the three group leaders was “We need the online media such as the HR NEW newsletter for official information from the programme itself” because they could then “use the information to talk with our employees” (Group leader). A potential benefit of the newsletter, which was suggested by the majority of the employees, was the possibility to send “a concise report about the status of the change and its key aspects to all employees” (Employee). But this effect was not achieved in this case study because implementers did not know about recipients’ suggestion and, therefore, did not use the newsletter to convey the desired information.

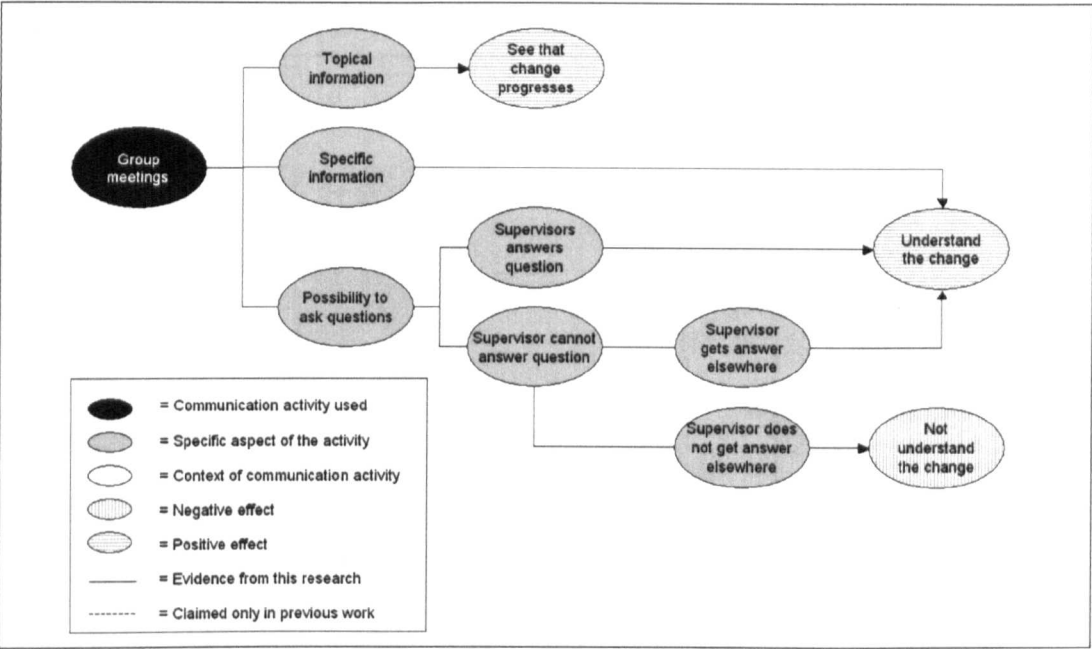
7.4.6 Management cascade

As in the first case study, the management cascade was an important communication activity. Group leaders said they “received topical information about HR NEW from the director of the HR department during the meeting of the group leaders” and in the same meeting the leader of the recruiting group “reports weekly about the progress of the project RECRUIT” (Group leaders). Group leaders forwarded this information and the information they had received from other sources to their employees during group meetings.

My boss brings some information into the group meeting. Sometimes the information is very short, two or three minutes. He said, for example, that the introduction of the personnel development process will be postponed and that more information will follow. That is very helpful. Then we are up to date (Employee).

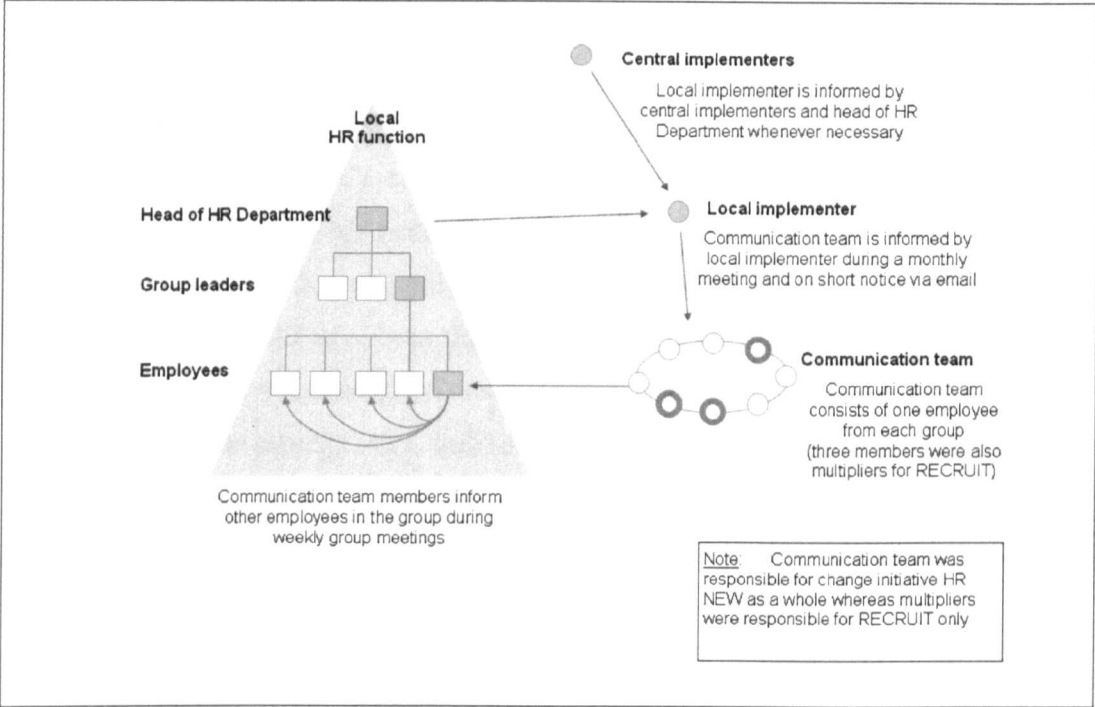
The main benefit of group meetings, as perceived by most employees, was that “questions were usually asked during the group meetings” (Employee). Employees did not consider it a problem that “supervisors could not answer certain specific questions” because, as one employee put it, when supervisors did not have the information, “they usually tried to get an answer elsewhere and then let us know”. Problems only arose when supervisors could not get an answer to all of recipients’ questions because recipients then did not understand the aspect of the change they had asked the question about (Figure 7.13). A minority of employees, however, did not consider the group meetings as particularly appropriate for asking questions. This was because they perceived the questions that could not be answered as the most important questions. One of those who did not consider group meetings as appropriate complained “What’s the benefit of telling us when a certain technology will be introduced but not being able to explain what the new structure would look like?”. Figure 7.13 illustrates the benefits and limitations of group meetings.

Figure 7.13: Benefits and limitations of group meetings



At one location, the communication via the management cascade was supported by a communication team, people whose responsibility it was to convey information about HR NEW and its projects to the different groups of the HR department. The communication team was founded after the kick-off event and included eight employees – one employee from each group within the HR department. “The intention is to use the communication team as an additional communication channel and as a sounding board so that all employees in HR can state their concerns and ask their questions about HR NEW” (Implementer, Observation of working committee Communication for HR NEW, 16 December 2002). The local implementer met with the communication team once a month and informed them about current developments of the change initiative HR NEW and the project RECRUIT. In addition, the communication team received an email when important information had to be conveyed quickly. The communication team members then forwarded the information to the employees in their group during the weekly group meetings with their supervisor. Three members of the communication team were also multipliers for the project RECRUIT. These multipliers brought in their knowledge about RECRUIT at the meetings of the communication team, thereby increasing the level of understanding of the project RECRUIT among the other communication team members. Figure 7.14 illustrates how the communication team functioned as an additional way to the management hierarchy.

Figure 7.14: Use of a communication team in Case Study HR NEW



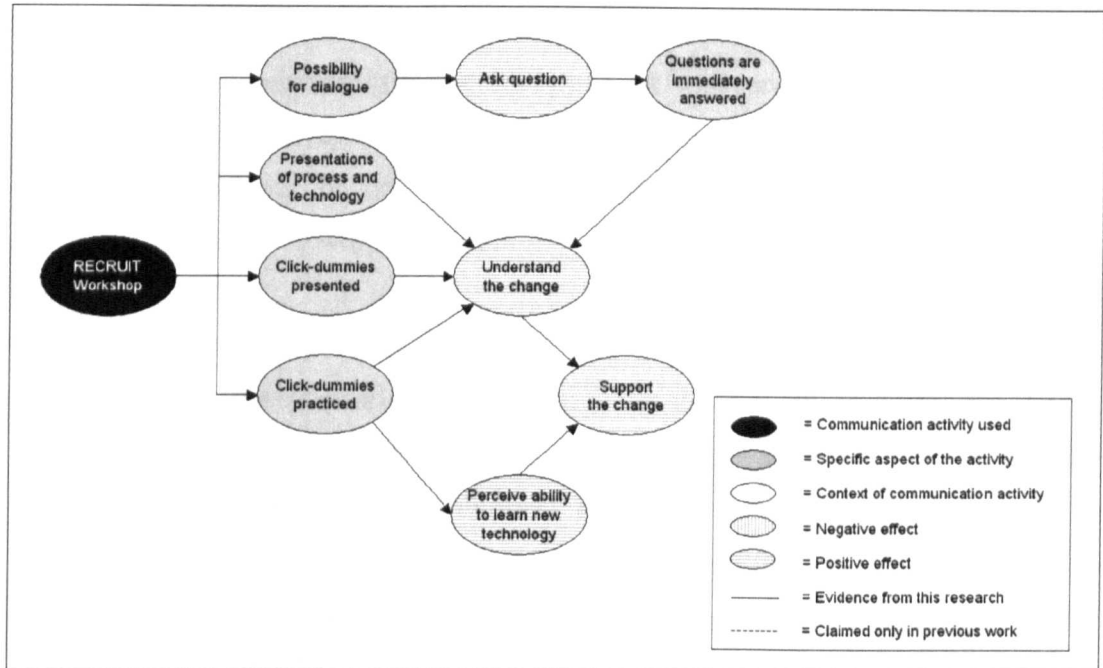
Communication via the communication team appeared very effective. Employees said that “the part of the information that the communication team brought into the group meetings was higher than the part of our supervisors” (Employee) and even group leaders said that “new information came regularly from the communication team” (Group leader). One reason for why communication via the communication team was effective was the depth of understanding that the members of the communication team had about HR NEW and RECRUIT. One of the group leaders even admired the members of the communication team because “they had a lot of background information”. The depth of understanding was increased because, in addition to the monthly meetings, they were “offered training sessions to get to know the new recruiting technology” and they “could always ask questions” (Communication team member). Another reason for the effectiveness of communication via the communication team was that “the communication team works really fast” (Employee) because team members “not only received information during the meetings that took place every four weeks but also inbetween via email” (Communication team member).

Despite the importance of the management cascade and its benefits, there was also room for improvement – mainly related to the provision of support for line managers. One of the peripheral change managers complained that “there is a big willingness among HR managers to carry the change into the organisation but supporting material and guidelines from the project are missing” (Observation of Change Management Leader Circle, 3 June 2002). The use of a communication team was one possibility to improve communication via the management cascade. Given its benefits, it should have been used at more locations. Another possibility, as implied in the statement by the peripheral change manager, would have been the provision of presentations that supervisors could have used for their communication, which had already been suggested by previous work (for example, Pfannenberger, 2003; Quirke, 1996). Finally, a structured process of how to forward recipients’ questions from supervisors via local implementers to the RECRUIT project team and how to forward the answers back to employees would have been beneficial.

7.4.7 RECRUIT workshop

The main communication activity used to prepare HR employees for the introduction of the new recruiting process and the new technology was a workshop which lasted between three and six hours, depending on the location. Guidance for the design of the workshops was provided by the central change management department as part of the multiplier toolkit. Therefore, the workshops were similar in substance: presentations were held, click-dummies were used and FAQ were discussed. The workshops were then fine-tuned and organised by the local implementer and the multipliers at the different locations. Employees perceived these workshops as very helpful, a typical statement being “The workshops about RECRUIT were great. The uncertainty and reluctance towards the new technology could be reduced” (Employee). A local implementer who had organised a workshop confirmed “At the beginning there were some critical voices but at the end everybody was convinced” (Observation of Working committee Communication for HR NEW, 15 April 2003). Figure 7.15 illustrates the central effects of the RECRUIT workshops and the aspects responsible for these effects. Negative effects were not mentioned by recipients.

Figure 7.15: Reasons for the positive effects of the RECRUIT workshop



One success factor of the RECRUIT workshops was that presentations were held in order to explain the new recruiting process and technology and its benefits. Employees appreciated that “the communication about RECRUIT was very open” (Employee). The basis for the presentation was provided by the central change management department and adjusted by the local multipliers. This combination was effective because the presentations included the relevant facts, they fit the project design and they were specifically relevant for the respective audience. Multipliers confirmed the importance of being able to adjust the presentation because “the presenter must feel comfortable using the presentation and he must not be confused after the first critical question” (Multiplier). Another success factor of the RECRUIT workshops was the use of the click-dummies of the new technology during the workshop.

First they presented the system using the click-dummies and then we could practice with the click-dummies ourselves. That was very helpful. My colleagues and I were enthusiastic. This workshop reduced a lot of uncertainty. Before the workshop, we did not know what the new system would be like. After the workshop, we knew it and thought that it is much better than the old system (Employee).

Another positive effect of the use of click-dummies, in addition to an increase of recipients’ understanding of the change, was an increase in recipients’ perception of

their own ability to change. "During such an event one also recognises that it is certainly possible to learn the use of the new software" (Employee). According to the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2001) and the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001), this positive perception is an important determinant of whether recipients adopt the desired behaviour or not because, without this perception, trying to behave differently would not be worth the effort.

The effectiveness of the click-dummies could have been even higher. Multipliers complained that "the content of the click-dummies did not reflect reality. Employees with characteristics that were displayed on the sample screens do not exist. The numbers were also unrealistic" (Multiplier). In addition, several multipliers warned to "be careful with the use of click-dummies if you have little time because it leads to questions that you cannot answer. ... Sometimes it is sufficient to show what the screens will look like and to show how certain parts of the system are linked to each other" (Multiplier). This statement illustrates the importance of the fit between the knowledge of the communicator and the medium used. Multipliers felt uncomfortable using the click-dummies because their knowledge of the new technology was insufficient to answer questions that could arise. Interestingly, with regard to their own preparation, most multipliers had said that "it was great" (Multiplier) that they could explore the new technology by using the click-dummies. One of the multipliers had even said "It was important that we could use the click-dummies. I don't think a presentation of the click-dummies would have been enough". This allows the conclusion that, from the perspective of those at the receiving end of the communication activity, the use of click-dummies is a benefit because it increases understanding. But the benefit becomes a limitation when the negative effects of not being able to answer recipients' questions outweigh the positive effect of the increased understanding. The difference between the use of click-dummies at the multiplier workshops and the RECRUIT workshop was that, at the multiplier workshops, the click-dummies were presented by those who had developed the new technology. The software developers could answer any question related to the new technology whereas multipliers could not.

A third success factor of the RECRUIT workshops was the fact that implementers and multipliers discussed the new recruiting process and technology with employees instead of simply talking to them, confirming the importance of dialogue between those

responsible and those affected by a change (Barrett, 2002; Young and Post, 1993). “Much uncertainty was reduced during the one-day workshop - mainly because our questions were immediately answered by those responsible” (Employee). In addition to having their questions answered, it was also important for HR employees to learn how to answer other persons’ questions because they would be responsible to answer the questions of the managers from the other departments. They said that it was very helpful that “a member from the project team listed critical questions that were likely to be asked” and that “a multiplier explained how to deal with these questions” (Employee).

The fact that other communication activities had taken place before made the RECRUIT workshops even more effective. Local implementers agreed with the statement made by one of them that “It was very important that employees had some understanding of RECRUIT before. Otherwise they would not have been able to follow the presentation or to ask that many questions” (Implementer, Observation of working committee Communication for HR NEW, 15 April 2003).

7.5 Summary of findings from Case Study HR NEW

As with the first case study, the findings from this case study can be grouped into three sets. The first set of findings again relates to the influence of specific aspects of the communication programme (causes) on recipients’ perceptions and reactions (effects), thereby addressing the first two research objectives. The second set of findings addresses the third research objective – the interdependence of different communication activities in causing certain effects and the role that multipliers can play in different communication activities. The third set of findings regards the relationships between different effects and the importance of understanding these relationships for the design of a communication programme, thereby addressing the fourth research objective.

The first set of findings – the lessons learned regarding the appropriateness of different communication activities for achieving certain effects and regarding the specific aspects that need to be considered in order to achieve these effects – is summarised in Table 7.3. The specific aspects included in the table again either were success factors, barriers or missed opportunities. The barriers and missed opportunities are included in brackets in

order to demonstrate that these aspects also need to be considered in order to achieve a positive effect and/or to avoid a negative effect.

As in the first case study, grey cells in Table 7.3 indicate findings that confirm the claims made in previous work whereas white cells indicate findings that either contradict previous work or that were not addressed specifically in previous work. Two or three grey cells within one row indicate that previous work claimed the benefit of making a certain choice but the likely effect of this choice was either not defined or not explained. Previous work (Quirke, 1996) claimed, for example, that group meetings are appropriate to convey topical information (Row L) in order to increase recipients' understanding of the change but previous work apparently neither suggested that members of a local communication team may be more appropriate than group leaders to convey the information nor did previous work mention that another important effect may be that recipients see that the change is progressing which, in turn, increases the perceived likelihood of success. The discussion of the contribution of such specific aspects to the realisation of certain effects is a set of findings in itself because much of this had rarely been discussed in this depth in the context of a specific change project.

The second set of findings is related to the effects of the communication activities used. The effect of the face-to-face communication activities basically reflected the expectations of implementers as well as the predictions put forward in previous work (for example, Pfannenberger, 2003; Quirke, 1996). The benefit of the road show HR NEW was that recipients became aware of the fact that a change was about to come and that they received at least some orientation about where the HR function was heading. From recipients' perspective, the local HR NEW events were as effective as the road show because they increased recipients' understanding of the change and reduced their uncertainty. The RECRUIT workshop was the most effective communication activity because the details of the new process and recipients' new role were explained and recipients could experience the change by using the click-dummies.

Table 7.3: Lessons learned from Case Study HR NEW

	1	2	3	4	5
	Comm. activities used	Timing	Information conveyed	Communicator	Effects
A	Road show HR NEW	Once	Need for change, vision and change process	Change strategist	Aware of change / Oriented
B			Impact of HR NEW on location	Senior local line manager	See change is supported / Attach priority to change
C			Examples from daily business	Multipliers (Must be accepted as communicators)	Become interested in change / Seek info actively / Access website
D			Discussion at information market	Project team members	Understand change
E			Address rumours and recipients' concerns (Process control needed)	Change strategist (Must be trusted)	Less anxious / Less uncertain
F	Series of Local HR NEW events	Regularly every 6-8 weeks	Impact of HR NEW on location (Kick-off should take place before)	Senior local line manager	Aware of change / Understand change (Otherwise rumours develop)
G			Progress of change (milestones reached)		See change progresses
H			Possibility to ask questions		Understand change
I	Group meetings	Regularly / Weekly	Details about one project (tailored to location)	Multipliers	Understand change / Less uncertain
J			Impact of HR NEW and RECRUIT on group	Group leader	Understand change / Less uncertain
K			Interpretation of information conveyed via other channels		
L			Topical information	Multipliers	See change progresses / Perceive likelihood of success
M	RECRUIT workshop	Once	Discussion of any issue that is of interest to employees	Group leader (must be able to answer question or get answer elsewhere)	Understand change / Less uncertain / Prevent use of informal communication
N			Impact of RECRUIT on location	Highest local HR manager	Less uncertain
O			Explain new process and technology (including practice with click-dummies and examples from daily business)	Multipliers and project team members	Perceive ability to learn new technology / Support change
P	Website	Always accessible	Question and answer session	Highest local recruiting manager and multipliers	Less uncertain / Understand change
Q			Background information (not too much / structured)	Project team	Understand change (when desired information is found)
R			Topical information		See change progresses
S	Email-Newsletter	Regularly / Monthly	Updated	Sent and answered by project team member	Stay interested in change
T			Topical information and key aspects of change (design important / not too many details)		See change progresses
U			Possibility to send email in reply (must be encouraged)		Understand change (Otherwise perceive as not relevant and stop reading) State opinion / Ask question / Participate

Grey cells = Findings that confirm a claim made in previous work
 White cells = Findings that either contradict previous work or that had not been addressed specifically in previous work

The more interesting findings regarding the effect of the communication activities used concerned the interplay between different face-to-face activities. Whereas previous work (Belmiro *et al.*, 2000; Glover, 2001; Schnöller and Tasch, 2001) had discussed different types of events such as a series of road shows, information markets with opportunities for dialogue and workshops on specific aspects, the interdependence between different types of events and their appropriateness at different stages of the communication process had been widely neglected. The findings from this case study emphasise the importance of considering the interaction of different communication activities in causing certain effects. The RECRUIT workshop, for example, could only be effective because employees had already received information about HR NEW and RECRUIT during previous communication activities. Furthermore, the local events built upon the road show in that the road show had outlined the broad direction of the change and the local events provided topical information about how far the change had progressed and what the next steps would be. Similarly, the road show had presented the constituent projects of the change initiative and during each local event one of the projects was explained in depth. A specific content that was addressed at each face-to-face communication activity was the impact of the change, which was the most important aspect of the change from recipients' perspective. Change strategists and senior local line managers jointly explained the impact of the change initiative HR NEW at the road show and senior local line managers repeated the information at the first local event. During group meetings, group leaders then tailored the information to the impact of HR NEW on the group. At the RECRUIT workshop, the local recruiting manager explained the specific impact of the project RECRUIT on the location. During group meetings, group leaders specified the impact of RECRUIT on the group. This combination of face-to-face communication activities was a key success factor in increasing understanding of the impact of the change.

Although the electronic communication activities intranet and email-newsletter were relatively ineffective, compared to the potential claimed by previous work (for example, Hoffmann, 2001), their potential for playing an important supportive role, which was claimed by Bernecker and Reiss (2003), was visible. For example, although employees were dissatisfied with the HR NEW newsletter because of its content and design, they considered an email-newsletter as potentially effective for conveying topical information. The more interesting findings, however, concerned the interplay between

face-to-face and online communication activities. The interest in the change that was created during the road show made recipients access the HR NEW website which, in turn, increased their understanding of the change. The use of the website, in turn, encouraged discussion and asking of questions during group meetings. A positive effect of the newsletter was that supervisors used it as the basis for the discussions with their employees during group meetings, thereby increasing the effectiveness of group meetings. Print channels were hardly used in this case study because information was either conveyed face-to-face, which allows discussion and personal contact (Lengl and Daft, 1988; Mast, 2002a), or online, which enables implementers to reach a large audience quickly (for example, Axley, 2000). Whereas recipients did not mention that the lack of use of print channels limited the effectiveness of the communication programme, some recipients stated that they printed the information that was available online such as the newsletter on the HR NEW website, emails or PowerPoint presentations. Therefore, the claimed benefits of written material such as being able to read the documents anywhere anytime (for example, Buchholz, 2002) could also be realised by the use of electronic channels. A more coordinated approach would have considered in advance which electronic communication activities are appropriate for printing or offered printable versions of important information on the website. These findings expand our understanding of the relationships between different communication activities and they stress the importance of considering the effects of the communication programme as a whole and not only the effects of single communication activities.

Additional relationships that have been found between different communication activities regarded the use of multipliers who supported the rollout of the change to the other HR employees. The use of multipliers was a specific characteristic of this case study and implementers were right in expecting that “the role of multipliers is a critical success factor in the rollout process” (“Documentation of second multiplier workshop”, 31 March 2003, Slide 44). Table 7.3 has indicated that a main benefit of multipliers was that their participation in different communication activities increased recipients’ understanding of the change. Multipliers explained the project RECRUIT during the local events and, therefore, could tailor the explanation to the situation at the respective location. During the RECRUIT workshops, multipliers used their own experience in order to convince the other recipients that the new process is beneficial, that initial

scepticism is normal and that the new technology can be learned. The benefit of the participation of local employees in the road show suggests that multipliers also should have participated in the the kick-off event but they had not been prepared yet. Whereas likely positive effects of using opinion leaders had been discussed in previous work (for example, Palmer and Fenner, 1999), the question of how to integrate different opinion leaders into formal communication activities was mainly addressed in practice-oriented publications (for example, Mohr and Woehe, 1998; Umsetzungsberatung, 2003). The discussion of the multiplier approach was extended to the preparation of multipliers because it was important to explore in how far the choice and preparation of multipliers influenced recipients' perceptions of the effectiveness of the communication activities in which multipliers participated. For example, multipliers could only explain the new recruiting process during the RECRUIT workshop because they had understood it and because they had practiced the presentation during the second multiplier workshop. The use of click-dummies during the RECRUIT workshop has shown that a lack of preparation of multipliers can have negative effects because multipliers could not answer the other recipients' questions. These findings contribute to an increased understanding of the role that multipliers can play in increasing the effectiveness of a communication programme.

The main finding of this case study was the confirmation of the idea that had been developed in the first case study: that the key to the design of an effective communication programme may be a detailed understanding of likely effects. The findings from this case confirmed the assumption that all communication aims need be considered in the light of their contribution to achieving the overall aim of the communication programme, which is to influence the behaviour that recipients adopt after the introduction of the change. All effects found in this case study (Table 7.4) contributed either directly or indirectly to influencing recipients' understanding and acceptance of the change which are considered two key determinants of the behaviour that recipients adopt after the introduction of a change (Rosenstiel, 1997). From the relationships found between different effects, an appropriate point in time until when a certain aim needs to be achieved and when a certain communication activity may be used could be inferred. For example, HR employees realised during the road show HR NEW that they would be affected by a major change initiative and, therefore, they became interested in the change. In order to satisfy their need for information, recipients

accessed the HR NEW website. This demonstrates that recipients’ interest in the change made them actively seek more information about the change. Active seeking of information, however, only led to an increased understanding of the change because some desired information was available on the website. If the website would not have been available, the interest in the change would not have led to an increased understanding of the change. Similarly, if recipients had not been interested in the change, the website would not have been beneficial because recipients would not have accessed it. The relationships found between the different effects and the conclusions that could be drawn with regard to the use of communication activities are discussed in an integrated way and across case studies in Chapter 9.

Table 7.4: Effects found in second case study

Effects found in second case study	
Aware of change	
Understand change	
Accept change	
Cognitive states	Attach priority to the change
	Interested in change
	Oriented
	Perceive information as inaccurate
	Perceive information as not relevant
	Perceive lack of competence of implementers
	Perceive lack of coordination/redundancy of
	Perceive likelihood of success
	Perceive self-efficacy/ability to learn new technology
	See that change is supported
	See that change progresses
	Perceive managers as trustworthy
	Uncertain/Confused
Emotions	Anxious/Afraid
	Enthusiastic
	Satisfied
Behavior	Ask questions/Engage in dialogue
	Complete unnecessary tasks/inefficient
	Seek information actively
	Use informal communication

This case study in itself was instrumental in that it increased understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme. Additional insight could be generated by comparing the findings from this case study with the findings

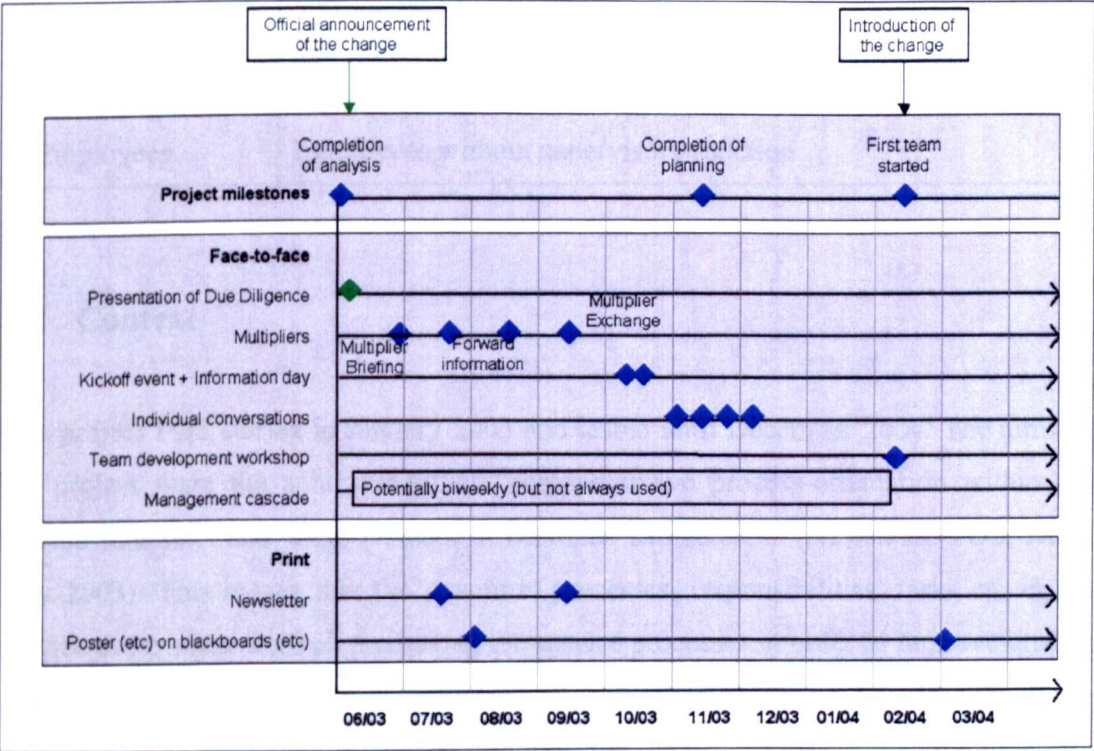
from the first case study. For example, the benefit of publishing the newsletter on the website could be confirmed and it has been demonstrated that departmental meetings do not have to be ineffective if the information conveyed is chosen in the light of the information conveyed during the central events and during group meetings. Despite the contribution of these findings to academic knowledge, an additional case study was considered beneficial. A third case study could analyse important communication activities from the first two case studies (such as departmental meetings or the use of multipliers) in a different context and it could explore the effects of communication activities which had not been used in the first two case studies (such as posters and the print newsletter). The main reason for the choice of the third case study was the use of multipliers because it was an important activity in the second case study but it had rarely been discussed in detail in previous work.

8 Case Study FOS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses recipients’ perceptions of the effects of the communication activities used to prepare them for the introduction of new processes and a team-based structure. The change took place in the service function of a distribution centre and it was planned and implemented by the project “Future-oriented Service” (FOS). The first official communication about the change took place in May 2003 and the first team was introduced in February 2004. The communication activities used are illustrated in Figure 8.1. Online channels were not used in this case study because many recipients did neither have an email address nor access to the intranet. Interviews were conducted with members of the first team that was introduced.

Figure 8.1: Communication activities used in Case Study FOS



The first section briefly describes the context of the communication process. The next three sections report the findings of the analysis of recipients’ perceptions of the information conveyed, the role of informal communication and the formal

communication activities used. The discussion of the timing of the communication activities and the creation of dialogue is integrated into these three sections. The chapter concludes by summarising the lessons learned regarding the design of an effective communication programme. The terms used to refer to the different groups of people in this case study, which are based on the distinction between different roles in the change processes discussed earlier in this thesis (2.5), are defined in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Terms used to refer to different groups of people in third case study

Term	Definition
Change strategists	Those responsible for planning FOS (the director of the distribution centre and the director of the service function)
Implementers	Those responsible for implementing the change (four unit leaders and three change managers)
Multipliers	Employees from different units who were chosen and prepared to support the introduction of the change
Recipients	Employees who were neither involved in the planning of the change nor its implementation
- Team leaders	The direct reports of the unit leaders
- Group leaders	The direct reports of the team leaders
- Employees	Employees without supervisory function

8.2 Context

The project FOS started in January 2003 and lasted until December 2004. The aims of the project were the achievement of “comprehensive process-orientation within the service function” and “improvement of customer satisfaction” (Newsletter FOS, No.1, July 2003). This means that the structure, processes, responsibilities, tasks etc in the service department were aligned along the service processes in order to improve quality and speed when delivering these services and, thereby, to improve the satisfaction of the customers. The main change was a restructuring of the service department: the function-based structure (electricians, mechanics, saddlers, tin-smiths, etc) was replaced by a team-based structure in which each team was responsible for completing the assignments that the service consultants of the team received from the customers. Although “only part of FOS was about restructuring” (Project leader, Observation of

project meeting, 25 November 2003), the restructuring had the biggest impact on employees’ work and pay.

About 300 employees were affected by the change and 200 employees would work in one of six teams after the change. The other 100 employees continued to complete similar tasks in a similar structure. The introduction of the first team with 22 employees on 16 February 2004 was the beginning of the implementation of the change. The first team was officially referred to as “Customer Service Group One” (“Project FOS”, Presentation held at team development workshop on 29 January 2004, Slide 3) but recipients usually called it “Start team” (Group Leader) or “Team 1” (Employee). The first team included the functions outlined in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Composition of the first team

Function	Number of employees
Team leader	1
Group leader	1
Service consultant	3
Team assistant	1
Diagnostic technician	1
Tin-smith	2
Saddler	1
Electrician	3
Mechanic	9
Total	22

Source: Interview with team leader

8.3 Information conveyed

8.3.1 Individual impact of the change

The evidence from this case study supports the claim widely made in the literature that information about the individual impact of the change is important (for example, Larkin and Larkin, 1996; Mast, 2002a). The statement “We wanted to know what the change meant for us” (Employee) is typical for recipients on all levels and a key finding of an evaluation of the communication process was that “employees want more information

about the impact of the change” (Multiplier exchange workshop, 15 September 2003, Minutes, Slide 2). As employees were affected by the change in different ways, they needed to understand different aspects of the change in order to be able to understand its impact, which highlights the importance of target-group specific communication (for example, Lewis *et al.*, 2001; Quirke, 1996).

One group of recipients included those who worked in the organisational unit “Final Control” (Organisational chart of distribution centre). Final controllers wanted specific information about which job they would complete in the future because “the function final control will not exist anymore after the introduction of the teams” (Implementer). One effect of not receiving the desired information was an increase in uncertainty and fear, a typical statement being “After we had been told that the unit final control would not exist anymore, employees became afraid” (Employee). An employee from another unit said that “employees in final control did not have any idea of which task they would complete in the future”. An evaluation of the communication process confirmed that the most important reaction to previous communication activities was “employees’ fear” (Multiplier exchange workshop, 15 September 2003, Minutes, Slide 2) and one of the implementers admitted during our interview

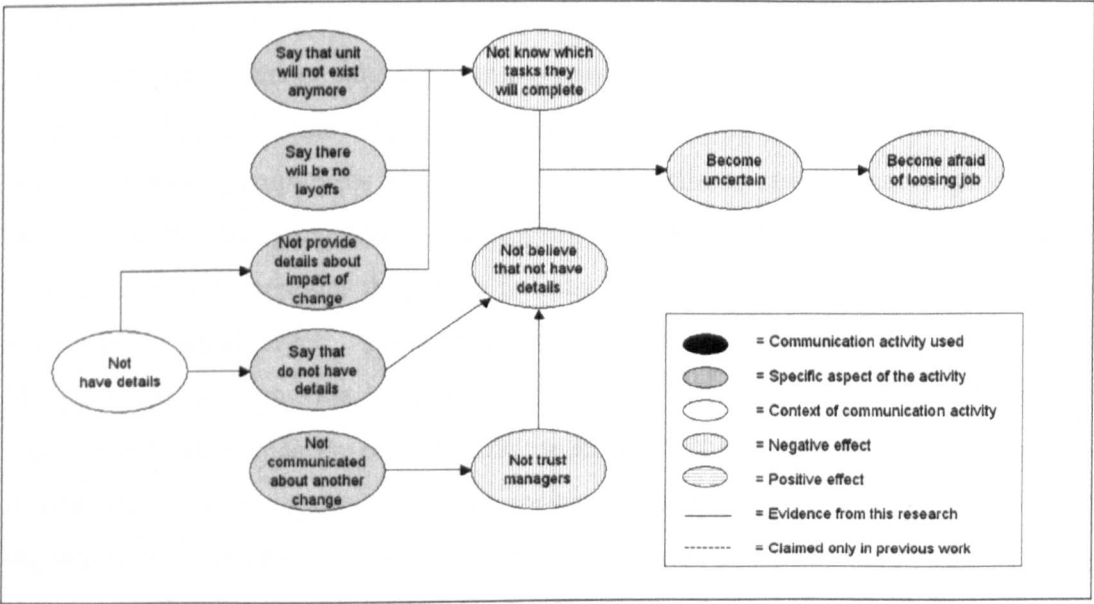
We said ‘There will be no layoffs’ but we did not say what exactly would happen. This was a problem because, until we told employees working in Final Control what would happen to them, some employees were even afraid of losing their job. Information about what was actually planned was communicated much too late.

The negative effect of not communicating about the impact of the change on uncertainty and anxiety has been claimed by previous work (for example, Larkin and Larkin, 1996; Mast, 2002a). The problem in this case study, however, was not a lack of knowledge of the importance of communicating about the impact of the change. Implementers knew that “employees wanted to know what would happen. The problem was that the details had not been agreed upon with the works council and, therefore, we could not communicate the details” (Implementer). In line with the advice of authors such as Mast (2002a) and Mohr (1997), implementers explained why more information could not be conveyed yet. A change manager who had attended several group meetings stated “In every meeting between unit leaders and their employees they said that they did not have

the information yet”. But employees thought that “all this was little believable” (Employee) and, therefore, employees’ anxiety was not reduced.

One reason for the low believability of information was that implementers could not communicate specific information about what would happen to employees in Final Control because the information had not been agreed upon by the works council yet. This effect of a lack of specific information on the believability of information had already been present in the first case study. It is likely that another reason for the low believability of information was that recipients perceived implementers’ trustworthiness as low. Although recipients did not talk about trustworthiness explicitly, there was tension in the relationship between implementers and recipients which appeared to stem from “an event earlier in the year when change strategists had not informed employees early about changes to the pay system” (Change Manager). Another change manager concluded “I doubt that it would have increased credibility and reduced the negative effects if unit leaders had said more often and empathically that they were sorry but that they did not have the information themselves”. If change managers’ perception were correct, it would contradict the claimed benefit of using holding statements such as ‘discussions are continuing’ (Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002; Young and Post, 1993).

Figure 8.2: Negative effects of not providing details about the impact of the change



The findings from the first two case studies suggest that one way to compensate for the lack of trustworthiness of those responsible is to integrate the works council into the communication activities. Recipients in this case study confirmed the potentially positive effect of this, a common perception being "the involvement of the works council is a sign that the interests of employees are considered" (Employee). One of the employees specified that "it is very important that the works council is involved" because "otherwise the distribution centre management would do whatever they want and usually this means that employees suffer". The problem was that the works council could not be integrated because, as said above, the details had not been agreed with the works council yet.

Another group of recipients included those who specialised in few tasks (such as motor testing) instead of being generalists. Completing few tasks means that the employees completed these tasks very quickly, which means that their level of efficiency was higher, which resulted in higher pay because "their pay depends on their level of efficiency" (Team leader). Specialists wanted to know in how far they would have to become generalists since this would mean a lower level of efficiency and, consequently, less pay. Implementers thought that this negative impact of the change could be partly compensated by the fact that the completion of a variety of tasks would enrich employees' work. The team leader, for example, said "Many employees can study further because working in the team requires completing a broader range of tasks" and one of the implementers said that "employees should view this positively". But the assumption that recipients would view this positively was wrong because a common perception among employees was that "specialists want to remain specialists, they do not want to become generalists" (Employee). As implementers acted on the basis of their inaccurate perception, they even focused their communication on the chance to have one's work enlarged. "Team leaders told everybody that the change involves the chance to develop towards broader work contents" (Implementer). This shows that focusing the communication on a specific aspect of the change can have negative effects if recipients view this aspect negatively instead of viewing it positively as assumed by implementers. Seeking feedback on recipients' thoughts and feelings regarding the change, as suggested by previous work (for example, Barrett, 2002; Pfannenberger, 2003), may have provided the information that implementers would have needed to rethink their assumption.

Recipients' perceptions of the information provided about the development of the breadth of their tasks also demonstrates the limits of communication. Whereas communication could have reduced anxiety if recipients had had an inaccurate understanding of the real impact of the change, communication could not reduce the fear of losing money because it was real. After being presented with the first findings, the project leader concluded that "communication can achieve little in terms of acceptance of the change when employees will earn less, that is, when the change is objectively negative".

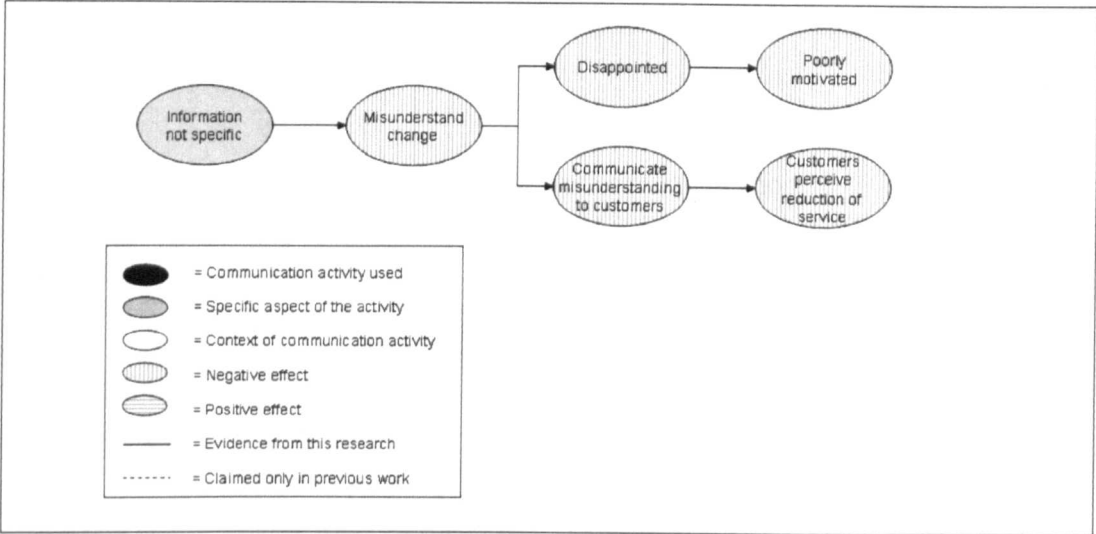
8.3.2 Specific information

Employees on all levels shared the view that "those responsible provide no details" (Employee) and an evaluation of the communication process also demonstrated that recipients thought that those responsible "need to become more specific" (Multiplier exchange workshop, Minutes, 15 September 2003, Slide 2). The previous section has shown that a lack of specific information about the impact of the change led to uncertainty and anxiety among Final Controllers. As the information about the intended reduction of the number of service employees was also unspecific, uncertainty and anxiety increased further. A common perception among employees was that, "if something like layoffs is perceived as possible, or even likely, it causes a lot of uneasiness" (Employee).

Implementers could not fully understand why recipients said that they had not received enough details. The project leader said "We said that we would reduce the number of service employees but we also clearly said that this does not mean that employees would be laid off because some colleagues would go into partial retirement or retire and some employees would leave the department on their own will" (Observation of project meeting, 25 November 2003). Implementers were not fully aware of the fact that recipient wanted to know "Who will go into retirement? Who will leave the distribution centre? What will I do?" (Employee). Without this level of detail, uncertainty and anxiety were unavoidable. When faced with this fact by the researcher, one of the

implementers admitted during an interview “We should have communicated ... more details”.

Figure 8.3: Negative effects of a lack of specific information



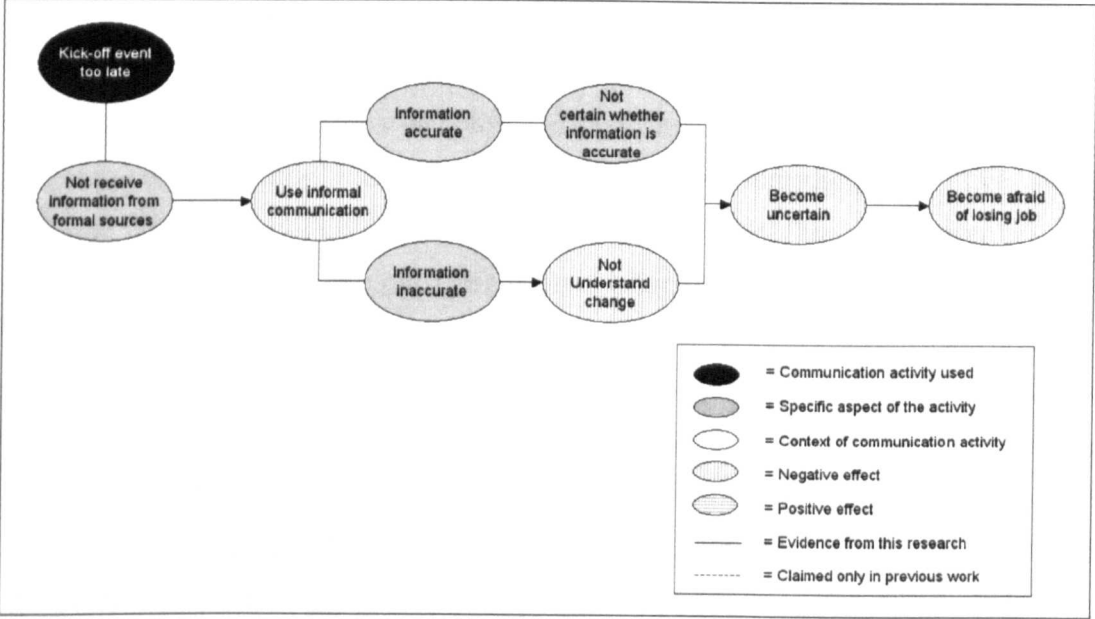
Another negative effect of the lack of specific information was that employees communicated their inaccurate understanding of the change to customers. Because of the unclear communication about the future of the unit Final Control, “some workshop masters misinterpreted the information and told customers that there would be no more quality control” and “the service consultants then had difficulties explaining that the quality would be guaranteed in a different way” (Implementer). This shows how ineffective communication about a change can negatively influence the customers’ satisfaction with the services of an organisation, the paradox being that a main objective of the change was “improvement of customer satisfaction” (Newsletter FOS, No.1, July 2003).

8.4 Informal communication

Employees used informal communication intensively in this case study which is reflected in statements such as “Everybody in the house talks about FOS” or “FOS is the number one topic among us employees” (Employees). When asked about the relationship between formal and informal communication, one of the implementers said

that the benefit of formal communication activities needs to be evaluated in detail because “for the most part information is conveyed through the grapevine¹³ anyway”. Another implementer stated during a phone call that dealing with the “incredibly large number of rumours traveling around the distribution centre ... is a real challenge for communication planners”. The reasons for using informal communication and its effects are illustrated in Figure 8.4.

Figure 8.4: Causes and effects of using informal communication



One reason for the use of informal communication was that, as one implementer put it, “informal communication was an important part of the culture of the distribution centre”. Another implementer said “I think employees want their grapevine and discuss things informally”. Another reason for the use of informal communication was that recipients did not receive the desired information during formal communication activities. Common perceptions among employees were “People want to know what they can expect from the change” and “If those responsible do not tell us, we talk about the change among each other and guess what might come” (Employees). When confronted with this perception during the interview, one of the implementers admitted “The kick-off event came too late” but this was not the only occasion when employees had to rely on informal sources. The first time employees heard about many issues was

¹³ “Mundpropaganda”, the word used by the employee, is one of the German words used for informal communication. Literally translated it means “mouth propaganda”.

from an informal source because, as predicted by authors such as Glover (2001), the grapevine was quick. Two examples regarding the speed of informal communication which were mentioned by several employees were “The first time I heard that the unit Final Control would not exist anymore was from a colleague” and “Information about the constellation of the new teams came from a friend in another unit first” (Employees). One employee even said that information about who would be in the first team “spread like a wildfire¹⁴”.

Whereas recipients did learn something about FOS during informal conversations, the problem was that the information was mostly inaccurate and that it was more negative than reality. The team leader was convinced that “the negative aspects overbalance in informal communication” and several employees said something like “We heard different things about FOS from different colleagues and then we forwarded this information. Now I know that most things that I heard did not reflect reality. They were much more negative” (Employee). Furthermore, even accurate information did not necessarily reduce recipients’ uncertainty and anxiety because they did not know whether the information was accurate or not. One employee said “Everybody knew a little bit about FOS and talked about it. Someone knew a little bit here and someone else knew a little bit there but nobody knew whether his information was accurate” and another employee said “We heard the things around 10 corners and therefore we did not know whether they were true or not”. Although previous work (Crampton et al., 1998; Quirke, 1996) argues that informal communication is not negative per se, few positive effects were visible in this case study.

8.5 Communication channels used

8.5.1 Presentation of due diligence

It has been illustrated in Figure 8.1 that the analysis of the situation in the service function was completed early May 2003. Between 26 May and 5 June 2003, the results of this due diligence were presented to the first two levels of employees in each unit.

¹⁴ In German: “Das ging um wie ein Lauffeuer”

Three events with 15 to 25 attendants took place, each lasting about one and a half hours. “The intention was to inform all employees as early as possible about what was taking place” (Implementer). The communication activity was indeed timely because the external consultants had completed the due diligence only two weeks earlier. Previous work (for example, Klein, 1996; Smeltzer, 1991) suggests that such timely communication is likely to provide orientation after the announcement of a change and to prevent the circulation of inaccurate rumours. From the perspective of the recipients in this case study, however, the events did not play an important role in the communication process because they had not yet understood how FOS would affect them. A common perception among employees was “Afterwards nobody knew what the change would be about” (Employee).

It is very likely that the reason for why the events were perceived as rather ineffective was that recipients did not give FOS much thought at that point in time because they were not aware yet that FOS meant an intensive impact on their work. This explanation, however, is based on the researcher’s understanding of the case as a whole rather than supported by explicit statements by recipients. This is because a limitation of this study – with regard to the effect of the presentations of the due diligence – was that recipients had difficulties remembering their perceptions of events which took place 10 months before the interviews. This was not critical to the study, however, because the official announcement of the change took place in July and recipients were more comfortable talking about the effects of those events.

8.5.2 Multipliers

Implementers decided to use multipliers in order to inform the other employees about the change. In contrast to the second case study, the multiplier approach in this case study had little effect. Two typical statements from implementers were “Little information was conveyed via multipliers” and “We did not achieve the desired effect by using multipliers” (Implementers). A common perception among recipients on lower levels was “I cannot remember having received any interesting information from multipliers” (Employee). Much input on the effect of multipliers came from implementers, which was appropriate because project managers as well as change

managers had “talked to multipliers about their role because [they] wanted to find out why little information was conveyed via multipliers” (Implementer). This section discusses the choice and preparation of multipliers and, thereby, provides the basis for the integration of multipliers into other communication activities.

“In some units the employees themselves chose the multiplier” (Implementer). The benefit was that the other employees in the unit accepted the multiplier. In other units the unit leader asked an employee whether she or he would like to become a multiplier and the employee usually said yes. This way unit leaders made sure that “the multiplier had the skills to convey the required information to their colleagues” (Implementers). The limitation was that the other employees in the unit did not necessarily accept the multiplier. In the “Unit Shop-floor” all group leaders became multipliers because those responsible in the unit “did not want a second information cascade and informal leadership in addition to the formal hierarchy” (Implementer). This decision was perceived as inappropriate by the employees in the unit who would have preferred to have the choice. A main result of an evaluation of the communication process which was conducted in September 2003 was that “the nomination of multipliers in the unit shop-floor should have included a choice between group leader and vice group leader in order to have at least some choice” (Multiplier exchange workshop, 15 September 2003, Minutes, Slide 2). Implementers themselves realised after a while that the other employees did not accept the multipliers they had chosen. One of the implementers stated “We wanted to understand the sentiments of the employees in the group. I think employees prefer to share their opinion about a change with a colleague rather than with the group leader”.

The preparation of multipliers began with a meeting called “Multiplier Briefing” (FOS Communication Concept, 13 May 2003, p.13) on 25 June 2003. In the invitation to the multiplier briefing multipliers were told “It will be your responsibility to regularly inform the employees in your department or group about the status of the project and to forward information – ideas, suggestions, but also misgivings – from employees to the project team” (Multiplier briefing, Invitation, 4 June 2003). The implementer who led the meeting again explained that the role of multipliers would be to forward information from above to their colleagues and to forward feedback from their colleagues to the

project team. After the multiplier briefing, topical information was conveyed to multipliers during “regular information updates” (Implementer) which took place every two weeks. The idea behind the multiplier approach was that multipliers talked to their colleagues about the progress of the project after these meetings. But the multiplication of information by multipliers did not work as intended because, as one implementer put it, “multipliers simply did not have enough knowledge about the change”.

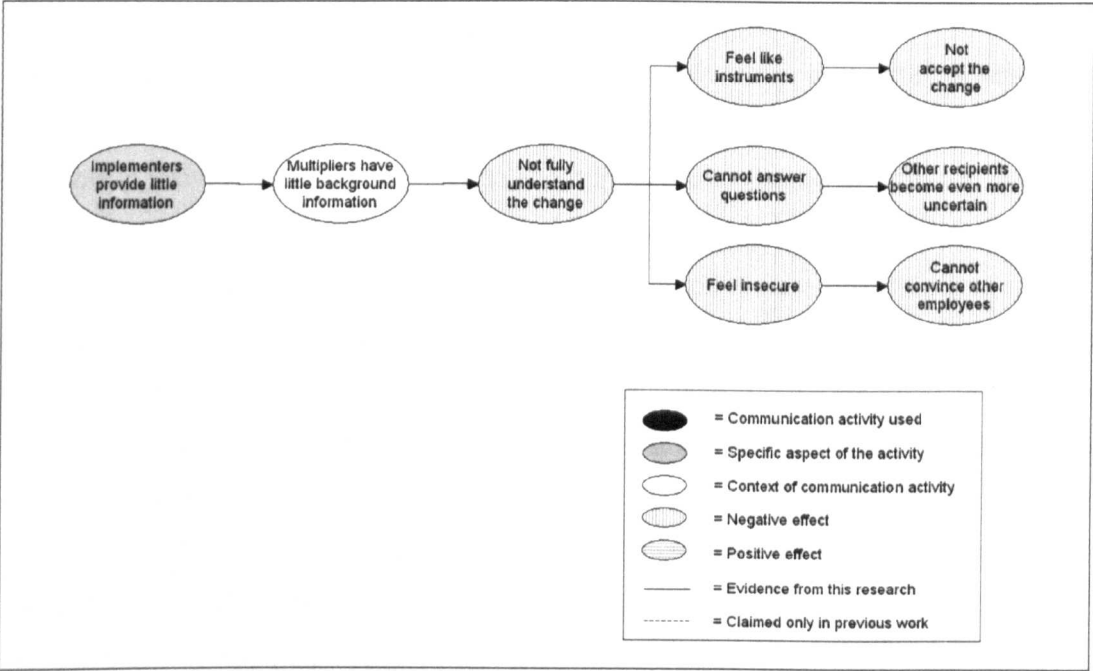
The lack of knowledge was partly caused by the fact that those responsible did not provide multipliers with enough information. One of the implementers complained that “the regular information updates did not take place regularly” and that “multipliers had not been provided with the information they would have needed”. My understanding of the case study organisation suggests that the hierarchical culture of the organisation was one reason for this because certain sensitive information are usually not forwarded to employees on lower hierarchical levels. However, implementers did not talk explicitly about it. Another reason, suggested one of the implementers, may have been that “multipliers did not have the necessary background knowledge and, therefore, they could not understand all the information that they received”. When multipliers were invited to the multiplier exchange workshop in September 2003, the two implementers who led the workshop were surprised that “multipliers complained that they first wanted more information about the project” (Implementer). Both implementers agreed that “They were really sulky”¹⁵.

The lack of knowledge led to the problem that “not all multipliers accepted the change and not all multipliers supported the project” and those who wanted to support the change “felt insecure and could not convince the other employees” (Implementer). Some multipliers even felt like instruments. One of those who were not happy with their preparation complained “We were expected to forward the information that we were given but we did not receive any additional information” and another multiplier added “We did not understand what all the information was about”. Another negative effect caused by multipliers’ lack of knowledge about the change was an increase in the other recipients’ uncertainty. When discussing this issue with two implementers, one of them said “When other employees asked questions about FOS, the multipliers rarely knew the

¹⁵ In German: „Die waren richtig sauer.“

answer” and the other implementer said “This [inability of multipliers to answer questions] increased the other employees’ uncertainty instead of reducing it as intended”. The negative effects caused by multipliers’ insufficient understanding of the change are illustrated in Figure 8.5, supporting the claim that a multiplier must know much more than the other employees (Mohr and Woehe, 1998).

Figure 8.5: Key limitation of the multiplier approach in the third case study



When implementers recognised the ineffectiveness of the multiplier approach in October 2003, they decided to “stop using multipliers by the end of the planning phase” in November 2003 (Implementer). A project manager concluded during the interview “I think the multiplier approach did not fit our project” but the evidence suggests that the use of multipliers could have been effective if they had been used later. The preparation of multipliers should have started with the beginning of the implementation teams in November 2003. The responsibility of the implementation teams was to specify the intended changes in processes, structures and systems and to put these solutions into practice. As detailed knowledge about the change was required to complete this task, employees in the implementation teams easily could have been prepared as multipliers and officially given the role to carry the change into the distribution centre. Although the members of the implementation teams were not given the formal role of a communicator, they quickly became the preferred source of information. A common

perception among implementers was “When employees had a question, they went to the employees in the implementation teams because they had the most information” (Implementer). The benefit of this informal multiplication was that the employees who actively sought information and who knew a member of an implementation team received answers to their questions. The limitation was that the effects largely depended on the initiative of those who wanted to know more and the willingness of those who had the information.

As implementers had recognised this problem, the project leader asked the leaders of the implementation teams to make sure that every employee in the implementation teams was able to provide accurate information about FOS. He explained that “this is the basis for consistent and, therefore, effective communication” (Project Leader, Observation of project meeting, 25 November 2003). When reflecting on the use of multipliers and the role of the implementation team in retrospective, one of the implementers stated “We could have told all employees that, whenever they have a question about FOS, they should ask their colleagues from the implementation teams”. After realising the similarities between the original underpinnings of the multiplier approach and the actual behaviour of the implementation team, the implementer concluded “We could have prepared the members of the implementation teams for answering the other employees’ questions”. It is likely that preparing the members of the implementation teams as multipliers would have increased the effectiveness of the communication process because the members of the implementation teams had the required understanding of the change – otherwise they could not have worked in the teams – and they met regularly in order to feed back information from employees to the managers of the implementation teams.

8.5.3 Newsletters and posters on blackboards

The presentation of the due diligence, which was the first communication about the change, was followed by a series of written communication activities. The benefit of this is the possibility to repeat key messages (Klein, 1996) and to communicate about the change continuously (Young and Post, 1993). The intention of the FOS Newsletter was to “inform all recipients in the service department of the distribution centre about

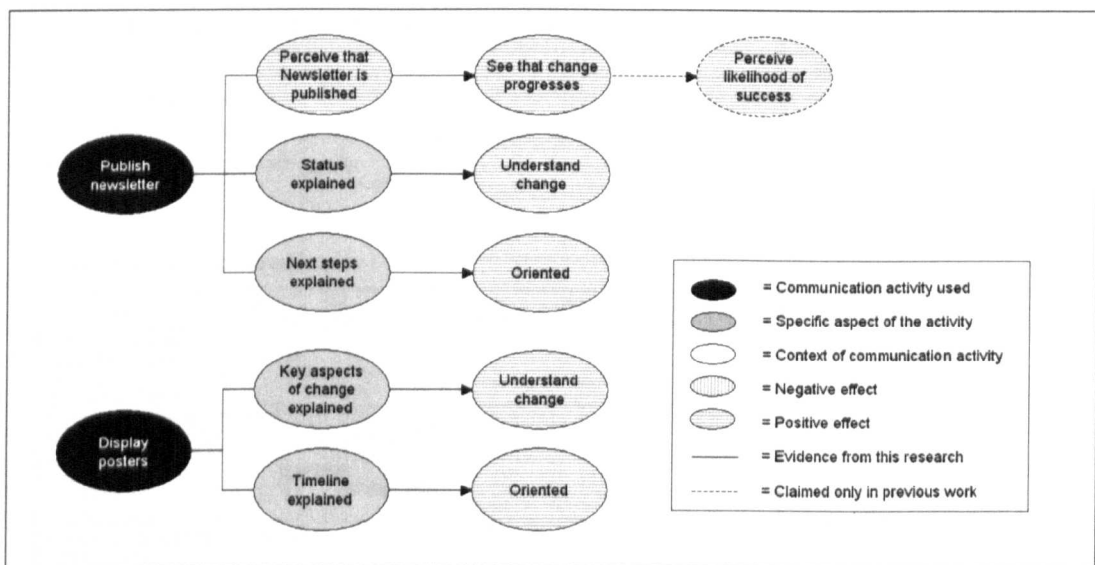
the progress of the project” (FOS Communication Concept, 13 May 2003, p.14). The first newsletter was published in July 2003. It was distributed by multipliers and included information about the objectives of the project, the project team and the results of the due diligence (Figure 8.6). The second newsletter was published in September 2003. It included information about the status of the project and explained why the project did not progress as fast as announced during the events in May 2003.

Source: FOS Newsletter No.1 (names changed to preserve confidentiality)

Implementers were satisfied with the newsletters, in particular, with the first newsletter. “The first newsletter was published shortly after the strategy workshop so that employees got the information quickly. The information was topical. I think the newsletter was perceived as helpful and positive” (Implementer). The team leader confirmed “To my knowledge, most employees read the newsletter”. Although recipients did not express their positive attitude towards the newsletter explicitly, it is still possible to conclude from their statements that the newsletter was effective. One employee, for example, said during the interview “Sometimes written information is

sufficient to be up to date. I do not need to receive information verbally and personally”. The reason for the effectiveness of the newsletter, however, was not the fact that the information conveyed was specific. Several recipients even criticised that “the information should have been more specific” (Employee). The reason for the effectiveness of the newsletter was that it kept recipients informed about the change (Figure 8.7). A statement typical for employees was “I did not read the newsletter in detail. I rather recognised that it was published. Therefore I knew that the project was on its way” (Employee). This confirms the claim that continuous communication is important (Quirke, 1996; Young and Post, 1993). Furthermore, the importance of using print media in order to support the communication that takes place face-to-face, which was suggested by authors such as Mast (2002a), has been confirmed.

Figure 8.7: Positive effects of newsletter and poster



The main reason why the newsletter was not as effective as it could have been was that the multipliers also did not operate as effectively as intended. “We wanted multipliers to take the newsletters into their units and give them to their colleagues”, said one implementer and another implementer added “The multipliers did not function as intended and therefore the distribution of the newsletters also did not work well”. This demonstrates that the theoretical benefit of combining the two communication activities multipliers and newsletter is not necessarily achieved in organisational practice. It even highlights that the ineffectiveness of one communication activity (multipliers) can

negatively influence the intended effectiveness of another communication activity (newsletter).

In addition to the publication of newsletters, a poster (Figure 8.8) was displayed on the blackboard in the social area of the distribution centre, where “everybody could assess it easily” (Implementer). Whereas the newsletter was intended to keep employees informed about the status of the project, posters were perceived as effective in terms of providing an overview of key aspects of the change (such as those responsible, the timeline, the need for change). A common perception among employees was “It was helpful to get a broad overview of the plans” (Employee).

Source: Poster FOS, No.1 (anonymised)

The poster was also perceived as helpful because it included a timeline showing what had happened so far and what would happen in the near future. Several employees made statement such as “It was good to be able to look at it when I wanted to know something” (Employee). Two employees, however, considered the timeline as too

detailed. One of them stated “They can use this for themselves but we want an overview of the main steps”. This statement supports a finding from the first case study where recipients wanted to be informed about the milestones only whereas details of the process were considered unnecessary, if not confusing.

Drawing together the findings on the effect of newsletters and posters, it has become visible that, although neither channel played a central role in the communication process, recipients still perceived them as helpful. This is confirmed by an evaluation of the communication process conducted by the responsible change managers. “Newsletter and poster were helpful because they gave some orientation about what was going on” (Multiplier exchange workshop, 15 September 2003, Minutes, Slide 2). Furthermore, both communication activities had an important support role in the communication process in that they provided information between the events in May 2003 and the kick-off event in October 2003. The effectiveness of the communication programme could have been increased by continuing to publish newsletter and posters between the kick-off event in October 2003 and the team development workshop in February 2004.

8.5.4 Group meetings

Group meetings were expected to take place biweekly but they took place less often because group meetings were not used as a means of regular communication as they were in the previous case studies. Compared to the previous case studies, employees received less information about what was going on in the organisation. Consequently, group meetings also played a minor role in the communication about FOS but they could have been much more effective. For example, short talks by multipliers during group meetings could have been used to follow-up the presentations of the due diligence in order to make sure that recipients were aware of the change. Furthermore, group meetings could have been used to follow up the kick-off event (Klein, 1996). It is likely that regular discussions of FOS during group meetings would have compensated for some of the negative effects caused by the inaccurate information circulating through the grapevine (Quirke, 1996). A general improvement would have been if implementers had regularly checked whether group meetings had taken place. This would have been important because implementers either could have asked group leaders to hold the

meetings in order to convey the necessary information or implementers could have adjusted the other communication activities in order to compensate for the lack of communication during group meetings.

A limitation of group meetings was that, for a long time, group leaders did not have enough knowledge about FOS in order to explain the change and to answer their employees' questions. Therefore, an appropriate aim for group meetings – the reduction of uncertainty and anxiety through personal interaction between employees and their direct supervisor (for example, Brimm and Murdock, 1998) – could not be achieved. This could have been compensated if well-prepared multipliers had attended group meetings and answered the other employees' questions. In addition, a communication package could have been provided for line managers in order to increase their understanding of the change, which has been suggested by authors such as Quirke (1996) and Townley (1994).

8.5.5 Kick-off event and information day

“On 17 October 2003 we had the big employee information, the kick-off event, in the shop-floor area. All service employees were present” (Implementer). The kick-off event was considered a key communication activity, indicating the beginning of the implementation phase. Recipients appreciated that “the distribution centre management, the project leader, the works council, the external consultant and a member from the personnel function were present” (Team Leader). But the kick-off event was less effective than intended for several reasons.

One limitation of the kick-off event was that recipients received hardly any new information (Figure 8.9). A complaint put forward by several employees was “We expected to receive the details that we all had been waiting for but they only repeated the general information that we already had” (Employee). One of the employees specified the negative effect of this when he stated “They increased uncertainty instead of increasing understanding and clarifying open issues”, a view that was shared by the other recipients though not addressed that explicitly. The negative effect was increased because the event was announced as the kick-off for the implementation phase. When

confronted with the gap between what was announced and what was actually communicated, one of the implementers stated that “employees finally wanted to know how they would be affected” and that “the lack of information about the issues that recipients expected information about led to disappointment”. This negative effect of not meeting recipients’ perceptions regarding the information conveyed at a large event was also present in the first case study. It emphasises the importance of regular process control in order to assess the issues that recipients would like to be informed about at an event.

Another limitation, which was mentioned by several employees, was that “the kick-off event was much too late” (Employee). Therefore, “many rumours existed by then because the due diligence had already taken place in May 2003” (Implementer). This needs to be considered a limitation because of the negative effects of informal communication discussed earlier in this chapter (8.4). However, an opportunity that arose because of the fact that the event took place late was that “they [implementers] confirmed some of the information we had heard from informal sources” (Employee). A positive effect of addressing rumours, which had already been present in the first case study, was an increase in recipients’ understanding of the change. Another positive effect, which had neither been addressed by recipients in the first case study nor by recipients in the second case study, was that addressing rumours reduced the uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the information conveyed via informal channels. A common perception among employees was “We did not know what to think of the information that we received from our colleagues.”¹⁶ But I thought that, when our bosses said the same things, it must have been true”. This was important because it has already been illustrated in Figure 8.4 that recipients’ uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the information conveyed informally prevented an increase in the accuracy of recipients’ understanding of the change.

A third limitation of the kick-off event was the way the works council was integrated. As discussed earlier in this chapter (8.3.1), the involvement of the works council was considered a sign that the interests of employees are considered. A view that all employees shared was “The works council should participate in communication

¹⁶ In German: “Wir wussten nicht, was wir von den Informationen halten sollten, die wir von unseren Kollegen erhalten haben”

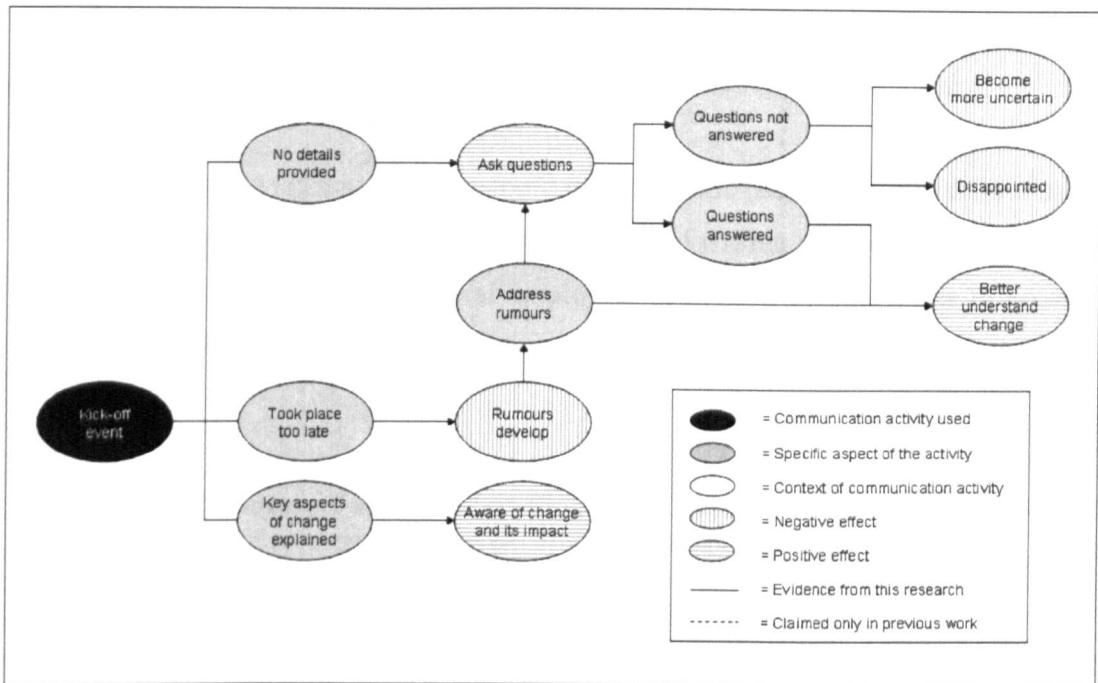
activities such as the kick-off event” (Employee). But the presentation of the works council was not well prepared. One of the implementers said during a discussion “The messages of the works council and the project leader were not consistent” and another implementer added “Consequently, the works council was not very convincing”. Implementers were certain that “employees had [also] recognised the difference in the opinion of the works council and the project leader” (Implementer) and they were right. A common perception by employees was

At the kick-off event they explained the plans of the distribution centre management. That was important. Then came the representative from the works council and said that he had not known about this until two days before and that he had been informed last. I asked myself ‘What is this going to be?’. That was not helpful (Employee).

This illustrates how the integration of the works council into communication activities, though potentially effective, can be ineffective if the works council does not support the change and/or is not well prepared. The works council needs to be convinced of the change before it can be integrated into communication activities.

Despite these limitations, the kick-off event was still an important communication activity. Employees typically argued that “a kick-off event is really good to announce a change” (Employee) and thereby confirmed claims made by previous work (for example, Klein, 1996; Mast, 2002a). Furthermore, the kick-off event was the only comprehensive communication activity before the team development workshop. One of the implementers said that, “from my perspective, the whole thing started with the kick-off event because then everybody knew that FOS would come”. Given implementers’ and recipients’ emphasis on the benefit of the event for kicking off the change, it is likely that it would have been sufficient an aim for the kick-off event to signal the departure towards a new structure and new processes. The intention to provide an overview of the change was too ambitious at that point in time and for that audience. The evidence even suggests that the possibility to provide specific information correlates negatively with the size of the audience. Three employees were convinced that “information needs to be tailored to employees in different departments or functions in order to be sufficiently specific” (Employee).

Figure 8.9: Positive and negative effects of the kick-off event



An information day, during which implementers were present in the project office on a rotating basis in order to answer recipients' questions, followed the kick-off event on 21 October 2003 but it was also ineffective. Implementers had expected many questions because they "were sure that recipients had not understood everything that had been presented at the kick-off event" (Implementer) and employees themselves admitted "We could not understand all the information during the kick-off event because it was way too much information" (Employee). But hardly any employee came to the project office to ask a question. During a meeting of the project team one of the implementers stated "We were disappointed" and the other implementers agreed (Observation of project meeting, 25 November 2003). One of the implementers considered the culture of the organisation to be responsible for the low effectiveness of this communication activity: "It is not the culture of the distribution centre to ask questions in this environment. They prefer small groups or informal communication". This explanation is supported by the wide-spread use of informal communication discussed in Section 8.4. Another implementer was convinced that another explanation was more accurate. He argued "I think the people were interested in FOS but they had not received the desired information four days earlier and they probably did not expect to receive the information when going to the information day". The researcher's understanding of the distribution centre and of the case as a whole suggests that both explanations played a

role, once again highlighting the influence of the context in which the communication takes place, which had already been claimed by previous work such as Mohr (1997), and the interdependence of the effects of different communication activities.

An alternative to the information day would have been the preparation and follow-up of the kick-off event with the help of group meetings and written material as suggested by authors such as Klein (1996). Several employees suggested that, in order to provide relevant information about the change, meetings in small groups would have been more effective.

Before the kick-off event, information could have been communicated in each unit in order to prepare the event. As those responsible did not do this, some information during the kick-off event came really surprisingly. After the kick-off event, more details and specific information should have been communicated in each unit (Employee).

Another employee elaborated on this by stating that, “after the kick-off event, small group events should have taken place in each unit and details should have been communicated through group meetings”. As implementers neither coordinated the discussions during the group meetings nor continued to publish the posters and newsletters, the negative effects illustrated in Figure 8.9 were the result.

8.5.6 Individual conversations

Most employees came to know that they would be in the first team in November 2003.. The team leader remembered that “[Leader unit shop-floor] came to me, explained what was about to happen and asked whether I would like to become the leader of the first team”. Then individual conversations with all potential employees of the first team took place. The team leader conducted the individual conversations in the unit shop-floor and in the other units the unit leader talked to the employees.

Before this conversation employees knew very little about FOS. This has already been implied in the discussion of the limitations of the communication activities that had taken place earlier. One employee, for example, remembered that, “before this

conversation, I had hardly any information” and another employee stated “Until then I knew hardly anything about FOS”. Recipients did not perceive this lack of knowledge as problematic because implementers explained during the conversation how each employee would be affected and briefly outlined what the new structure and processes would be. Implementers continued to emphasise “We explained what would happen and we asked whether employees would like to be in the first team” (Implementer).

The individual conversations were very effective because every employee received exactly the information that he wanted to know, a typical statement being “I knew everything that I needed to know at that stage” (Employee). The recipients who wanted to know more could ask during the conversation and they were satisfied with the answers they received. One of these employees stated that

The team leader told me about my tasks and he explained, along general lines, how the whole thing would work. As I was interested in with whom I would work in the team, I asked who the other electricians would be and he told me immediately.

8.5.7 Team development workshop

An event with all employees of the first team, referred to as the “team development workshop” (Implementer), took place on 12 and 13 February 2004 (Thursday and Friday). The aim of the workshop was to prepare the members of the first team, who had still worked in a function-based structure on the day before the workshop (Wednesday), for working in a team-based structure three days later (Monday). Therefore, two key issues were discussed: “The first topic was how to ensure the quality of our services without the function final control. The second topic was how each individual employee was affected by the change and what they would have to do differently after the start of the team” (Implementer). The opinion of most employees was that the workshop was very helpful. Typical attributes that were attached to the workshop were “great ... relaxing but informative” and “very motivating” (Employees).

One reason why the workshop was considered as helpful was the fact that very specific information was conveyed, which is reflected in statements such as “Those responsible explained all the new processes and steps” (Employee). As intended, the effect was that employees were ready to start working as a team the following Monday. Common perceptions were “We knew exactly what was expected from us on Monday” and “Without the information the start of the first team on Monday would have been chaotic” (Employees). This effect could only be achieved, however, because the information was very specific, which supports the findings presented in Section 8.3.2. The team leader stated during the interview that they had explained details such as “whether the service consultants send only the list of required services to the group leader or the complete service assignment” and he emphasised that explaining these details was important because “otherwise employees would not have known what to do on Monday and they could not have started working”.

Whereas recipients generally appreciated receiving details about the things that changed, they had the problem that it was almost too much information (Figure 8.10). One of the employees stated “We received a large amount of information in a short period of time” and added “That was almost too much”. Another employee confirmed “The messages flew like cannon balls”¹⁷. Suggestions on how this problem could have been avoided were made by several employees. One group of employees suggested that the problem could have been avoided if not all critical information had been communicated on the first day

Some information could have been conveyed on the second day. Perhaps one could have conveyed the basics on the first day and the details on the second day. Then it would have been less information on one day (Employee).

Another group of employees suggested that “a few things that were conveyed at the workshop could have been communicated later”, their explanation being “We did not need that for Monday” (Employee). Both suggestions would have reduced the amount of information that recipients had to process within a short period of time. Therefore, it is likely that applying these suggestions would have increased the effectiveness of the

¹⁷ In German: „Das kam wie aus der Kanone geschossen“.

communication programme. This finding emphasises that implementers should carefully evaluate which information needs to be communicated when and they should not ask too much of recipients by communicating too much information at once, a claim that had already been put forward by previous work (for example, Daly *et al.*, 2003).

A third suggestion on how to reduce the amount of information conveyed at the workshop, which was not mentioned explicitly by recipients, would have been providing more information before the workshop. The appropriateness of this suggestion can be deduced from the fact that several employees made statements such as “FOS was not at all clear before the workshop”. Furthermore, this suggestion links into the perceived gap regarding the use of the print channels, which has been discussed earlier (8.5.3). If implementers had continued to publish posters and newsletters on a regular basis (for example, every 6 to 8 weeks), it is likely that recipients would have had a more detailed and accurate understanding of the change at the beginning of the workshop because, as discussed earlier, the posters and the newsletters were read. Therefore, the amount of information conveyed at the team development workshop could have been reduced.

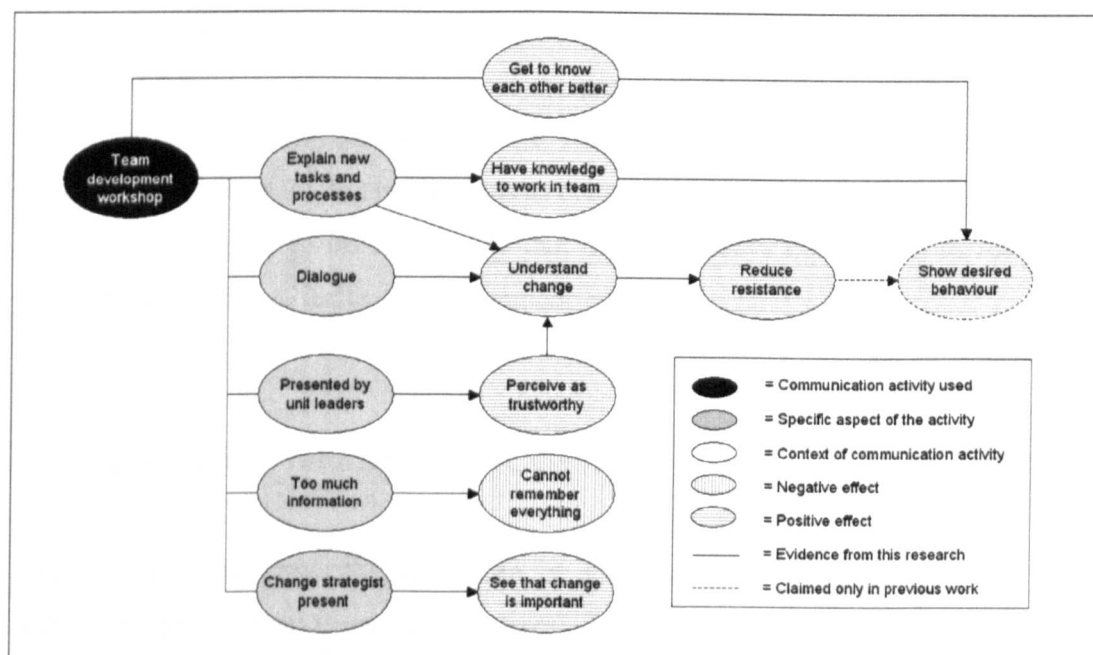
Another reason for the effectiveness of the workshop was that employees got to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere before the start of the team. A common perception among employees was that it was helpful “to get to know each other better as humans on the workshop¹⁸” (Employee). The reason why spending time with the new colleagues was perceived as important was that many employees “did not know the new colleagues apart from seeing them at breakfast” but “knowing each other was important for Monday” (Employees).

Almost all employees perceived the learning projects that were used to bring employees together as “useful” (Employee). In one learning project, for example, recipients worked in two teams, each of which had to solve a problem, and then they discussed the way they had solved the problem and the role that different individuals played in this process. However, as in the second case study, not all employees considered the learning projects as helpful. One employee called the learning projects “games” and

¹⁸ In German: “*Man kam sich auf dem Workshop auch menschlich näher*”

considered them “childish”. The employee complained “They should explain as many new things as possible and they should not build bridges out of paper in order to demonstrate that we are able to work as a team”. His response to the question of the researcher whether the learning projects may not be useful in terms of learning about something they had not done before (working as a team) was “What a nonsense”¹⁹. However, given the fact that the vast majority of recipients perceived the learning projects as beneficial, they can be considered an important success factor in preparing employees for a change.

Figure 8.10: Effects of the team development workshop



The importance of the participation of senior management in the kick-off event has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. Related to this earlier finding is the fact that recipients also perceived the visit of the director of the distribution centre at the team development workshop as positive (Figure 8.10). One of the employees stated that, “if the boss takes the time, the project must be really important for the organisation” and another employee concluded that “the participation of [Director of the distribution centre] has underlined that they really want this change”. This had left such a positive impression that recipients even talked to the director of service about the visit of the

¹⁹ In German: “So ’n Quatsch”

director of the distribution centre, which made him state “That was lived appreciation” (Dialogue with Director of Service, 14 April 2004). This is further evidence for the importance of giving senior managers an active role in communication activities.

At the end of the workshop every participant got three free gifts: a cup, a lighter and a ballpoint pen. Recipients on all levels liked these free gifts, typical statements being “The cup and so were good” (Group leader) and “The lighter was okay, the cups as well” (Employee). Employees also liked the slogans on the give-aways. One employee, for example, said “An igniting spark, not bad”. Although recipients found that the give-aways “encouraged the troops” (Group leader) and “increased feelings of togetherness” (Employee), the evidence is not sufficient in order to be able to say how the give-aways influenced recipients’ understanding and acceptance of the change or the behaviour they conducted after the introduction of the team on Monday. Similarly, one of the employees said “I doubt this really helps as claimed by psychologists”. But the evidence is sufficient in order to be able to say that the give-aways contributed to recipients’ positive perceptions of the team development workshop.

8.6 Summary of findings from Case Study FOS

The findings from this case study can be grouped into three sets, each of which addresses one or two research objectives. The first set of findings relates to the influence of specific aspects of the communication programme (causes) on recipients’ perceptions and reactions (effects). The second set of findings is about the interdependence of different communication activities in causing certain effects and about the role that multipliers can play in different communication activities. The third set of findings regards the relationships between different effects and the importance of understanding these relationships for the design of a communication programme.

The first set of findings – the lessons learned regarding the appropriateness of different communication activities for achieving certain effects and regarding the specific aspects that need to be considered in order to achieve these effects – is summarised in Table 8.3. As in the previous case studies, the specific aspects included in the table either existed

as success factors, as barriers or as missed opportunities. Success factors are specific aspects that were actually present and had a positive effect (such as the combination of posters and newsletters), barriers are specific aspects that were actually present and had a negative aspect (such as the lack of details during the kick-off event) and missed opportunities are specific aspects that implementers or recipients considered as potentially effective but that were not used in this case study (such as an alternative choice of multipliers). Barriers and missed opportunities are integrated into the table in a way that demonstrates their relevance as factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme.

As before, grey cells indicate findings that confirm a claim made in previous work, whereas white cells indicate findings that either contradict previous work or that had not been addressed specifically in previous work. The number of grey cells indicates that the findings from this case study confirm several claims from previous work. This was again particularly true for the role of certain communication activities (such as individual conversations to explain the individual impact of the change) and for the positive effects of specific aspects (such as use of an event at the early stage of the communication process or the presence of change strategists). The number of white cells indicates that the findings from this case study relate to several aspects of the communication programme that apparently had not been addressed in previous work. For example, several authors (Quirke, 1996; Pfannenberger, 2003) have emphasised the benefit of visible top management support and of explaining the need for change at the kick-off event but previous work has not made explicit that top management must be trusted and that the information at the event must be specific (Row H). This could have been concluded on the basis of previous work on trust (for example, Kramer, 1999) but it had not been discussed in relation to individual communication activities in the context of organisational change. The discussion of the contribution of certain specific aspects of the communication programme to the realisation of certain effects is a set of findings in itself because much of this had rarely been discussed in this depth in the context of a specific change project.

Table 8.3: Cause and effect-relationships found in third case study

	1	2	3	4	5
	Comm. activities used	Timing	Information conveyed	Communicator	Effects
A	Presentation of due diligence	Once (early)	Need for change, goal of change and impact of change	Change strategist / Senior line managers	Aware of change (Not aware if impact of change is not explained)
B	Posters	Episodical (after milestones)	Key aspects of the change	Written by project team	Understand change
C			Timeline and next steps		Oriented
D					See that change progresses / Perceive likelihood of success
E	Newsletter	Regularly (every 2 months)	Key aspects of the change	Written by project team / Distributed by multipliers	Understand change (If not regularly: Use informal communication)
F			Timeline and next steps		Oriented
G					See that change progresses / Perceive likelihood of success
H	Kick-off event	Once (at beginning)	Need for change, vision and change process	Change strategists (Must be trusted)	Understand change / Become interested in change (only if information specific)
I			Impact of change		
J			Impact of change	Works council (needs to support change and be well prepared)	Accept change
K			Possibility to ask questions	Change strategist / Senior line managers	
L					If not at beginning: Use informal communication
M	Information day	Once (after event)	Repetition of information from kick-off event at walls	Project managers	Understand change / Become less uncertain (Become more uncertain when question not answered)
N			Possibility to ask questions		
O	Individual conversation	Once	Brief overview of change	Unit leader	Understand change / Become less uncertain
P			Impact of the change		
Q			Possibility to ask questions		
R	Team workshop	Once (shortly before introduction)	Details about new processes and tasks	Unit leaders	Understand own tasks (must not be too much information)
S			Question and answer session		
T				Change strategist (Visit is sufficient)	Become less uncertain / Become less resistant
U	Group meetings	Regularly (Biweekly)	Topical information	Group leader	See that employees matter
V			Discussion of the change		Understand change / Become less uncertain / Become less anxious

Grey cells

= Findings that confirm a claim made in previous work

White cells

= Findings that either contradict previous work or that had not been addressed specifically in previous work

The second set of findings is related to the interaction of different communication activities in causing certain effects. In the second case study, the kick-off event created awareness among employees that a change was about to come, which is considered a prerequisite for the creation of understanding and acceptance of the change during later communication activities (Buchholz, 2002; Rogers, 1995). After the first face-to-face

communication activity in this case study (the the three-hour events during which the results of the due dilligence were presented), however, recipients did not see how the change would affect their work. Consequently, recipients did not start seeking information about the change actively: they neither paid attention to multipliers nor were the poster and newsletter read widely at that stage. On the other hand, the two print channels newsletter and poster, though less effective in themselves, had an important support function at a later stage because of their interaction with other communication activities. Firstly, information that had been communicated face-to-face was repeated via the two print channels, which increased the accuracy of recipients' understanding of the change. This supported the claim by Klein (1996) that repetition of the message increases the accuracy of the perceived message. The two activities even supplemented each other insofar as they were updated at different points in time and, therefore, key aspects of the change were repeated more than once. Secondly, the two print channels contributed to the achievement of 'continuous communication' (for example, Young and Post, 1993) because they were published between face-to-face communication activities. The low effectiveness of the information day, which took place four days after the kick-off event, is another example of the interdependence between different communication activities. The intention of implementers was to provide an opportunity for recipients to ask the questions that had arisen during or after the kick-off event. Previous work such as Klein (1996) and Quirke (1996) also considers such follow-up activities as potentially effective. In this case study, however, recipients did not expect that their questions would be answered because their questions had not been answered four days earlier and, therefore, they did not attend the information day. Finally, earlier communication also influenced the effectiveness of the team development workshop. One of the limitations of the team development workshop was that recipients perceived an overload of information because a large amount of information had to be conveyed in order to prepare recipients for the start of the first team three days later. If recipients' understanding at the beginning of the team development workshop had been higher, the amount of information conveyed at the workshop could have been reduced. This could have been achieved by continuous publication of newsletters and posters or by ensuring more effective communication via the management cascade. But implementers did not continue publishing newsletters and posters during the three months between the kick-off event and the team development workshop. Without written communication, however, rumours flourished and uncertainty regarding the impact of the change

increased. These findings expand the relationships found in previous case studies and, therefore, increase the existing understanding of important factors to consider when designing a communication programme.

Additional relationships that have been found between different communication activities regarded the use of multipliers. Although the data that could be collected with regard to recipients' perceptions of the use of multipliers were limited, it was nevertheless possible to draw tentative conclusions regarding the role that multipliers could, or should, play in different communication activities. For example, it may have been beneficial to prepare multipliers before the presentations of the due diligence. Short talks by multipliers during group meetings could have been used to follow-up the presentations of the due diligence and to make sure that each individual recipient was aware of the change. Group meetings only, without the participation of multipliers, were not sufficient because group leaders did not have enough knowledge about FOS in order to explain the change to their employees and to answer their employees' questions. Multipliers even could have attended group meetings and answered the other employees' questions throughout the whole communication process. This would have created the variety of possibilities for dialogue which previous work (for example, Mast, 2002a) has claimed to be important. A negative influence of the use of multipliers became evident with regard to the distribution of the newsletter. Implementers had planned that multipliers distributed the newsletters to their colleagues but multipliers did not function as expected. Consequently, the newsletter did not reach all employees as intended and employees were not encouraged to read the newsletter, which reduced the positive effect of the newsletter on recipients' understanding of the change. These negative influences of the multiplier approach on the effectiveness of other communication activities were present partly because the multiplier approach had two general limitations. Firstly, group leaders were chosen as multipliers in the largest unit of the distribution centre and, therefore, the communication via multipliers was equal to the communication via the management cascade. Consequently, an additional communication channel could not be created but this is considered beneficial during times of change (for example, Palmer and Fenner, 1999; Mast, 2002a). Secondly, multipliers were not prepared intensively for their role. Therefore, multipliers' understanding of the change was neither sufficient to explain details of the change nor to answer the other employees' questions. These findings contributed to an increased

understanding of the role that multipliers can play in increasing the effectiveness of a communication programme.

The main finding of this case study was the confirmation of the idea that had been developed in the first two case studies: that the key to the design of an effective communication programme may be a detailed understanding of likely effects and follow-up effects. The findings from this case confirmed the assumption that all communication aims need be considered in the light of their contribution to achieving the overall aim of the communication programme, which is to influence the behaviour that recipients adopt after the introduction of the change. All effects found in this case study, listed in Table 8.4, contributed either directly or indirectly to influencing the behaviour that recipients would adopt after the introduction of the change.

Table 8.4: Effects found in third case study

Effects found in third case study	
Aware of change	
Understand change	
Accept change	
Cognitive states	Believe information
	Information overload
	Interested in change
	Oriented
	Perceive likelihood of success
	See that change progresses
	Perceive managers as trustworthy
	Uncertain/Confused
Emotions	Anxious/Afraid
	Feel comfortable/safe
	Disappointed
	Motivated
Behaviour	Ask questions/Engage in dialogue
	Seek information actively
	Use informal communication

From the relationships found between different effects, an appropriate point in time until when a certain aim needs to be achieved could be deduced. The example of recipients’ awareness of the change, which has already been used earlier in this section, is appropriate to illustrate this. Awareness should be created at the very beginning of the

change process because it creates interest in the change. This is important because it makes recipients' actively seek information about the change which, in turn, is likely to increase their understanding of the change. Only when these relationships are known, is it possible to choose and design appropriate communication activities. It has become evident, for example, that the intention to increase understanding of the change during the presentations of the due diligence was too ambitious at the early stage of the communication process because recipients did not have enough pre-understanding of the change. It would have been sufficient to create awareness. In order to create awareness, however, a less complex and less expensive communication activity than three-hour presentations would have been sufficient. The relationships found between the different effects are discussed in an integrated way and across case studies in Chapter 9.

9 Discussion of findings

9.1 Introduction

The overall research aim was to increase understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme. The specific research objectives were to explore the effects of the communication activities used and the relationships between these effects, to identify the specific aspects of the communication activities used that caused these effects and to assess the interdependencies between communication activities in causing certain effects. This chapter discusses the findings from the three case studies in an integrated way and thereby answers the research questions.

In the first section, the effects found are summarised and clusters of effects are defined. In the next section, the central cause-and-effect relationships are discussed, which includes the relationships between the different effects, the communication activities used and the specific aspects of these communication activities. Whereas the case study chapters have been structured along the communication activities used, in order to facilitate understanding of the cases, the discussion in this chapter is structured along the clusters of effects because the relationships between the different effects have been identified as key in the design of a communication programme. It has become evident throughout the research that it is difficult to design an effective communication programme if one does not understand how the effects of the individual communication activities interact. The third and fourth section summarise the interdependencies between different communication activities in causing certain affects and the role that multipliers can play in different communication activities respectively.

9.2 Clusters of effects

Being clear about the intended effects is considered a prerequisite for the design of an effective communication programme (Klein, 1996; Lewis, 2000a). In Section 3.4 a hierarchy of aims could be developed which included the overarching aim “Make recipients adopt the desired behaviour” and the five categories of specific aims “Create awareness of the change”, “Increase understanding of the change”, “Increase acceptance of the change”, “Address recipients’ emotions” and “Influence the perceived events”. For reasons outlined in Chapter 6, the category “perceived events” was expanded during the research and labelled “cognitive states”. It was unclear, however, how specific aims such as influencing recipients’ expectations of communication activities or creating interest in the change fit into this structure. Furthermore, not all specific effects were known. Therefore, two research objectives were to explore the actual effects of the communication activities used and the relationships between these effects. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, understanding of the potential effects and of the relationships between the different effects proved to be even more important than originally expected on the basis of the review of previous work. This section briefly summarises the effects and the relationships between different effects that have been found.

Table 9.1 compares the effects that have been found across case studies. As expected, awareness, understanding and acceptance were present in all three case studies. Furthermore, a variety of other effects were present, which have been grouped into the three categories cognitive states, emotions and behaviour, which were identified as key categories in Chapter 3.

Table 9.1: Overview of the effects found in the three case studies

Effects		Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Aware of change		X	X	X
Understand change		X	X	X
Accept change		X	X	X
Cognitive states	Attach priority to the change		X	
	Believe information	X		X
	Concentrated	X		
	Expect new information at next activity	X		
	Information overload	X		X
	Interested in change	X	X	X
	Look for hidden meaning	X		
	Oriented	X	X	X
	Perceive information as inaccurate	X	X	
	Perceive information as not relevant		X	
	Perceive lack of competence of implementers	X	X	
	Perceive lack of coordination/redundancy of activities	X	X	
	Perceive likelihood of success	X	X	X
	Perceive own interests as considered	X		
	Perceive self-efficacy/ability to learn new technology		X	
	See that change is supported	X	X	
	See that change progresses		X	X
	Perceive managers as trustworthy	X	X	X
	Uncertain/Confused	X	X	X
Emotions	Angry	X		
	Anxious/Afraid	X	X	X
	Feel comfortable/safe	X		X
	Disappointed	X		X
	Enthusiastic		X	
	Motivated	X		X
	Satisfied		X	
Behaviour	Ask questions/Engage in dialogue	X	X	X
	Complete unnecessary tasks/inefficient	X		
	Seek information actively	X	X	X
	Use informal communication	X	X	X

Figure 9.1 illustrates the relationships between the effects that have been found. The specific effects and their role in the different case studies are discussed in Section 9.3.

were influenced. The effects in the clusters are discussed in detail in separate sub-sections in Section 9.3.

Effects which do not fit into the clusters were also identified and are illustrated mainly at the bottom of Figure 9.1. These effects have been mentioned by very few employees only and their role in the communication process is comparatively unclear because, on the basis of the research evidence, they could be related to no or just one other effect. Therefore, the opportunity to integrate these effects into the relationships of effects illustrated in Figure 9.1 was limited. However, as the effects have been found, they need to be presented. The additional effects are discussed in Sub-Section 9.3.9.

9.3 Central cause-and-effect relationships

When planning the communication programme, one needs to anticipate which communication activity will have which effect because different effects are caused by different communication activities. Only then can one include the communication activities that are appropriate to achieve the desired effects. Throughout the communication process, one needs to assess regularly which aims have already been achieved and which aims have not been achieved yet. Only then can one make an informed choice about how to adjust communication activities. Each of the following sections discusses the relationships between one (or more) cause(s) and one (or more) effect(s). The structure of the sections varies, depending on the nature of the relationships. A section may begin with a communication activity, a specific aspect of the communication activity or with an effect. The intention of each section, however, is the same: to show how certain communication activities lead to certain effects and follow-up effects.

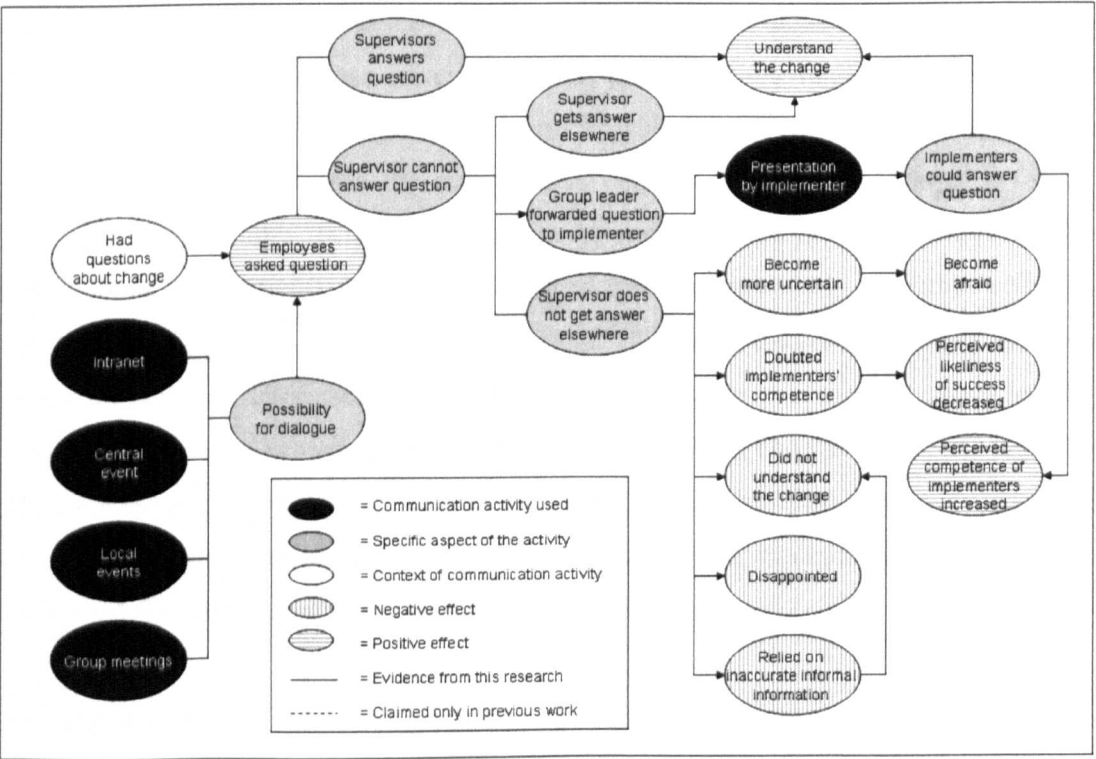
The central position of the effects awareness, understanding and acceptance in Figure 9.1 highlights that the role of these three effects was as important as claimed in previous work (Axley, 2000; Lewis, 1999; Mohr, 1997), although the claim that awareness should come before understanding and that understanding should come before acceptance (Buchholz, 2002; Rogers, 1995) could only be supported when not

understood in an exclusive sense because Figure 9.1 illustrates that recipients' acceptance of the change was also influenced by the perceived likelihood of success and by recipients' perceptions of the importance of the change. The causes and follow-up effects of awareness, understanding and acceptance are discussed in the sections on the clusters of effects because, otherwise, almost all effects would have to be discussed in the section on understanding.

9.3.1 Ask questions and pull information

The importance of interpersonal dialogue has become very clear in all three case studies, thereby supporting the findings of previous work (Glover, 2001; Young and Post, 1993). The fact that recipients ask questions is considered a positive effect because it is an indicator that recipients want to know more about the change and because answering questions leads to an increase in understanding. Figure 9.2 illustrates the effects and follow-up effects of answering or not answering recipients' questions.

Figure 9.2: Effects of (not) answering questions



Previous work (Lewis, 1999; Mast, 2002a; Mikeleit, 2000; Quirke, 1999; Smeltzer, 1991) argues that a main benefit of face-to-face communication is its contribution to dialogue. The evidence from this study supports this claim insofar as questions were asked almost only during face-to-face communication activities. The evidence also supports the claim (Daft and Lengel, 1986; Mast, 2002a) that dialogue is more likely during personal conversations and group meetings than during large meetings.

In each case study, recipients preferred to ask their questions during group meetings because the direct supervisor was the preferred person to approach. Recipients did not even expect their supervisors to answer their questions personally and immediately. It was sufficient when recipients' questions were not answered personally, for example, when group leaders referred to a presentation in the shared folder on the network drive. It was also sufficient when recipients' questions were not answered immediately, for example, when group leaders forwarded the request to the director of the Plant IT who forwarded the request to a MITIS project leader who then held a presentation. Despite the possibility to answer questions indirectly, the knowledge of the supervisor was a potential barrier to dialogue via the management cascade. This suggests that, in order to increase the effectiveness of dialogue during group meetings, supervisors should be trained as communicators and they should be provided with detailed information about the change. This has also been recommended by previous work such as Townley (1994) who suggests using a 'communication package'. Another means to increase the effectiveness of dialogue via the management cascade is the installation of a formal process for forwarding recipients' questions to implementers and for forwarding the answer back to recipients. A problem, even in the first case study, was that a formal feedback process had not been defined and that answering questions widely depended on the initiative of supervisors. This only worked because two of the four group leaders were members of a project team and because one of the change strategists was the former director of the local IT department. In the second and third case study, the lack of a feedback process from employees via group leaders to implementers was the main barrier to effective dialogue via the management cascade.

As suggested by previous work (Grasse, 1999; Quirke, 1996; Spiker and Lesser, 1995; Townley, 1994), larger events were designed in a way that allows the discussion of issues that are of personal interest to employees. Whereas only one event took place in

the third case study, the first two case studies included a central event and a series of local events. The benefit of the central event (road show IT NEW and road show HR NEW) was that recipients could ask change strategists directly. The claim that many employees feel unable to ask questions in large meetings (Belmiro, 1997; Belmiro *et al.*, 2000; Glover, 2001; Quirke, 1996) could be partly supported because several recipients argued that they felt uncomfortable in front of such a large audience. But several questions were still asked at the event because information about the change had been provided via other communication activities before the event and, therefore, recipients could think of questions in advance.

Local events were used in the first and second case study. In the first case study, few questions were asked during the departmental meetings because recipients asked their supervisors about local issues during group meetings and they asked change strategists about strategic issues. In the second case study, however, the local events were used intensively for asking questions, mainly because recipients were less satisfied with the answers they received during the group meetings. Another reason for the effectiveness of dialogue during the local events in the second case study was that recipients were satisfied with how local implementers took care of their questions and concerns. Local implementers had put in place a systematic process of how to answer questions that could not be answered during the event. As a consequence, recipients were more willing to ask questions because they knew that their questions would be answered – either immediately or at the next local event. The definition of such a formal process is necessary because it is likely that, at an early stage, local managers cannot answer questions about a change that is planned at the headquarters. In the third case study, the change took place at one location and, therefore, a difference between central and local events did not exist.

The evidence from the three case studies confirmed the claim (Bernecker and Reiß, 2003; Schick, 2002) that electronic communication activities such as websites and newsletters allow limited possibility for dialogue. The email-newsletter used in the first and second case study was rarely replied to and the email-address of the project team, which was published on the website, was hardly used either. This does not mean, however, that electronic communication activities cannot play a role in the creation of dialogue because the information received via these activities encouraged dialogue

during face-to-face activities. The publication of the newsletter and the availability of the website contributed to a level of understanding of the change that made recipients ask more questions during the road shows. Furthermore, recipients asked their supervisors during group meetings when they had read something on the website that they wanted to know more about. Group leaders themselves used the information published in the newsletter as a basis for discussing the change with their employees during group meetings because they considered the official information in the newsletter as a sound basis for discussion. This supports the claim made in previous work (for example, Young and Post, 1993) that the creation of dialogue is also a matter of combining channels.

Although different communication activities were used in each case study in order to create dialogue, more activities could have been used. For example, the website could have included a discussion forum and live chats on the intranet also could have been organised. A hotline would have created the possibility for recipients to have their questions answered immediately. Townley (1994) suggests that, when a question asked during a large event is expected to be of general relevance, it may be published on the website. In other words, there are many possibilities for creating dialogue and, given the importance of dialogue between implementers and recipients, these possibilities should be considered when designing the communication programme.

An important issue regarding the creation of dialogue that had hardly been addressed in previous work is the variety of negative effects when recipients' questions are not answered appropriately (Figure 9.2). Firstly, recipients cannot understand the change when the questions they ask in order to understand the change are not answered. The lack of understanding of the change usually leads to uncertainty which, in turn, is likely to trigger anxiety (Section 9.3.3). Furthermore, recipients perceived the fact that implementers cannot answer questions as an indicator that those responsible are not sufficiently competent to successfully implement the change and, therefore, they perceived the likelihood of success as low. In the first case study, for example, change strategists were not able to summarise the benefit of the change in three sentences at the end of the road show. Therefore, employees thought that change strategists did not know what they wanted and they thought that the change would not be successful. Finally, not answering recipients' questions led to the problem that recipients had to

rely on informal communication which frequently led to an inaccurate understanding of the change (Section 9.3.2). These negative effects will be discussed in greater depths in the section on the respective effect(s) below.

In addition to asking questions during the face-to-face communication activities, recipients could actively seek information about the change in that they 'pulled' information that was available via electronic communication such as websites or via print communication such as posters. Understanding when, why, and how recipients 'pull' information is important because an effective communication programme requires a combination of communication activities that enable implementers to 'push' certain key messages and communication activities that enable recipients to 'pull' other information (Clampitt *et al.*, 2000; Mast, 2002a). Quirke (1996) specifies that a sufficient number of pull-channels such as computer bulletin board, dial-up hotline, information kiosk, interactive CD or auto-answer email should be present. The pull channels used in the three case studies were websites, shared folders on the network drive and posters.

Previous work (Hoffmann, 2001; Mast, 2002a) argues that an advantage of a website is that the information is available any time at any place, thereby allowing recipients to access the information whenever they want to. The evidence from the three case studies supports this claim and suggests that the main role of the website should be to provide a platform with information that recipients can access whenever they want to. Recipients in the first and second case study stated that a website was appropriate after the first central event in order to expand their understanding of the key aspects of the change. It also became clear, however, that a prerequisite for pulling information is the availability of the desired information and the possibility to find it. In the first case study, in particular, the website included much information and it was little structured so that it was too difficult to find the information. This reduced the effectiveness of the website as a pull-channel. The claim that the ability to access information any time reduces feelings of being a passive recipient because employees can actively seek the information they desire (Mast, 2002a) could neither be confirmed nor contradicted.

Storing files in a shared folder on the network drive was a way of offering information that was used in the first case study. Recipients considered this as helpful because they

could look at information again when they had not understood it during the presentation. This confirms the importance of allowing recipients to learn about the change at their own speed (for example, Carnall, 2003; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002). Furthermore, it highlights that the possibility to learn at one's own speed depends on the possibility to pull information whenever recipients want to. This, in turn, requires the existence of a website and/or a shared folder where electronic material is stored.

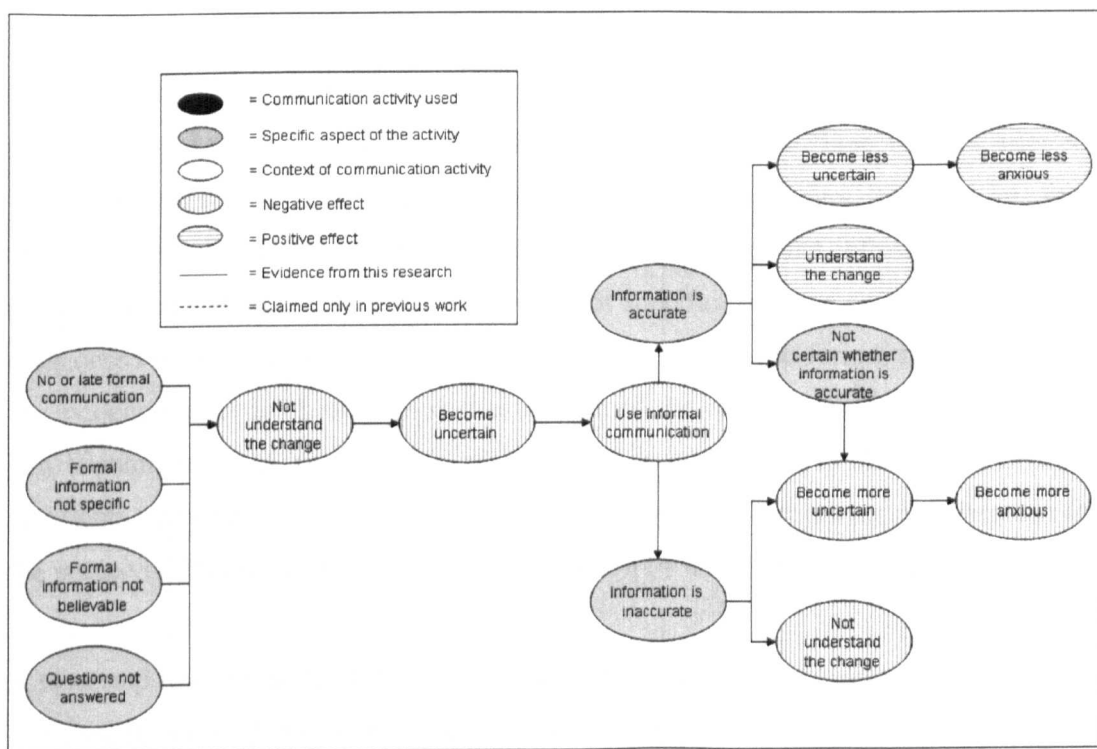
A limitation of all pull-channels used was that many recipients did not try to access the information. The fact that this can be caused by a lack of awareness of the impact of the change became particularly evident in the third case study. As recipients had not realised that they would be affected heavily by the change, they paid little attention to the posters when they were first displayed on the blackboards. Only when informal communication made them realise that they would be affected by the change, did recipients' interest in posters and newsletters increase. Another limitation was that implementers did not know whether recipients had accessed the information and, therefore, they did not know what level of understanding to use as the basis for the design of the next communication activity. The fact that recipients did not read much of what was published on the website supports the claim that, despite the availability of pull-channels, pushing important information is a prerequisite for effective change communication (Clampitt *et al.*, 2000; Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996). In the first case study, for example, a presentation that explained the need for change was available on the website but recipients did not read it because it was not pushed to them. Given recipients' interest in the need for change, it is very likely that they would have read the presentation if it had been sent to them.

9.3.2 Use informal communication

Another cluster of effects has the use of informal communication at its centre. The evidence from the three case studies confirms the claim (Brehm, 2002; Glover, 2001; Lewis, 1999; Richardson and Denton, 1996) that informal communication is an important part of the communication process. In all three case studies informal communication was used intensively, confirming the claim by Crampton *et al.* (1998) and Quirke (1996) who estimate that recipients may receive up to 70 percent of their

information through informal networking. Implementers in the third case study, in particular, found that an incredibly large number of rumours were travelling around the distribution centre. This section discusses why employees used informal communication, the characteristics and effects of using informal communication as well as ways to address rumours once they developed. The fact that, on the one hand, informal communication influenced recipients' perceptions of formal communication activities and that, on the other hand, the use of informal communication was triggered by recipients' perceptions of formal communication activities confirmed the definition made in Chapter 3 to consider informal communication a contextual factor as well as an effect. Figure 9.3 illustrates the reasons for, and effects of, using informal communication.

Figure 9.3: Causes and effects of using informal communication



A first step towards understanding the role of informal communication is to understand the conditions of its use. Previous work argues that informal networks are a natural consequence of people interacting (Crampton *et al.*, 1998; Davis, 1979). The evidence from the third case study, in particular, confirms this claim. Implementers stated that informal communication was an important part of the culture of the distribution centre. Employees wanted to use the grapevine and discuss things informally. This suggests

that informal communication would have been used even if formal communication activities had provided the desired information and, indeed, informal communication was also used in the first two case studies, although employees received much more information from official sources.

The other reasons for using informal communication were related to the information provided during formal communication activities. Previous work argued that, in the absence of formal communication, recipients tend to rely on informal communication (Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Quirke, 1996, 2000). Employees in the first case study, for example, complained that bringing together the information in order to be able to understand the change was highly dependent on informal communication. Similarly, recipients in the third case study stated that they had talked about the change with each other and guessed what might come because those responsible had not told them. The three case studies also provided evidence that the use of informal communication increases if the desired information is provided too late or not continuously. In the first case study, the central event came three months after the announcement of the change and, therefore, many rumours existed by then. Furthermore, recipients used informal communication when the information provided during formal communication activities was not specific. In these situations, recipients considered informal communication a necessary supplement to formal sources. Finally, the evidence from the three case studies confirmed the claim (Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999) that the use of informal communication is likely to increase if recipients perceive formal communication as unbelievable. Recipients compensated for the perceived lack of useful formal communication by using informal communication.

A next step towards understanding the role of informal communication is to understand its characteristics. One characteristic of informal communication, argues previous work (Argenti, 2003; Crampton *et al.*, 1998; Glover, 2001; Mohr, 1997), is that informal channels can be extremely fast because they are not restricted by hierarchies or departments and the evidence from the three case studies supports this characteristic. Employees in all three case studies stated that informal communication was faster than formal communication. In the second case study, for example, road shows took place at different locations at different points in time but the information that was conveyed at

the first road show was forwarded informally to the employees at the other locations soon after the road show.

With regard to the accuracy of the information conveyed via informal channels, previous work puts forward different claims. Several authors (Crampton *et al.*, 1998; Davis, 1979) argue that between 75% and 90% of the messages conveyed via the grapevine are accurate, whereas other authors (Axley, 2000; Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Schweiger and Denisi, 1991) argue that informal messages are often less accurate and more negative than formal messages. This lack of clarity is also reflected in the evidence from the three case studies. In the first and second case study, recipients said the information received via informal channels often was accurate. The information about the goals of the change, for example, which was forwarded informally after the first road show in the second case study, was accurate. In the third case study, however, the information conveyed via informal communication channels was mostly inaccurate and more negative than reality. The question of why differences exist between case studies is difficult to answer. Two potential reasons for the existence of inaccurate rumours in the third case study could be that less formal information about the impact of the change was available and that recipients were more interested in the change because the change not only affected the structure in the distribution centre but also the money that several employees would earn. These reasons are partly supported by a formula that Crampton *et al.* (1998, p.576), on the basis of Allport (1947), developed to calculate the intensity of informal communication. They argued that the intensity of informal communication is determined by the importance of the information to the persons communicating, the ambiguity of the facts associated with the information, the existing level of uncertainty and the breakdown in formal communication. This formula is only partly helpful, however, because it calculates the intensity of the rumour and not the negative deviation from the facts. Interestingly, however, the factors level of uncertainty, importance of the information and lack of formal information about the issue of interest were different in the third case study than in the previous two case studies.

Maybe the question of whether the information is accurate or not is less relevant anyway because previous work (Glover, 2001; Young and Post, 1993) has argued that recipients cannot know whether the information is accurate and, therefore, recipients are

likely to be sceptical about the ability of the informal communication system to relay reliable information. Employees in the third case study confirmed this. They stated that they heard the things “around ten corners” (Employee) and, therefore, they did not know whether the information was true or not.

A third step towards understanding the role of informal communication is to understand its effects. Previous work (Crampton *et al.*, 1998; Quirke, 1996) argues that informal communication is not negative per se. Respondents in a study by Glover (2001), for example, ranked the grapevine on the same level of effectiveness as events and group meetings. In particular, informal communication can fill the information vacuum when formal communication fails to reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that typically accompanies organisational change (Brimm and Murdock, 1998; DiFonzo *et al.*, 1994; DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Glover, 2001; Mohr, 1997). Crampton *et al.* (1998) argue that informal communication can also give employees a release mechanism for stress and provide an outlet for expressing anxieties. The central positive effects in this study were an increase in understanding and a reduction of uncertainty when the information received from informal sources was perceived as believable. Employees in the second case study stated that the information from informal sources was mostly accurate and always quicker than formal communication. They added that they did not like informal communication but they got used to it because of the absence of formal communication during certain periods. Another positive effect was that, when recipients had received informal information about an issue of interest, they became interested in the change. As mentioned above, the information conveyed at the first road show in the second case study was conveyed informally to employees at other locations. As employees knew about the need for change and the goals of the change before the road show at their location, they were very attentive during the road show because they wanted to take the chance to increase their understanding of the change. Furthermore, as discussed earlier (9.2.1), an increased understanding of the change before an event enabled recipients to think of questions and increased the likelihood of questions being asked.

The presence of several negative effects – mainly an inaccurate understanding of the change and increased uncertainty – confirmed claims that informal communication is likely to have several negative effects. Glover (2001), for example, found that formal communication activities were often supplemented and sometimes usurped by the

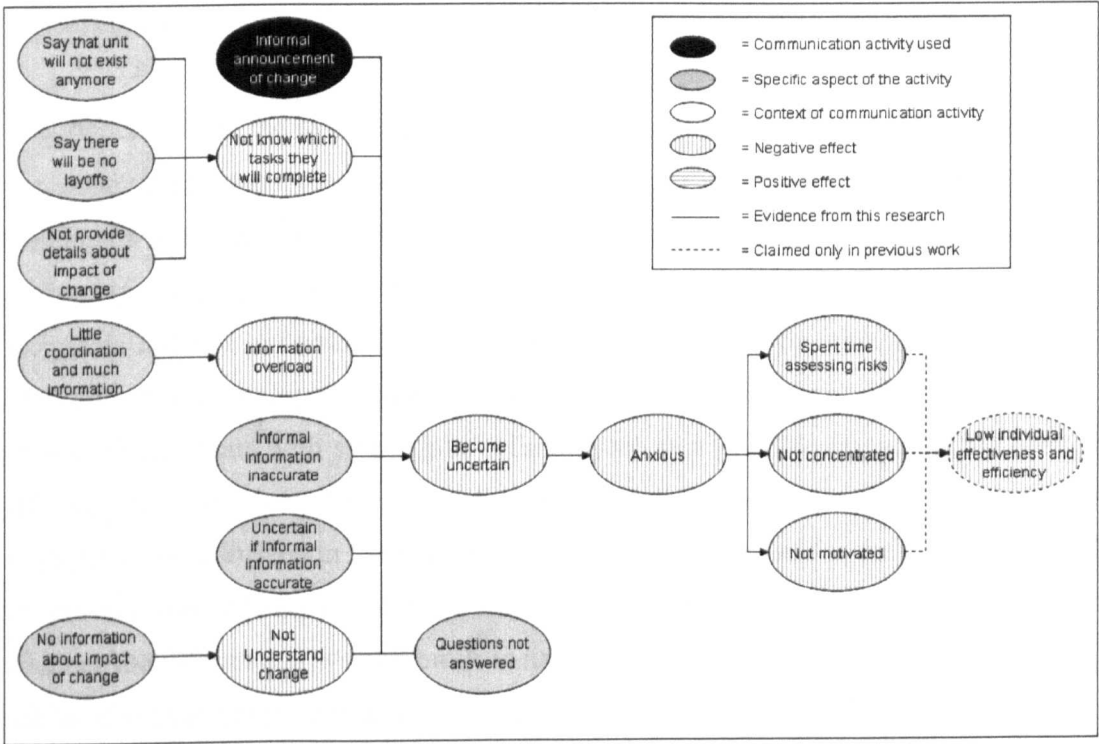
grapevine and in a study by Smeltzer and Zener (1992) the official announcement became meaningless because of extensive unofficial messages. As the grapevine was quick, the first time employees in the third case study heard about many issues was from an informal source. This led to an understanding of the change which influenced the interpretation of later information. The problem was that, when the informal information was inaccurate, the understanding was also inaccurate, and it was likely that new information was misinterpreted. The misinterpretation of the information received from formal sources, in turn, increased the level of uncertainty regarding the impact of the change because recipients feared negative effects which were not planned. Because of these negative follow-up effects, the box "Use informal communication" in Figure 9.3 has vertical stripes, indicating a negative effect.

Once the role of informal communication is understood, it is necessary to understand what can be done about it. The main finding across the three case studies is that any formal communication can be helpful to prevent the conditions of the use of informal communication because any formal communication can reduce uncertainty and increase recipients' understanding of the change, if the information is specific and believable. Even communication activities that were perceived as ineffective in general were considered as helpful with regard to addressing rumours. Employees in the third case study, for example, stated that the only good thing about the central event was that change strategists confirmed some of the information they had heard from informal sources. Furthermore, the evidence from the three case studies confirms the claim (Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Jay and Smith, 1996; Klein, 1996; Richardson and Denton, 1996; Smeltzer, 1991) that timely communication prevents rumours. At the same time, however, the evidence suggests that timely communication is no guarantee that recipients do not intensively use informal communication. In the second case study, for example, the kick-off event took place before rumours developed but the change was so complex that recipients had many questions after the event. As the event was not followed up with communication activities that provided the desired information, recipients had to rely on information communication.

9.3.3 Uncertainty and anxiety

Uncertainty can be defined as the psychological state of doubt about what an event signifies or portends (Clampitt *et al.*, 2000). The findings from the three case studies support the claims that uncertainty can be a key concern in organisational change (for example, Clampitt *et al.*, 2000; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002; Lewis, 1999) and that effective management of uncertainty is a prerequisite for effective change implementation (Clampitt *et al.*, 2002). Figure 9.4 illustrates the situations in which uncertainty developed and what the follow-up effects of uncertainty were.

Figure 9.4: Factors increasing or decreasing uncertainty and anxiety



In all three case studies uncertainty developed when recipients did not understand the change and, in particular, when they did not understand the impact of the change. This fits the argument that uncertainty develops in the absence of concrete information about a person's future because people do not have a clue as to which of their assumptions about their future and the future of the organisation have any validity (Buchholz, 2002; Mast, 2002a). Reasons why employees did not fully understand the change were that implementers either communicated too late, that the information was not specific or not clear or that recipients received too much information. The overlapping of these causes

with the causes for the use of informal communication is discussed below. In the third case study, in particular, the lack of timely information about the new structure and tasks caused uncertainty and anxiety among employees. This confirms the claim that releasing partial information is better than having to deal with the uncertainty caused by being secretive (DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998) but it also demonstrates that timely communication is not necessarily sufficient because uncertainty developed although timely communication took place. The problem was that the information conveyed during the event did not have the level of detail that recipients had expected and, therefore, recipients did not have any specific information about what was about to come. Employees complained that an additional event at which vague information is repeated, instead of conveying the desired details, even increased uncertainty instead of increasing understanding and reducing uncertainty.

The evidence from the three case studies also confirms the claim that, if information is not clear, employees tend to interpret the information negatively (Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999) and that this is likely to increase uncertainty and anxiety (for example, Mast, 2002a). In the second case study, for example, many recipients had not understood the new structure of the HR function for a long time. Therefore, some employees really considered “the creation of a call centre in the cellar of one of the plants with stupid jobs” (Employee) as a possible impact of the change although this interpretation was far from what had been considered by change strategists. As discussed in the previous section, another reason for the development of uncertainty was the use of informal communication because recipients did not know whether the information was accurate or not. This confirms the claim that rumours are not an effective means of reducing uncertainty and anxiety (Axley, 2000; Glover, 2001; Schweiger and Denisi, 1991). A finding by Kramer *et al.* (2004), that contradictory messages lead to uncertainty, could neither be confirmed nor contradicted.

The follow-up effects caused by recipients’ uncertainty were as manifold as the reasons for the development of uncertainty. The importance of uncertainty as a main determinant of recipients’ anxiety regarding the change confirms the claim that uncertainty is likely to trigger anxiety (Klein, 1994, 1996; Lundberg and Young, 2001). In the first case study, in particular, the anxiety caused by recipients’ uncertainty regarding the impact of the change caused additional problems. Firstly, recipients felt

distracted from their work and had difficulties focusing on their regular tasks. Secondly, uncertainty influenced the way later communication was perceived, resulting in worst-case scenarios about the impact of the change such as layoffs or having to complete the job at another location. In previous work this is also referred to as a downward spiral of negative perception (Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999). As demonstrated in the previous section, one reason for the use of informal communication was a high level of uncertainty, in particular, with regard to the impact of the change. This supports the claim that the uncertainty surrounding changes provides a fertile ground for rumours (Klein, 1994). The finding of Schweiger and Denisi (1991), that uncertainty creates stress for employees and that the stress causes a decrease in satisfaction, commitment and perceived trustworthiness of the organisation could neither be confirmed nor contradicted. A potential positive effect of uncertainty – that recipients ask questions about the change because they expect safety from the answers (Quirke, 2000) – also was not mentioned by the employees in the three case studies.

The importance of dealing with recipients' uncertainty and anxiety is supported by many authors in the field (Clampitt *et al.*, 2000; 2002; Kitchen and Daly, 2002; Klein, 1994, 1996; Lewis, 1999; Schweiger and Denise, 1991). DiFonzo and Bordia (1998) even argue that the key element distinguishing effective communication strategies is an effective management of uncertainty. One way to deal with uncertainty is to prevent it by designing communication activities that prevent the situations in which uncertainty develops. How to achieve this has been discussed in the sections on asking questions (9.3.1) and using informal communication (9.3.2).

Another way to deal with uncertainty is to reduce it once it has developed. Previous work (Lewis, 1999; Mikeleit, 2000; Smeltzer, 1991) argues that dialogue is an effective way to reduce uncertainty and face-to-face communication is especially effective because recipients' questions can be answered and their concerns can be addressed immediately. The evidence from the three case studies confirms this claim. During the road show in the first case study, for example, employees mentioned their concern regarding potential layoffs. Therefore, the director of the IT Infrastructure Department officially denied rumours regarding layoffs. He explicitly stated that nobody would be laid off. As employees believed him, they were less uncertain about their future and they felt much better after the road show, but employees emphasised that the personal

statement of the change strategist was very important. Similarly, recipients in the third case study said that the best thing at the kick-off event was that change strategists confirmed some of the information they had heard from informal sources, thereby reducing the uncertainty regarding the accuracy of the information. In the second case study, uncertainty and anxiety were caused by recipients' lack of understanding of the impact of the change. Uncertainty remained several weeks after the kick-off event and it was only reduced during a local event when recipients again expressed their concerns and when the most senior line manager promised that there will be a solution that would fit the situation at that location and that the interests of employees would be considered.

Dialogue did not only take place during events but also during the weekly meetings of supervisors with their employees. As discussed above (9.3.1), the frequency of group meetings and the closeness between employees and their supervisor made group meetings the potentially most effective communication activity to answer recipients' questions. Given the importance of dialogue in the reduction of uncertainty, group meetings also had the greatest potential to reduce recipients' uncertainty. But often this effect was not achieved because of the lack of supervisors' knowledge about specific aspects of the change. In the third case study, for example, group leaders could not answer their employees' questions and, therefore, they could not reduce their uncertainty.

The suggestion on how to deal with uncertainty made in the previous paragraphs emphasised that the level of recipients' understanding of the change widely determines whether their uncertainty regarding the change increases or decreases. But personal experience of what the change would be like – during the training workshop in the second case study and during the team development workshop in the third case study – was at least as important. Employees in the second case study stated that the uncertainty regarding the benefits of the new technology and the capability to learn could be reduced during the workshop. This effect was achieved because recipients could use click-dummies of the new technology in order to see what it would be like to work with the new system. Employees said that, after the workshop, they thought that the new system was much better than the old system. In the third case study, the change did not include the introduction of a new information technology but recipients could still experience what the change would be like because implementers had integrated learning

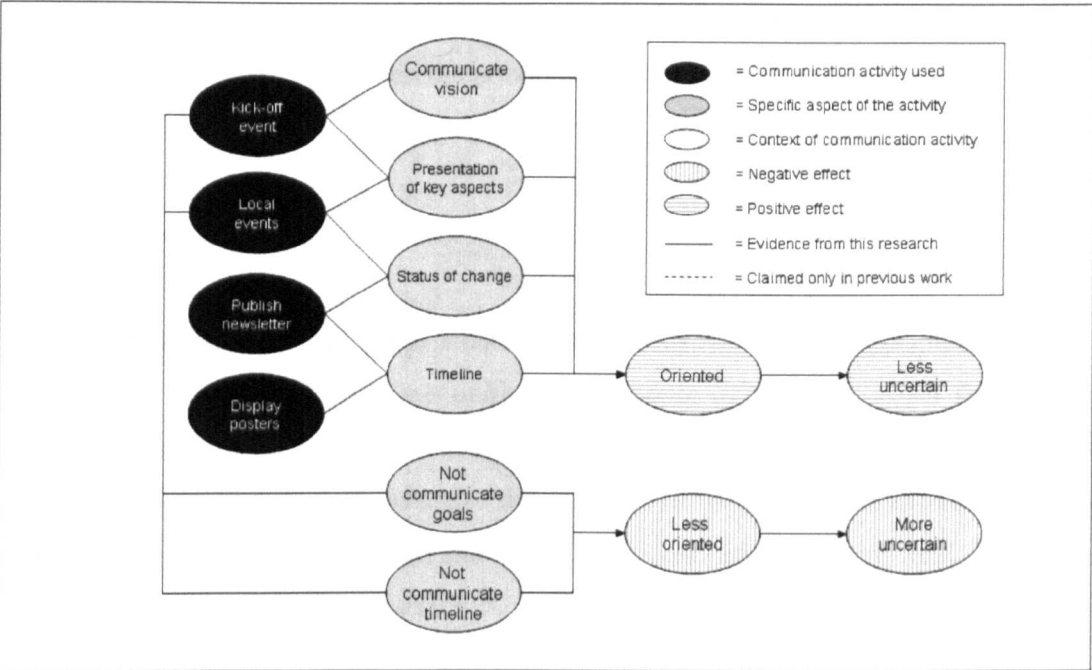
projects during which employees could practice specific processes in small groups. Again, employees stated that much uncertainty was reduced during the two days of the workshop.

Finally, although informal communication was one of the causes of uncertainty, it also played an important role in the reduction of uncertainty. The evidence from the three case studies confirms the claim that informal communication fills the information vacuum when formal communication fails to reduce the uncertainty (Brimm and Murdock, 1998; DiFonzo et al., 1994; DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Glover, 2001; Mohr, 1997). The phenomenon was especially visible in the third case study where recipients did not believe implementers' statements regarding the impact of the change and, therefore, had to rely on informal communication in order to have their uncertainty reduced.

9.3.4 Orientation

Previous work (for example, Künzel and Ehegartner, 1999) argues that organisational change always means losing some of the routines that provide safety. This means that employees usually become less oriented with regard to where the organisation is heading and what their role in the organisation will be (Mast, 2002a). Therefore, previous work (Schick, 2002; Sillince, 1999; Smeltzer, 1991) suggests that, very early in the change process, implementers should outline the vision and an approximate timeline of the change in order to give recipients at least some orientation and, thereby, to prevent some of the uncertainty that is likely to be caused by the announcement of the change. This close relationship between recipients' uncertainty and their perceptions of being oriented is supported by the empirical evidence from the three case studies (Figure 9.5).

Figure 9.5: Factors increasing or decreasing orientation



In the second case study, change strategists explained key aspects of the change during the road show that was used to kick off the change. Although some uncertainty still developed, employees said that the information about what was to be achieved and which projects were started to achieve this provided at least some orientation after it had been announced that many things would change. The opposite was present in the first case study. As implementers did not provide information about specific goals of the change, recipients did not know why the whole change was necessary and they were disoriented with regard to where the IT function was heading and how they would be affected. However, whereas recipients in the first case study stated that the vision was not communicated intensively enough, they considered information about the change process as very helpful with regard to the creation of orientation. “The description of the process provided orientation” (Employee). The benefit, from recipients’ perspective, was that they could check whether the change progressed according to plan. As illustrated in Figure 9.5, a success factor in both case studies was that the information that led to an increase in orientation was communicated via two different communication activities at least.

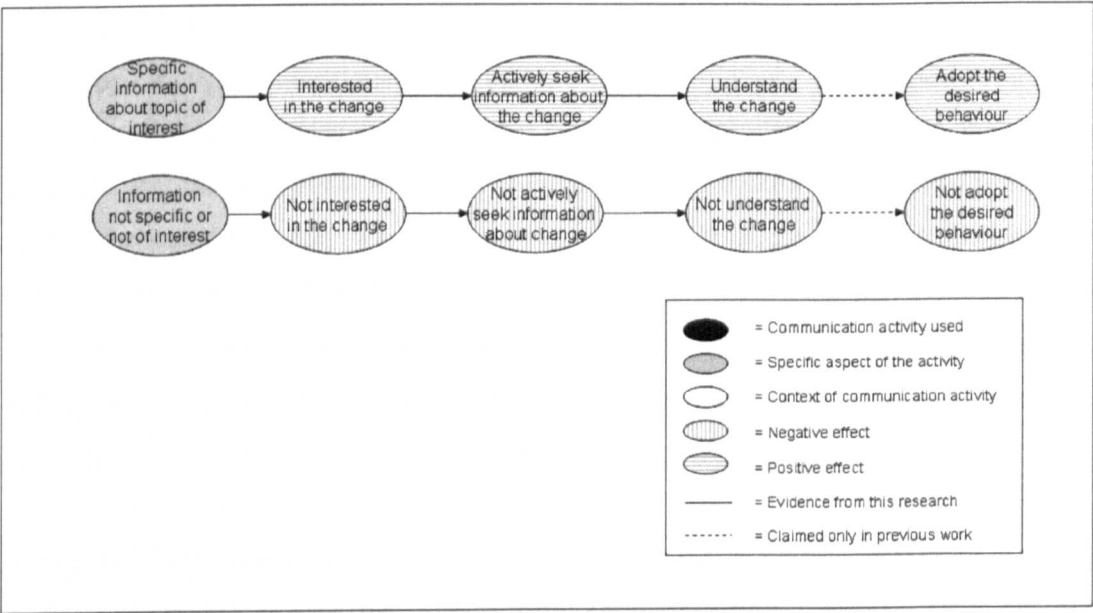
In the third case study, recipients hardly talked about orientation as an effect, which correlates with the fact that their uncertainty and anxiety were higher and that they used

informal communication more intensively. This is another indicator for the close relationship between orientation, uncertainty and the use of informal communication that has already been discussed in the previous sections.

9.3.5 Interest in the change

The evidence from all three case studies has demonstrated that, if recipients are not interested in the change, they are unlikely to process information about the change effectively and they are unlikely to actively seek information about the change. This is a problem because both factors influence the accuracy of recipients' understanding of the change and, thereby, the behaviour that recipients adopt before and after the introduction of the change (Figure 9.6).

Figure 9.6: Importance of creating interest in the change



The main content that led to interest in the change was the impact of the change because it made recipients realise that the change would affect them personally and it made them want to know more. In the first case study, for example, provision of information about the impact of the change created interest in the change and increased active seeking of information. Employees stated that they listened more actively if they were talking about the topics they are interested in. The road show in the second case study also

created interest to know more. During the road show, recipients became aware of the fact that something was coming that affected them. Although recipients in the first two case studies said that they did not use the website very often, the one situation in which they used the website was after interest in the change had been created during the road show. Therefore, an important aim of an event at the early stage could be the creation of awareness that a change is about to come and to create interest in this change so that recipients can actively seek more information about the change. However, the achievement of these follow-up effects requires the availability of communication activities in order to satisfy recipients' desire to learn more about the change.

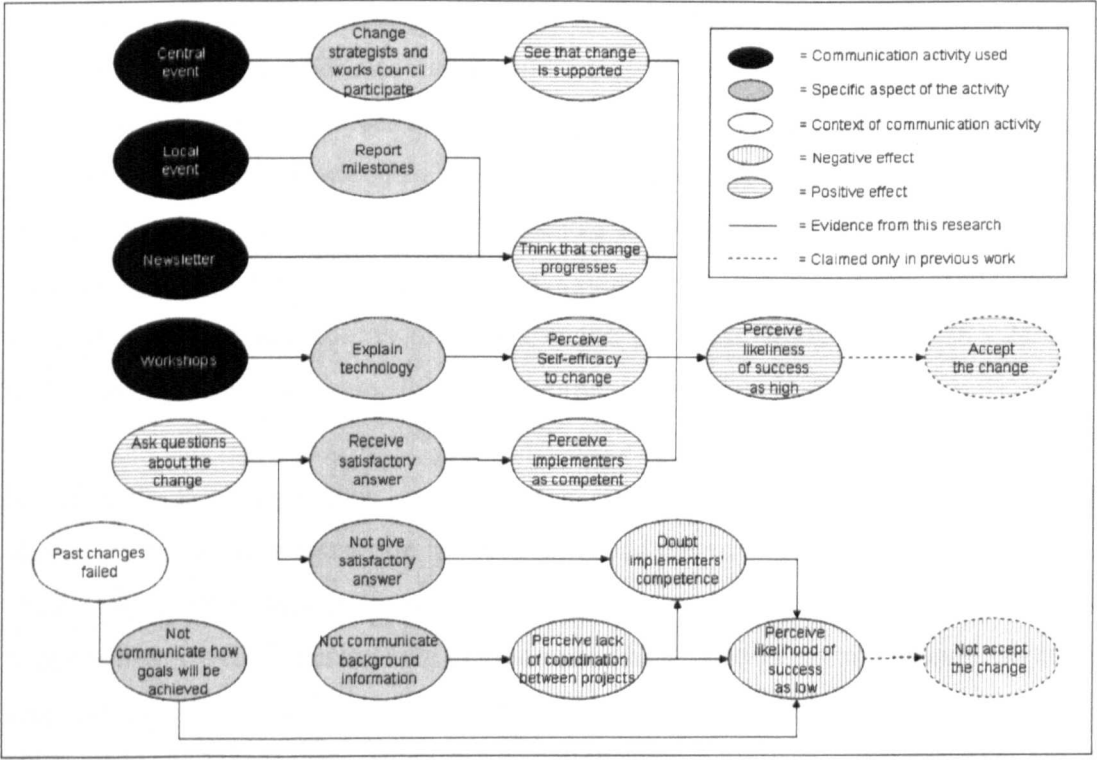
Another positive effect of a high level of interest in the change was that recipients asked more questions about the change. The influence of recipients' interest in the change on the number of questions asked during the road show has been discussed earlier in this chapter (9.3.1). Similarly, recipients in the third case study asked many questions during personal conversations because they were interested in how the change would affect them but they had not received the desired information yet. In order to create positive follow-up effects, the questions had to be answered to recipients' satisfaction, which has also been discussed earlier in this chapter (9.3.1). Furthermore, interest in the change led to the fact that recipients wanted to receive more information. Recipients in the first case study stated that they wanted more information about the options available with regard to the structure of the IT function and they wanted implementers to comment on (confirm or disapprove) the information they had received from informal channels. This willingness to know more is likely to increase attention and, therefore, the accuracy of processing the information (Gavin, 1998; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

A lack of timely information about the impact of the change led to a lack of interest and the lack of interest, in turn, led to an insufficient understanding because recipients did not look for information anymore. Two specific forms of this effect were that recipients stopped reading the newsletter and that they did not access the website anymore, which prevented an increase in their understanding of the change.

9.3.6 Perceived likelihood of success

Kotter (1995) explains that individuals are more likely to be motivated to attempt a change if they have confidence that they can succeed and Armenakis and Harris (2001) argue that, if individuals do not have the confidence to embrace a new way of operating, an organisational change is difficult, at best. This claim is supported by the expectancy theory of motivation (Vroom, 1964) and the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2001), according to which recipients' behaviour is determined by their anticipation of the consequences of the behaviour. The evidence from this case study elaborates on this claim insofar as specific aspects of the communication programme could be identified that directly or indirectly influenced recipients' perceptions of the likelihood of success (Figure 9.7).

Figure 9.7: Effects and follow-up effects around the perceived likelihood of success



The perceived likelihood of success could be increased directly by conveying information about how the goals could be achieved. In the first case study, for example, employees emphasised that those responsible must show a concrete way how it works. As implementers did not provide specific information on how the goals would be

achieved, employees did not believe in the likelihood of success. This expands the claim by Klein (1996) regarding the importance of communicating specific goals in that a negative effect of not communicating specific goals has been identified. Also in the first case study, the lack of understanding of the big picture led to the problem that recipients perceived a lack of coordination between the different projects and concluded that this influenced the likelihood of success of the change initiative.

Another aspect of the change message that can have an influence on the perceived likelihood of success was the relation of the current change to past changes. It is argued that, if past changes failed, information about why the current change is likely to be successful is important because otherwise personal experiences with past changes influence recipients' perception of the risks involved in the current change and, therefore, can reduce the perceived likelihood of success and cause resistance (for example, Armenakis and Harris, 2001; Kotter, 1995; Quirke, 1996). Furthermore, recipients in all three case studies said that communication about the reaching of key milestones is important because they consider it as an indicator that the change is likely to succeed. Whereas employees in the first case study complained that this had not been done, employees in the second case study considered the local events as beneficial because the local implementer briefly presented the status of the change and explained the next steps. Given the existence of local events in the first case study, this aim also could have been achieved. As discussed in the first case study chapter (6.4.2), two employees had even mentioned this opportunity.

Previous work claimed that, in addition to these specific messages, two general characteristics of the message are likely to influence the perceived likelihood of success. Mohr (1997) argues that dissonance between messages from different senior managers suggests high-level dissension and, therefore, fuels speculation that the change might be unsuccessful. Similarly, several authors (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Huy, 1999; Lippitt, 1997; Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996; Stout, 1994) argue that clarity of the message is a prerequisite for creating understanding of the change and for achieving subsequent effects such as reducing resistance and increasing the perceived likelihood of success. However, both claims could neither be confirmed nor contradicted in this research.

Other factors increasing the perceived likelihood of success were related to how the information was conveyed. In the first two case studies, employees perceived the ability to answer their questions as an indicator that implementers know what they were doing. This perceived competence, in turn, led to an increase in the perceived likelihood of success. Not answering recipients' questions had exactly the opposite effect. Recipients perceived implementers as not sufficiently competent and, therefore, they perceived the change as less likely to succeed. Similarly, the fact that those responsible in the first case study did not report about the progress of the change on a regular basis made recipients assume that the change did not proceed, although it did, which reduced the perceived likelihood of success. In the second and third case study, one benefit of the newsletter was that it kept recipients informed about the change although employees admitted that they did not read the newsletter in detail. Instead, employees recognised that it was published and, therefore, thought that the change was progressing. This effect may have been present in the first case study but recipients had not talked about it.

Regarding the choice of the communicator, the claimed importance of the presence of senior management at large events (for example, Mast, 2002a; Quirke, 1996) could be confirmed and expanded. Whereas recipients in all three case studies perceived the participation of change strategists as beneficial, recipients also wanted to know whether the local management and the works council supported the change. The involvement of the works council is considered a sign that the interests of employees are considered. Therefore, the works council should participate in communication activities such as the kick-off event. Recipients also considered the demonstrated support of local managers as important because it shows that the change is based on an understanding of their location and that "it is not one of the things made by, and for, those responsible at the headquarters" (Employee). As some recipients judged the likelihood of success of the change project on the basis of the trustworthiness of change strategists, it might be possible to increase the perceived likeliness of success by conveying information about change strategists. As this is supported by previous work on the bases of trust (Kramer, 1999), the issue is discussed further in the section on trust (9.3.8).

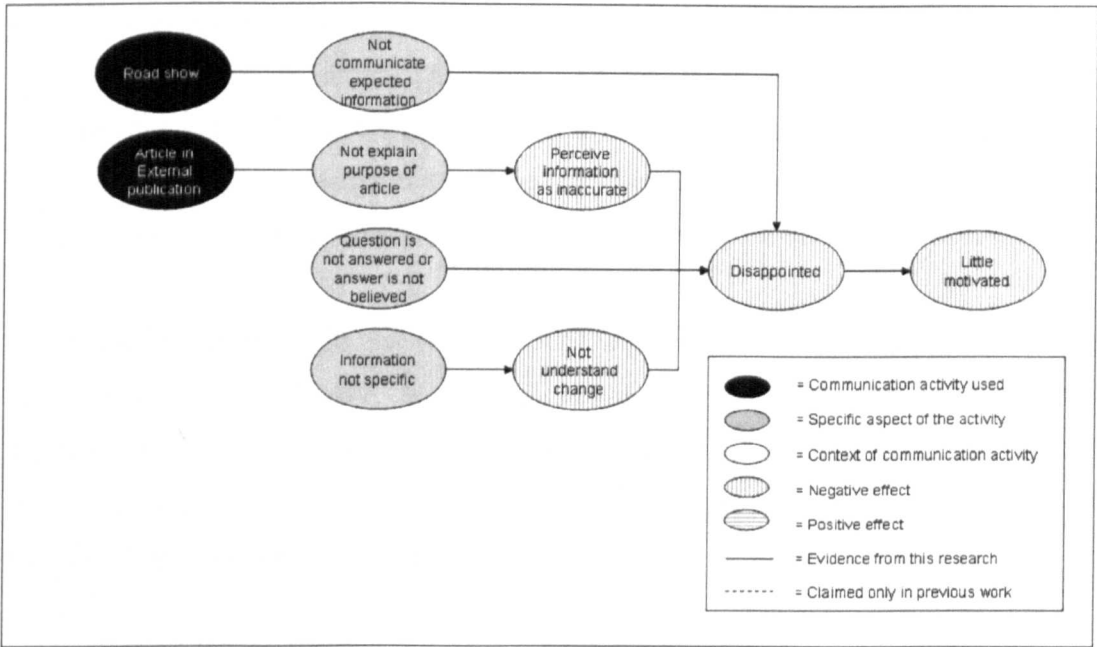
A positive effect of the use of click-dummies during the workshop in the second case study was an increase in recipients' perception of their own ability to change.

Employees recognised that it is certainly possible to learn the use of the new software. According to the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 2001) and the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001), this positive perception of one’s own capability is an important determinant of whether recipients adopt the desired behaviour or not.

9.3.7 Disappointment

Disappointment, it is argued in previous work (Kiefer, 2002; Mast, 2002a; Orgland, 1997), is likely to decrease the likelihood that recipients adopt the desired behaviour. The evidence from this case study supports this claim and shows how disappointment developed in different situations of the communication process (Figure 9.8).

Figure 9.8: Causes and follow-up effects of disappointment



In the first case study, many employees had not understood the need for IT NEW until the road show and, therefore, they expected this issue to be addressed during the road show. As the need for change was not explained, recipients’ expectations were not met and disappointment developed. The same effect was present in the third case study. Recipients said that, at the kick-off event, they finally wanted to be informed about how they would be affected but implementers did not provide the information and,

consequently, recipients became disappointed. Disappointment, in turn, led to low motivation and even frustration. It is likely that in both case studies an explanation of the need for change during the event would have prevented the disappointment. This emphasises the importance of regular process control in order to assess the issues that recipients would like to hear about at the next communication activity.

Another reason for disappointment was when recipients perceived a statement as being inaccurate. A change strategist had said in an article in an external publication that IT employees are not used to working in shifts. Employees were disappointed because, although they did not work in shifts, they had agreed to be available on stand-by on a rotating basis. The manager from the central department had not only not appreciated their effort, he had also said they would not do it. It is very likely that the disappointment could have been prevented if implementers had forwarded the article to all IT employees and explained its purpose. The researcher's experience of other change projects suggests that implementers could have said that such external articles are necessary in order to attract IT talents and to satisfy the information needs of shareholders and that certain generalisations are necessary in these articles in order to meet the audience's expectations. One of the recipients himself accepted that "generalisations probably have to be the case when writing for an external audience".

A relationship found by Glover (2001, p.306), that recipients were disappointed when implementers' answers were 'politicians' answers', could neither be confirmed nor contradicted explicitly. However, her finding is related to the relationships found in the three case studies insofar as not answering a question appropriately is a specific form of not providing the desired information.

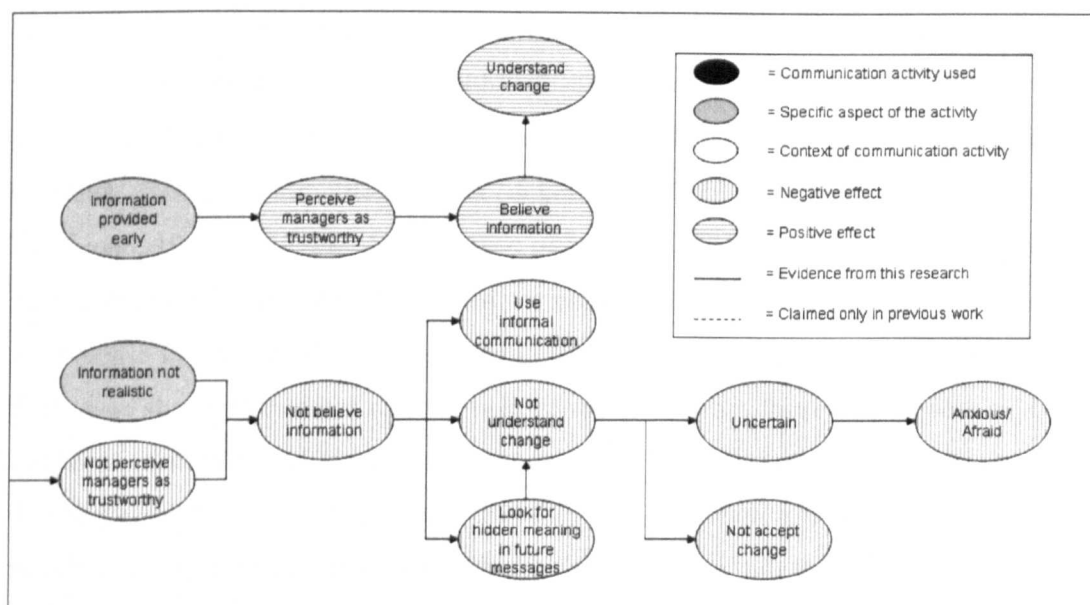
Interestingly, disappointment also developed when the information provided was accurate and desired but when the communication activities used were combined in the wrong way. In the second case study, several recipients said that they would have been disappointed if they had found something about the impact of the change in the newsletter first. They said that they had asked their supervisors several times without receiving an answer and that they expected to receive important information personally. This shows that communication planners need to be careful with how they communicate certain aspects. Informing employees directly, without integrating supervisors, may

have reduced employees' trust in their supervisors which, in turn, may have negatively influenced the effectiveness of group meetings.

9.3.8 Believability and trustworthiness

Previous work (Broadfield, 1997; Harshman and Harshman, 1999; Lippitt, 1997; Lengel and Daft, 1988; Palmer and Fenner, 1999; Quirke, 1996; Smeltzer, 1991) argues that believability of information is a necessary condition for its use and emphasises that ensuring believability is a big challenge because recipients may not trust the communicator, may not believe the message content or may consider the channel as inappropriate. The evidence from the three case studies confirms the influence of all three factors on recipients' perceptions of the believability of the message. Furthermore, several follow-up effects of (not) believing the information conveyed could be identified (Figure 9.9).

Figure 9.9: Reasons for, and effects of, recipients' perceptions of believability



In several situations, believability of the information was the central factor influencing whether a communication activity increased or decreased uncertainty and anxiety. In the second case study, for example, change strategists addressed employees' concerns regarding potential negative effects during the road show HR NEW. They said that there

would neither be an electronification of the HR function nor were employees' jobs at risk. At one location, employees believed this because they trusted their managers. As a result, employees at this location became less uncertain and anxious. At another location, recipients did not believe the information. Employees were convinced that HR NEW was a cost reduction programme and that some things were presented as more positive than they actually were. As a result, employees at this location became even more uncertain and their perception of implementers' trustworthiness decreased further. In the first case study, change strategists also denied rumours regarding layoffs during the road show. As recipients again believed change strategists, the anxiety triggered by recipients' uncertainty regarding potential layoffs was reduced.

In addition to increased uncertainty and anxiety, previous work claims three other negative follow-up effects of a lack of believability of the information. Firstly, conveying unbelievable information is problematic because unbelievable information is unlikely to increase the accuracy of recipients' understanding (Harshman and Harshman, 1999). Secondly, the provision of unbelievable information may lead to the problem that recipients are more likely to interpret future messages for hidden meaning because, having gone through downsizing and outsourcing, recipients ask themselves why management should tell the truth next time (Kotter, 1995; Lippitt, 1997; Quirke, 1996). Thirdly, recipients are likely to use informal communication channels if they perceive formal communication as unbelievable (Glover, 2001; Harshman and Harshman, 1999). Whereas the influence of low believability on the perception of later information could neither be confirmed nor contradicted, empirical evidence confirming an increase in the use of informal communication could be provided, especially in the third case study. Recipients did not believe much of what those responsible said and, therefore, mainly relied on informal communication. For example, implementers said that there would be no layoffs and that they did not know yet who would complete which tasks in order to compensate for the deletion of certain tasks. Recipients did not believe this and they intensively participated in informal communication in order to receive at least some information about what their future would look like. The problem was that many rumours in the third case study were inaccurate and, therefore, recipients' understanding became inaccurate, their anxiety increased and their acceptance of the change decreased.

With regard to the reasons for (not) believing the information provided by those responsible, previous work (Mast, 2002a; Pfannenberger, 2001; Quirke, 1996) argues that information should be realistic and that potential difficulties of the change should not be played down because communicating challenges and negative aspects increases the believability of the message. Similarly, Clampitt *et al.* (2002) suggest that charting both the certainties and uncertainties of a change can increase recipients' perceptions of implementers' trustworthiness. This claim is supported insofar as a lack of realistic information had several negative aspects. In the first case study, for example, recipients on all levels would have desired more realistic information because they did not believe the overly optimistic information provided by implementers. They thought that risks are involved in any change project. Similarly, employees in the second case study stated that those responsible should have presented more realistic information and that the information became much less believable because only positive aspects were presented. An effect that could not be supported was that the effect of communicating realistic information is mediated by the nature of the trust-relationship between implementers and recipients. Quirke (1996) and Glover (2001) found that a lack of trust made recipients suspect that the intention of implementers' focus on negative information was to create a climate of insecurity so that the employees would be more compliant with implementers' wishes.

The trustworthiness of the communicator, argues previous work (Broadfield, 1997; Klein, 1996; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), is another important criterion because the credibility of the message is directly related to the credibility of the source of the message. Horbury (1996) found that a lack of trust in the organisation's management team resulted in the failure of the change message to be received and Smeltzer and Zener (1992) found that, the more recipients trusted communicators, the more they believed in the purpose and rationale of the change. Recipients' perceptions of change strategists' trustworthiness was also an important factor in the three case studies.

Recipients in the first two case studies said that, when a manager in their organisation denied a rumour regarding layoffs, then the statement could be considered as true. This shows that at least a certain amount of trustworthiness is attached to managers because of their role as a manager. This can be referred to as role-based trust (Kramer, 1999). To the extent that people within an organisation have confidence in the fact that role

occupancy signals both an intention to fulfil obligations and competence in carrying them out, individuals can adopt a sort of presumptive trust based upon knowledge of role relations (Mishra, 1996; Webb, 1996; Weick, 1993). The role of the works council can also be important in change communication. The findings from the first two case studies suggest that one way to compensate for the lack of trustworthiness of those responsible is the integration of the works council into communication activities. The works council was considered as trustworthy because it was perceived as having the same interests as employees because it has been elected to represent the interests of employees.

Choosing communicators who belong to the same group as recipients is another way to increase the trustworthiness of communicators. This can be referred to as category-based trust (Kramer, 1999). Whereas this has not been addressed explicitly, employees in the second case study perceived the kick-off event and the local events as helpful because part of the information was presented by local employees whom the other employees considered as trustworthy. Employees could not imagine why their colleagues should say that the system was good if they were not convinced because they would not benefit from saying it. Derieth (1995) warns, however, that the positive effect will be reduced if the intention to influence is perceived as too obvious because those presenting the information will then be perceived as less trustworthy.

Another determinant of trustworthiness is the personal history of interaction between implementers and recipients. This can be referred to as history-based trust (Kramer, 1999) and it caused problems in the third case study. Recipients did not believe certain information forwarded by change strategists in the third case study because change strategists had not provided detailed information in a past change although they had had the information. Therefore, recipients did not believe change strategists' statements that details are not available. Instead, they concluded that change strategists knew the details but did not want to tell them because some negative impact would result. This further increased recipients' anxiety. Whereas these negative effects of past interaction between change strategists and recipients apparently have not been discussed in previous work, authors such as Mayer *et al.* (1995) or Quirke (1996) suggest the creation of possibilities for interaction between change strategists and recipients early in the change process because direct contact between change strategists and recipients creates

familiarity and familiarity creates trust. Similarly, Saunders and Thornhill (2003) found that face-to-face communication between senior managers and recipients led to feelings of trust.

In the absence of personal interaction between change strategists and recipients, knowledge about change strategists and implementers may also increase perceptions of trustworthiness. Palmer and Fenner (1999) argue that it may be necessary to promote the credibility of the source of information and previous work on the role of trust in organisations (Kramer, 1999; Zand, 1997) argues that the trustworthiness of a manager is influenced by employees' knowledge about the manager. These claims are supported by the findings from the three case studies insofar as some recipients judged the likelihood of success of the change project on the basis of the trustworthiness of change strategists. Therefore, it might be possible to increase the perceived likelihood of success by conveying information about change strategists.

9.3.9 Additional effects

Two more positive and two more negative emotions have been found. One positive emotion was enthusiasm. Two employees reported that they had become enthusiastic when they could practice with the click-dummies of the new recruiting software during the preparation workshop. The importance of this is supported by Mohr and Woehe (1998) who emphasise that multipliers need to create enthusiasm for the change. The other positive emotion was satisfaction. Employees in the second case study were satisfied when their questions were answered during events and in the third case study implementers were satisfied with the first newsletter because employees got important information quickly. The opposite of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, was also mentioned by few employees. In the second case study, one employee reported that they were dissatisfied with the HR NEW newsletter because it did not provide the desired information and one employee was dissatisfied with the small workgroups used during the multiplier workshop because they did not add value from his perspective. The second negative emotion was anger. One recipient in the first case study stated that he had become angry after implementers had not presented specific information for the third communication activity in a row.

Two more cognitive reactions that have been mentioned by recipients are concentration and the perception that their interests are considered. Involvement of the works council in large events was interpreted positively by recipients because they considered it as an indicator that their interests were considered. This was particularly beneficial at the early stage of the communication process when implementers could not explain the impact of the change although employees had already heard that a change was about to come and wanted to know how they would be affected. Involvement of the works council prevented employees from assuming a negative impact of the change *per se*. The second effect on the cognitive level, which was mentioned by a group leader and few employees, was a lack of concentration. Previous work (for example, Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002) claimed that cognitive distractions are a main reason why organisational effectiveness is reduced during the change process. This could be supported insofar as, in the third case study, recipients' anxiety regarding layoffs led to the problem that employees felt distracted from their work and had difficulties focusing on their regular tasks.

An additional effect on the behavioural level was that some employees completed unnecessary tasks on the basis of an inaccurate understanding of the change. Recipients considered the information received as final decisions and, therefore, they started working on the basis of the information. But the tasks that they completed were not necessary because the change was not implemented as expected by employees. This additional work could have been avoided if implementers had made clear that the information conveyed was the status of planning and not the final decision.

Whereas the communication activities responsible for these emotions, cognitions and behaviour could be identified, the follow-up effects could not be explored. With regard to enthusiasm, for example, recipients said that the use of the click-dummies created enthusiasm, increased their understanding and reduced their uncertainty but a link between these three effects could not be made. But given the influence of, for example, misunderstandings on concentration and efficiency, the role of these effects should be explored further.

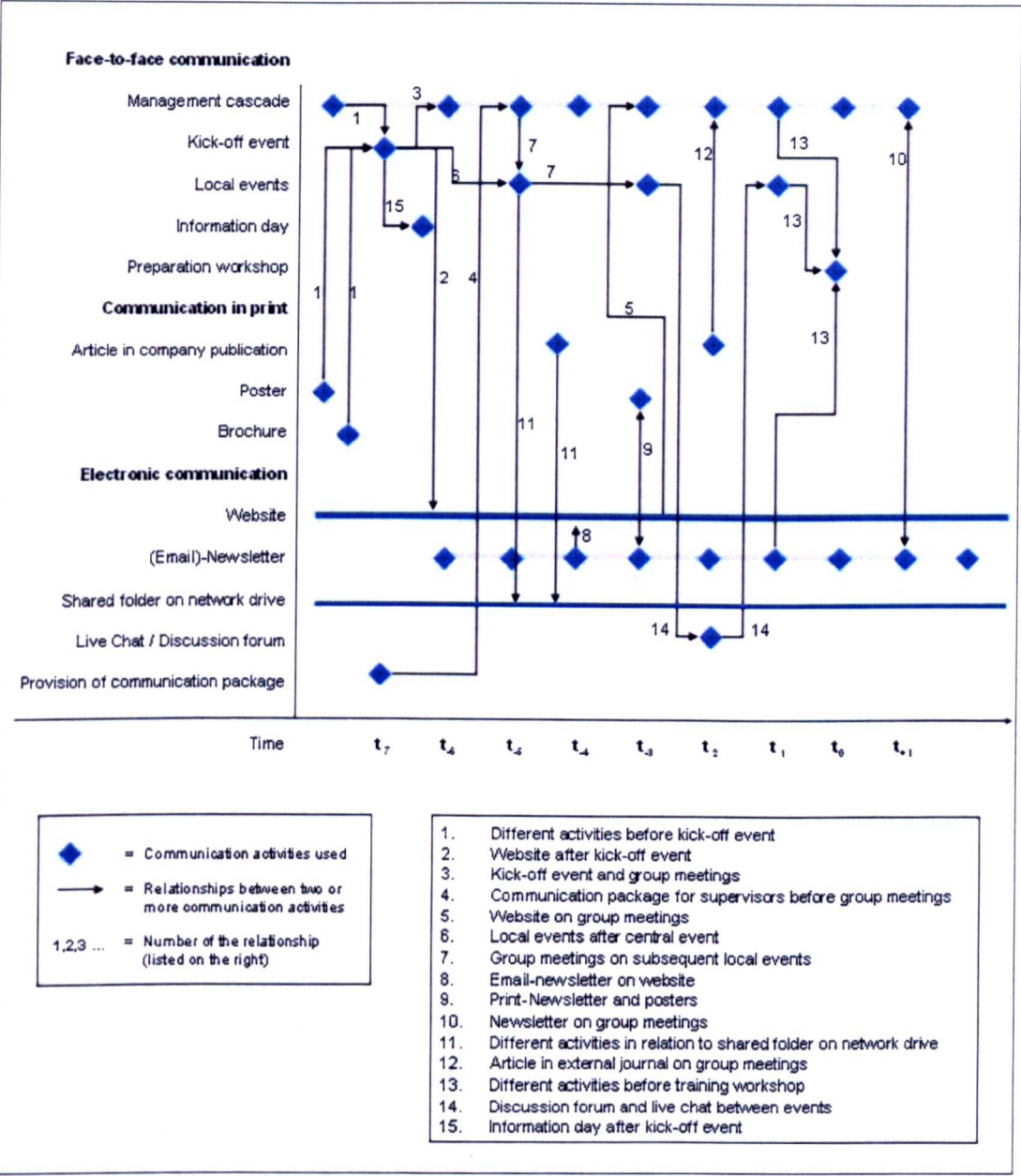
9.4 Interdependence between communication activities

In the previous sections, the central effects and the communication activities responsible for these effects have been discussed. At the end of each case study chapter, the findings regarding the appropriateness of different communication activities for achieving certain effects have been summarised. Therefore, the effects of certain communication activities have been analysed from the perspective of individual communication activities and from the perspective of the effects. This section summarises the interdependence between different communication activities in causing certain effects, thereby answering the third research question. As interdependencies apparently have been widely neglected in previous work, with the exception of few practitioner-oriented publications (for example, Pfannenberger, 2003; Schnoeller and Tasch, 2001), this section includes less references to previous work than other sections.

Figure 9.10 illustrates the interdependence between different communication activities, with each arrow indicating the relationship between two individual communication activities. The different relationships are numbered in order to link the discussion below to the illustration. Although certain communication activities such as the central event or the newsletter were designed differently in the three case studies, a comparison of the communication activities across case studies is still possible because the activities were generic in nature. When necessary, differences between activities across case studies were highlighted.

Although the relationships basically occurred in the sequence illustrated in Figure 9.10, this was not always the case for three reasons. Firstly, not all communication activities were used in all three case studies. Secondly, some relationships are displayed further to the right than they originally occurred in order to increase the clarity of the illustration. Thirdly, the illustration was not meant to be a process model in a narrow sense. The intention was not to suggest which communication activity to use when but to illustrate how the effects of one communication activity influenced the effects of another communication activity.

Figure 9.10: Interdependence of communication activities



A large event organised by central implementers took place once in each case study. A benefit of all large events was that recipients' questions were answered by change strategists and/or managers from their location. It has been shown that a potential limitation of a large event – that employees may be hesitant to ask questions in front of a large audience (Mast, 2002a) – can be compensated for when recipients have a certain level of understanding of the change before the event so that they can think of questions in advance (Relationship 1). This confirms a claim by Klein (1996) who suggested using brochures and flyers before the kick-off event. The benefit of communication

activities before the large event was particularly evident in the first case study. As the event did not take place at the very beginning of the communication process, employees at all levels had received information about the change via the website, during a local event, via the management cascade and through a presentation that had been forwarded by their supervisor. The use of such a variety of communication activities is impossible, of course, when the event is intended to be the kick-off event. It is possible, however, to use at least two different communication activities. In the second case study, recipients could pull information about the change from the website and a short presentation was held on each level of the management cascade about four weeks prior to the kick-off event. In the third case study, a newsletter providing an overview of the change was distributed to recipients and a poster was available which illustrated the timeline and those responsible. The evidence suggests that it does not necessarily influence the effectiveness of the communication programme whether the event is prepared by means of presentations, email-newsletter or poster.

In addition to the preparation of the kick-off event, the evidence from the three case studies has demonstrated that a kick-off event also needs to be followed up. This is necessary because the kick-off events raised more questions than it could answer and because recipients became interested in the change and wanted to learn more. Another reason was that recipients wanted to be informed about the change continuously, which supports the claim frequently made by previous work (for example, Klein, 1996). The evidence from the first two case studies suggests that a website of the change project is particularly appropriate to follow-up the kick-off event (Relationship 2). Whereas the website in both case studies was relatively ineffective, compared to the potential that previous work (for example, Hoffmann, 2001) claimed for electronic communication activities, the potential of a website for playing an important supportive role, which was claimed by Bernecker and Reiss (2003), has still become visible. After the kick-off event in the second case study, for example, employees accessed the website in order to satisfy their desire to learn more about the change. Furthermore, the use of the website encouraged discussion and asking of questions during group meetings (Relationship 5).

On the basis of the claims made in the literature with regard to the importance of face-to-face communication (for example, Glover, 2001; Kitchen and Daly, 2002), it could be expected that a website would not be sufficient to follow up a kick-off event. Group

meetings were necessary in all three case studies for several reasons (Relationship 3). Recipients in all three case studies expected their supervisors to forward information about the change during group meetings and they asked their supervisors questions about the change. The reason for this was that the direct supervisor was the preferred communicator in all three case studies, confirming the findings of previous empirical studies (for example, Arndt and Deekeling, 2000).

A limitation of group meetings in all three case studies was the lack of knowledge about the change on supervisors' part. Previous work (Marlow and O'Connor-Wilson, 1997; Quirke, 1996; Townley, 1994) argues that providing support for communicators in the management cascade is necessary in order to increase the effectiveness of group meetings. The benefit of this could be confirmed (Relationship 4). In the second case study, for example, implementers sent a presentation about the key aspects of the change to senior line managers at each location which increased these managers' understanding of the change. Furthermore, implementers attached a guideline on how to inform the employees at their location about the change. The presentation and guideline together provided the support that managers needed to convey accurate information about the change to their employees.

In the first two case studies, the central events were followed up by local events which took place for the whole department that was affected by the change (Relationship 6). Recipients in the second case study perceived the local events as effective because implementers interpreted the information conveyed by change strategists through the lens of the location and thereby supplemented the information recipients had received during the large event. Whereas the road show had outlined the broad direction of the change, the local events provided topical information about how far the change had progressed and what the next steps would be, and whereas the road show had presented the constituent projects of the change initiative, one of these projects was explained in depth during each local event. Therefore, the combination of central and local events increased recipients' understanding of the change and reduced their uncertainty.

In the first case study, on the contrary, the departmental meetings were considered as hardly necessary because recipients received the desired information during group meetings and they got to know change strategists during the large event. As recipients

had already received the information during group meetings, they perceived a redundancy of communication activities and, therefore, they were less attentive at the next communication activity (Relationship 7). Whereas previous work on learning had emphasised the importance of attention (for example, Gavin, 1998), the interesting finding is that earlier communication activities can negatively influence the level of attention at later communication activities.

In the third case study, an information day took place four days after the central event. The intention of implementers was to provide an opportunity for recipients to ask the questions that had arisen during or after the kick-off event (Relationship 15). This intention was in line with Quirke (1996) who considers such follow-up activities as potentially effective. However, recipients did not expect that their questions would be answered because their questions had not been answered four days earlier and, therefore, they did not attend the information day.

The email-newsletters in the first two case studies, though less effective in themselves, contributed to the effectiveness of the communication programme in that they increased the use of the websites (Relationship 8). As the newsletter was published on the project website, with the email only including a link to the page on which the newsletter was displayed, employees had to access the website in order to read the newsletter. The majority of employees stated that, although they rarely accessed the website, they read more when they were on the website anyway in order to read the newsletter.

The newsletter in the third case study was not sent via email but in print. It was combined with posters that were displayed on the blackboard in the social areas of the distribution centre (Relationship 9). The posters supplemented the newsletters insofar as they were updated at different points in time so that recipients received topical information about the change in short intervals, which contributed to the achievement of 'continuous communication' (Young and Post, 1993). Furthermore, the use of posters and newsletters led to the benefit that recipients received key aspects of the change repeatedly, which increased the accuracy of recipients' understanding of the change and thereby supported a claim by Klein (1996).

An unexpected relationship became evident in the second case study where employees emphasised that a newsletter is less appropriate to explain critical issues. They said they “would be disappointed if [they] would find something about the new structure of the HR function in the newsletter” (Employee) because they had asked their supervisors several times without receiving an answer (Relationship 10). In this situation, informing employees directly without integrating supervisors might have reduced employees’ perceptions of their supervisors’ trustworthiness and this, in turn, might have negatively influenced the effectiveness of group meetings because of the importance of the supervisor as communicator (Arndt and Deekeling, 2000; Larkin and Larkin, 1996). Another relationship between newsletter and group meetings is that group leaders may want to use the information published in the newsletter as a basis for discussing the change with their employees during group meetings. In the second case study, the newsletter increased the effectiveness of group meetings because group leaders based the part of the discussion during group meetings on what had been officially communicated by the project team. The benefit was that employees considered the information they had received directly from those responsible as accurate whereas they were not certain with regard to some of the information they had received from their supervisors.

In contrast to websites (Bernecker and Reiß, 2003) and publicly accessible project documentation (Englert and Dielacher, 1996), the role of shared folders on the network drive apparently had not been addressed in previous work on change communication. The benefit of a shared folder is that it allows recipients to read important information repeatedly and to learn about the change at their own speed (Carnall, 2003; Doppler and Lauterburg, 2002). Therefore, a shared folder on the network drive is appropriate to follow-up several communication activities (Relationship 11).

In the first case study, an article about the change was published in the company publication. The article could not be used directly to prepare IT employees for the introduction of the change because the article had to be written for a broader audience (all employees of the case study organisation). The article was intended to inform all employees about developments in the IT function. However, implementers could have suggested that supervisors use the fact that an article had been published in order to discuss the change during group meetings (Relationship 12).

The majority of the communication activities used focused on the creation of awareness, understanding and acceptance of the change. This could be expected because they took place before the introduction of the change and, therefore, the desired behaviour could not be activated yet. In the second and third case study, however, one workshop shortly before the introduction of the change included aspects of communication and aspects of training. This was only possible because earlier communication activities had provided employees with a certain level of understanding of the change (Relationship 13). Without previous communication activities, the main aims of the workshop in the second case study – deepening recipients’ understanding of specific aspects of the change and explaining what recipients will have to learn – could not have been achieved. The main limitation of the team development workshop in the third case study was that recipients perceived an overload of information because a large amount of information had to be conveyed during the workshop. If recipients’ understanding at the beginning of the team development workshop had been higher, the amount of information conveyed at the workshop could have been reduced and the perceived overload of information could have been avoided.

In addition to the relationships discussed so far, which have become evident in this research, Zerfass and Fietkau (1997) argue that discussion forums and live chats are important because they increase exchange between implementers and recipients (Relationship 14). On the one hand, this could have been an interesting option in the first two case studies because websites were available and all recipients had access to the intranet. On the other hand, it is uncertain whether recipients would have engaged in dialogue via an electronic communication activity, given the fact that they hardly used the opportunity to read information in the newsletter or on the website.

9.5 Role of multipliers in different communication activities

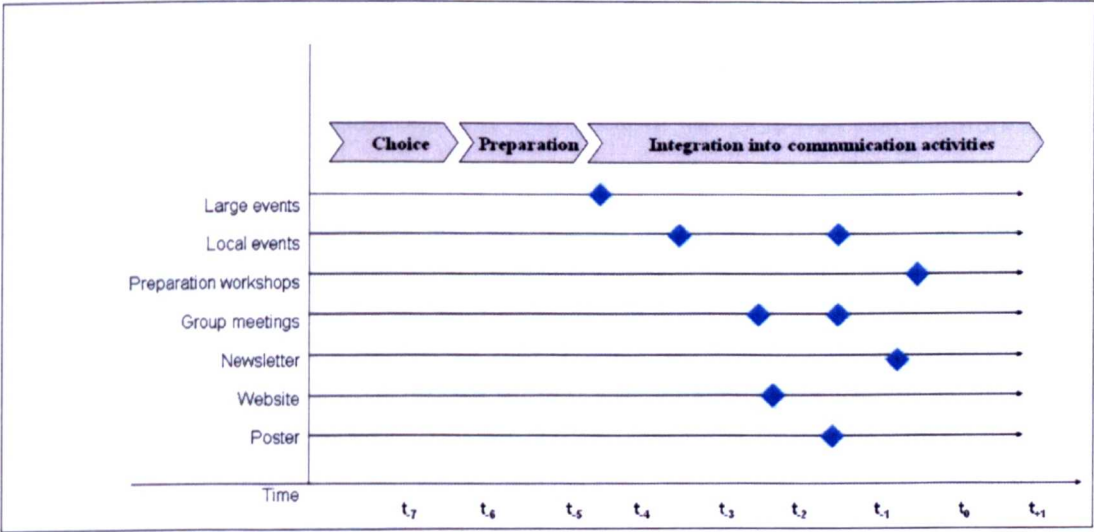
In the second and third case study, the communication programme included the use of multipliers. The multiplier approach was not an additional communication activity but an approach to communication, with multipliers being integrated into different

communication activities in order to support the communication about the change. As the multiplier approach was effective in the second case study and less effective in the third case study, barriers as well as success factors of the multiplier approach could be inferred. Whereas positive effects of using opinion leaders had been discussed in previous work (for example, Moore, 1996; Palmer and Fenner, 1999), the question of how to integrate different opinion leaders into formal communication activities was mainly addressed in practice-oriented publications (for example, Mohr and Woehe, 1998; Umsetzungsberatung, 2003). This section briefly compares the multiplier approach, as used in the two case studies, with other concepts such as change champions or change agents, and then summarises the role that multipliers played, or could have played, in different communication activities.

It has been argued in the case study chapters that the use of multipliers is comparatively novel in the context of change communication. The demonstration of the validity of this claim requires the distinction of the multiplier approach, as used in the two case studies, from related concepts that have been discussed in the literature. Particularly interesting is a distinction regarding the degree to which certain employees are chosen and prepared to play the role as opposed to employees who have influenced others' opinions before. Multipliers were given a formal role in the communication process and they were prepared for this role, although they had not necessarily done this before. 'Opinion leaders' (Derieth, 1995; Rogers, 1995) are different from multipliers because, as Rogers (1995) argues, opinion leaders are individuals who influence others' opinion but they usually do so by the nature of their relationships to others and not because they are given this role for the purpose of the communication programme. 'Block busters' (Carnall, 2003) are similar to multipliers insofar as they are expected to bust emotional and cognitive blocks, which are considered a main reason for resistance. But block busters are different from multipliers insofar as Carnall (2003) does not write about actively preparing employees and preparing them to become block busters for a specific change. 'Apostles', a term used by Moore (1996), are similar to block busters. An idea which is related to multipliers and tailored to the context of change communication is the use of a strategic communication team (Barrett, 2002) which consists of employees from different backgrounds who are expected to plan the communication and to communicate with the rest of the organisation. However, according to Barrett (2002), the focus of the strategic communication team is more on the planning of the

communication than on actual participation in different communication activities. The term used most widely in the literature, ‘change agent’ (for example, Mohr, 1997; Ottaway, 1987), is inappropriate to clarify whether the use of multipliers has been discussed in previous work because any individual involved in the change process can be considered a change agent. Ottaway (1987), for example, distinguished between those planning the change, those implementing the change and those affected by the change. Taking these definitions into account, it can be said that the use of multipliers in a narrow sense had received little attention whereas the role of different individuals influencing the implementation of a change has been discussed widely. The focus in this section, however, is on employees who have been chosen and prepared for playing an active role in formal communication activities in order to increase the effectiveness of the communication programme. The communication activities into which multipliers were, or could have been, integrated are illustrated in Figure 9.11.

Figure 9.11: Role of multipliers in different communication activities



In the second case study, multipliers explained the project RECRUIT during the local events and, therefore, could tailor the explanation to the situation at the respective location. The benefit of this is supported by previous work (Mohr, 1997; Palmer and Fenner, 1999) on opinion leaders, according to which opinion leaders can greatly influence the other recipients’ reactions to the change because opinion leaders are expected to evaluate information in the context of group norms. Multipliers also could have participated in the kick-off event but they had not been prepared yet. Therefore,

other local employees who had some understanding of specific aspects of the change explained these aspects during the road show. The benefit of the participation of these local employees has demonstrated that it is possible to increase the effectiveness of a large event by involving local employees such as multipliers. This is supported by Mast (2002a) who argues that the integration of opinion leaders increases the believability of a message because opinion leaders have a high reputation. In line with their role during central and local events, multipliers also used their experience during the RECRUIT workshops in order to convince the other recipients that the new process is beneficial, that initial scepticism is normal and that the new technology can be learned.

In the third case study, multipliers did not participate in the large event but they were expected to forward information to the colleagues in their groups. Enough time for presentations or short talks was reserved during the group meetings. At an early stage, the use of multipliers could have compensated for the failure to create awareness of the change during the presentations of the due diligence. Group meetings only, without the participation of multipliers, were not sufficient because group leaders did not have enough knowledge about FOS in order to explain the change to their employees and to answer their employees' questions. The limitation in this case was that multipliers had not fully understood the change themselves and, therefore, they could not increase the other recipients' understanding of the change. However, if multipliers had been sufficiently prepared, they even could have attended group meetings and answered the other employees' questions throughout the whole communication process. This would have created the variety of possibilities for dialogue which authors such as Mast (2002a) and Young and Post (1993) have claimed to be important.

Also in the third case study, a negative influence of the use of multipliers became evident with regard to the distribution of the newsletter. Implementers had expected multipliers to distribute the newsletters to their colleagues but, due to a lack of preparation, multipliers did not function as intended. Consequently, the newsletter did not reach all employees as expected and employees were not encouraged to read the newsletter, which reduced the positive effect of the newsletter on recipients' understanding of the change.

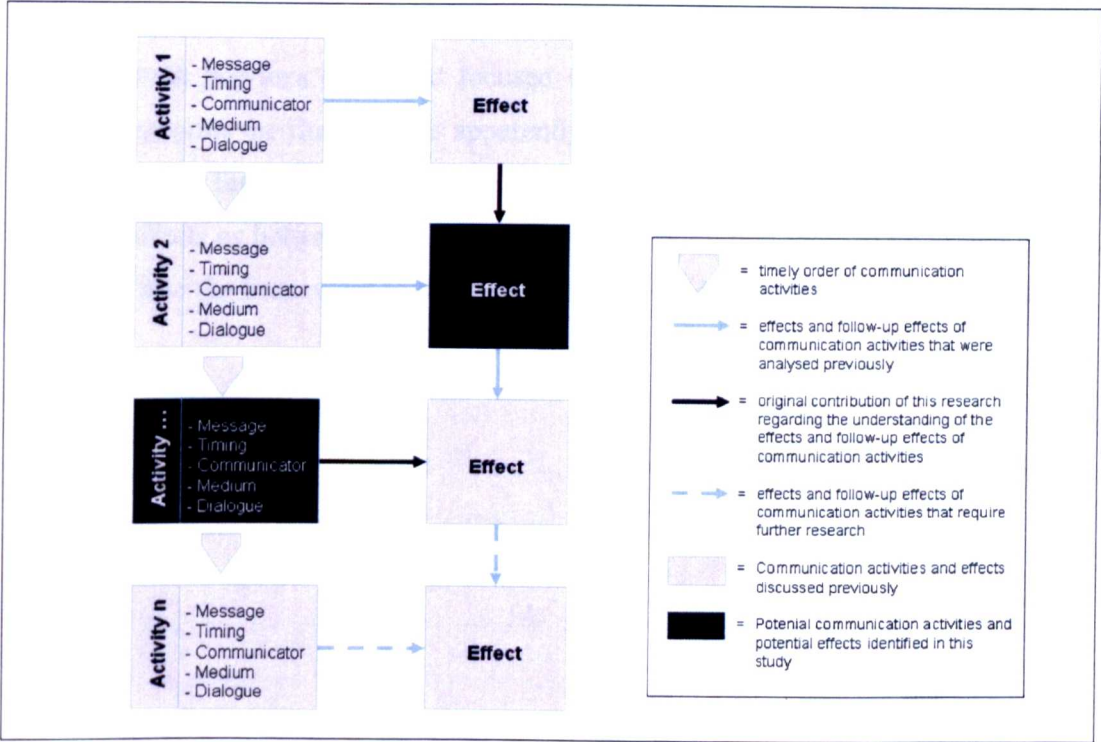
The personal experience of the researcher in change projects other than those analysed as part of the research presented in this thesis suggests that, in addition to the presence of multipliers at face-to-face communication activities, it is also possible to benefit from multipliers by integrating quotes and pictures of them on a poster, website or newsletter. As discussed above, the likely effect of this is an increase in the believability of the information conveyed. As these assumptions are not supported by research evidence, the effect of combining multipliers with print or electronic communication activities needs to be explored further.

Given the benefits of the multiplier approach, communication planners should evaluate of the use of multipliers for their change process and, if appropriate, try to integrate multipliers into central and local communication activities. It may be the case, however, that this approach is appropriate for experienced change managers and project managers only.

9.6 Summary

The overall research objective was to increase understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme. In the case study chapters, the issue has been discussed from the perspective of the communication activities used. In this chapter, the issue has been looked at from the perspective of the effects and from the perspective of the interdependence between different communication activities. The findings put the required flesh to the claim that communication programmes need to be coordinated (Blakstad and Cooper, 1995; MasterMedia, 2000). The essence of the findings is illustrated in Figure 9.1 (Relationships between effects) and Figure 9.10 (Interdependence of communication activities). The link between specific aspects of the communication programme and specific effects has been illustrated in several illustrations throughout the case study chapters and in this chapter. Figure 9.12 illustrates that the gap in the literature has been addressed by explaining the effects of the communication activities used, the interdependence between these communication activities and the relationships between the different effects.

Figure 9.12: Understanding of phenomenon after integration of this research’s findings



The central cause and effect-relationships that have been found improved the framework developed earlier in this thesis in three ways. Firstly, more specific effects are known which need to be considered when analysing the communication process in the context of organisational change (black box on the right). Secondly, more relationships between specific effects are known, which also need to be considered in future research (vertical black arrow). Thirdly, the influence of specific aspects of different communication activities is better understood. In particular, the communication activities used in the three case studies could be analysed in depth and in the context of the other communication activities (black box on the left). Therefore, it becomes easier to predict the likely effects of a chosen communication activity (horizontal black arrow). With regard to organisational practice, the relationships found are appropriate to infer suggestions on how to design effective communication programmes, including the definition of appropriate communication aims as well as the choice and design of communication activities that are likely to achieve the desired aims.

The three dotted lines at the bottom of Figure 9.12 indicate that, despite the contribution of this research, a gap remains. This is due to the fact that the intention of this research

was an in-depth exploration of the effects of few activities as opposed to an analysis of a larger number of activities in different contexts in less depth. This was necessary because much previous work had focused on specific aspects and a framework into which to integrate the findings was apparently missing. However, the findings provide a sound basis for further research on the phenomenon. Additional relationships between different effects or between certain communication activities and certain effects can be integrated into the framework to further increase the understanding of the phenomenon.

10 Conclusions

Lewin (1947) argues that nothing is as practical as a good theory. Poole *et al.* (2000) elaborate that good theory is practical because it provides a systematic way to understand complex phenomena in the real world. One reason for conducting this research was the absence of detailed discussions in the academic literature on communication in the context of organisational change. This made practitioners rely on the suggestions in the practice-oriented literature, many of which lack a theoretical foundation and/or are not supported by empirical research evidence. This is problematic because, as Poole *et al.* (2000) continue, the best theory is only as good as its evidence. Therefore, the research presented in this thesis aimed at providing empirical research evidence on the actual effects of communication activities used in the context of organisational change and, thereby, expand the existing theory. As explained in the first chapter, the research set out to increase the understanding of the factors influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme. Through an analysis of the communication process in three case studies this study sought to ...

- Explore recipients' perceptions of the effects of the communication activities used
- Identify the aspects of the communication activities responsible for the effects
- Assess the interplay of different communication activities in causing the effects
- Explore the relationships between different effects

The literature on organisational change and communication as well as work from the fields of psychology and sociology was used to identify possible issues and to provide a background to the study. The primary intention was, however, to be open to whatever was to be found during the fieldwork. Chapters 6 to 8 have described and analysed in detail the causes and effects in the communication process of one change project each, while Chapter 9 has drawn these findings together and discussed the central cause and effect-relationships. This final chapter summarises the findings and their implications, makes recommendations for further research and presents my personal reflections on the process.

10.1 Findings and implications

The contributions of this research include a structured presentation of the published claims and findings of others as well as the provision of empirical research evidence and a discussion of this evidence in the light of previous work. The groups of findings are:

- Dimensions along which to define a change
- Framework for research on change communication
- Effects of different communication activities
- Aspects of the communication activities responsible for the effects
- Interdependence between communication activities
- Role of multipliers in different communication activities
- Relationships between effects

The first contribution of this thesis is the detailed and structured discussion of appropriate criteria for defining the nature of a change and the nature of the approach to change in Chapter 2. This is important because, without a clear definition of the type of change that is analysed, it is difficult if not impossible for other researchers to judge the relevance of one's findings for their research.

The foundation for achieving the research aims has been set at the very early stage of the research process by reviewing different bodies of literature. Given the intention to conduct research on communication in the context of organisational change, reading the literature on communication and organisational change was mandatory. Because of my interest in the determinants of human behaviour, combined with my belief in the benefits of interdisciplinary research, I also read the relevant literature in the fields of psychology and sociology. Concepts such as attitude and trust and theories such as the theory of planned behaviour and the expectancy theory of motivation contributed to the quality of the framework for research on the effect of communication activities which has been developed in Chapter 3. As much previous work referred to few concepts from other fields only, if at all, the integration of findings from different fields and the development of the framework can be considered a contribution to academic knowledge in itself. In the published work of others, a framework for research apparently was not

available before this thesis was almost completed (Elving, 2005). Elving developed a conceptual framework for the study of communication during organisational change. His model includes several propositions regarding the influence of different aspects of communication – such as information, feelings of belonging to a community and feelings of uncertainty – on resistance to change. The underlying assumption is that reduced resistance will affect the effectiveness of the change effort. The claims put forward by Elving can be supported by the empirical research evidence from the three case studies. Whereas Elving focused on the development of a conceptual model including few key factors, the focus of this research was on the exploration of the role that a broad variety of factors play in influencing the effectiveness of a communication programme.

Empirical evidence on the effects of the communication activities used in the three case studies has been provided and the reasons for the effects have been explained. Each case study in itself, therefore, contributed to the understanding of the success factors of a communication programme for planned change. By comparing the findings across case studies and with previous work, central cause-and-effect relationships could be identified. The effects found basically reflect the effects discussed in previous work. Awareness, understanding and acceptance played a central role but effects such as uncertainty, anxiety, interest in the change, active seeking of information and use of informal communication were also crucial. Furthermore, additional effects such as unnecessary workload or enthusiasm were identified. Regarding the specific aspects responsible for the effects, many claims put forward in previous work could be confirmed. For example, timely information prevented the use of informal channels, answering questions reduced uncertainty and integration of opinion leaders increased the believability of the message. A detailed discussion of the effects found and of the specific aspects of the communication activities responsible for the effects has been undertaken in Chapter 9. More original, however, are the findings related to the relationships between different effects and to the interdependencies between different communication activities. Therefore, the analysis in this thesis focused on these relationships. Much other work, in contrast, has continued to provide evidence on the importance of communication (for example, Change Management Learning Centre, 2005) but did not provide robust recommendations or empirical research evidence regarding the actual or likely effects of certain communication activities.

The findings related to the interdependencies between different communication activities can be summarised as follows. Communication face-to-face played the central role in all three case studies. The evidence suggests that there needs to be a series of face-to-face activities between the announcement of the change and its introduction, which can consist of different activities such as large events, small events, management cascade or individual conversations. This series of face-to-face activities needs to be supported by online communication and print communication. A website of the change project is appropriate to satisfy recipients' need to pull information and a newsletter is the ideal instrument to communicate regularly, thereby compensating for the episodic occurrence of face-to-face channels. The benefit of print channels is their permanent presence and the possibility to read flyers and brochures whenever and wherever recipients want to. This combination of activities is also important with regard to the creation of dialogue. Whereas the series of face-to-face activities provides regular possibilities for dialogue, print and electronic communication activities provide the information that can be discussed, or asked about, during the face-to-face activities.

A separate group of findings, which is related to the interdependencies between different communication activities, regarded the use of multipliers. Multipliers were expected to support the implementation of the change. Through their participation in different communication activities they contributed to the effectiveness of these activities. They explained certain aspects of the change at central and local events, they talked about their personal experiences during training workshops and they forward information about the change during regular group meetings. Furthermore, multipliers could have been integrated into additional communication activities – including print communication such as posters or electronic communication such as discussion forums. Two limitations of the multiplier approach – lack of preparation and use at an inappropriate point in time – have also become visible. But taking everything into account, the use of multipliers is an approach which should be evaluated for any planned change.

The interdependencies found between the different communication activities could be explained by the relationships found between the different effects. As claimed by previous work, the influence of awareness on understanding and the influence of

understanding on acceptance were important. This is relevant with regard to the choice of communication activities because, if the first communication activity does not create awareness that a change is about to come, recipients are less attentive at the second communication activity. When the following communication activities were 'pull'-channels, which means that recipients needed to access them actively, the activities were ineffective because recipients did not access them because they were not aware of the change. Relationships between other effects such as interest in the change and active information seeking support this interdependence because recipients are unlikely to access a 'pull'-channel if they are not interested to learn more. With regard to recipients emotions it is important to understand that uncertainty is a main trigger of anxiety which, in turn, can lead to low levels of motivation and concentration. This suggests that face-to-face communication activities which specifically aim at reducing recipients' uncertainty and anxiety may be needed later in the communication process. In contrast to anxiety, emotions such as disappointment or anger are not considered typical reactions during times of change. These emotions developed in response to the communication activities used, for example, when implementers did not convey the expected information or when questions were not answered. As these effects were not expected, communication activities to address the emotions were not planned and the emotions negatively influenced the effectiveness of the following communication activity. A detailed discussion of the relationships between different effects has been undertaken in Section 9.3 in particular.

A general implication of the findings for future research is the emphasis on the importance of considering interdependencies between communication activities and between effects even when analysing individual communication activities or individual effects. Furthermore, the findings also have implications for organisational practice. The discussion of the different cause-and-effect relationships and of the interdependence between different communication activities is appropriate to infer suggestions on how to design an effective communication programme. In particular, it has become evident that an understanding of the relationships between different effects is a prerequisite for the choice and design of communication activities.

10.2 Recommendations for further research

Despite the findings summarised above, further research is necessary to increase the understanding of the phenomenon. The recommendations put forward in this section are based on three considerations. Firstly, this thesis set out to develop a tentative theory based on the findings from three in-depth case studies. Further research is required to test the theory. Secondly, interesting causes and effects became visible throughout the research which could not be investigated in depth because the time and resources available required a focus on the central cause-and-effect relationships. Thirdly, clear boundaries had to be put around the research in order to keep the complexity manageable. However, findings were also generated with regard to issues outside these boundaries – such as the process of planning the communication programmes – and these issues would be interesting to follow up.

A good variety of recipients (organisational level, gender, way affected by the change, location, profession) and projects (changes in structure, processes and technologies) has been included in this study and no direct evidence of bias was detected. However, the relatively small number of represented viewpoints and the fact that only one organisation has been analysed, should temper my confidence in the conclusions and the theoretical development based on these data. Furthermore, only the understanding of the effects of the communication activities used in these three cases could be increased whereas the effect of communication activities which were not present, such as a discussion forum in the intranet, could not be analysed. Therefore, further in-depth investigations of the communication activities used in specific change projects are necessary which take into account the specifics of the change as well as the context of the communication programme.

Although the focus of this research was on the interdependencies between different effects and between different communication activities, interesting insight with regard to specific aspects of the communication programme (such as the importance of encouraging recipients' to engage in dialogue) and with regard to specific effects (such as implementers' trustworthiness) could still be generated. As the focus in the discussion in Chapter 9 was on the relationships found and neither on individual effects

nor on individual aspects of the communication programme responsible for the effects, these details deserve further research.

Several specific effects deserve further research. The importance of trust in the context of change communication, which is claimed in previous work (for example, Holt *et al.*, 2003; Mueller, 2004), could be confirmed. Given the variety of reasons for trust which have been put forward in the literature (for example, Kramer, 1999) and have been confirmed in this research, further research on the role of trust in the context of change communication is important. It is important to know how specific aspects of the communication programme influence recipients' perceptions of implementers' trustworthiness and on how recipients' perceptions of trustworthiness cause other effects such as use of informal communication or increased acceptance of the change. Similarly, further research on how specific aspects of the communication programme influence recipients' perceptions of justice and on how these perceptions lead to other effects such as positive emotions would be beneficial. Whereas perceived justice did not play an important role in this research, the concept is important to understand because recent publications (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003; De Cremer, 2004) found that perceptions of justice were explained at least partly in terms of the perceived trustworthiness. Finally, the role of emotions in general and the influence of specific emotions on acceptance and behaviour need to be investigated further. The lack of understanding of the role of emotions in the context of organisational change has been criticised by several researchers (for example, Kiefer, 2002; Carr, 2001). Among other things, such research could contribute to an increased understanding of the benefits of publishing pictures of an event on the website, distributing give-aways or using learning projects at workshops. Ideally, these effects are analysed in the context of the other effects.

Several individual communication activities also deserve further research. Innovative communication channels, in particular, are not well researched. Zerfass and Fietkau (1997), for example, argue that discussion forums and live chats are appropriate to increase dialogue between two face-to-face communication activities. But the factors that should be considered in the design of both channels are apparently little researched. Whereas traditional communication channels such as large events or company publications are reasonably well researched, it seems as if more innovative components

of face-to-face communication – such as business theatre, simulations or learning projects – are not well understood. Learning projects were used in the second case study in order to increase acceptance among multipliers and in the third case study in order to explain details to employees. In both case studies, the majority of employees liked the learning projects but were not able to explain the actual effect on understanding and acceptance. Therefore, further research would be helpful which explores the effects of the use of learning projects and identifies the factors that should be considered in their design. Finally, the management cascade also deserves further research because it has mainly been researched in contexts other than organisational change (for example, Klöfer, 2003). The foci of further research should be on how to increase the effectiveness of dialogue via the management cascade and on how to increase supervisor's willingness and capability to communicate with their employees about the change. Ideally, these individual communication activities are not analysed in isolation but in the context of the other communication activities.

The evidence from this research provided barriers and success factors when using a multiplier approach. Further research is required, however, with regard to the role that multipliers can play in different communication activities. Whereas this research explored the role that multipliers can play in different communication activities such as large events or the newsletter, further research could further explore the factors that need to be considered when integrating multipliers into these activities and further research could also explore the role that multipliers can play in additional communication activities such as the management cascade.

Despite the contributions of this research and of previous work, further research is necessary in order to increase understanding of how informal communication works in the context of planned change. Whereas the in-depth exploration of recipients' perceptions conducted in this research has provided insight into how formal communication and informal communication interact in causing certain effects, additional research could further increase understanding of how informal communication can be influenced in a way that contributes to achieving the aims of the formal communication programme.

As explained in the introductory chapter, the focus in this thesis is on the process of communication between the announcement and the introduction of the change whereas communication after the introduction of the change was not addressed. Therefore, future research could expand the framework developed in this study to communication after the introduction of the change. Furthermore, the focus of this thesis was on the effects of the communication activities used whereas the process of planning the communication programme was not addressed. However, it became evident that the process of planning the communication can influence the design of the communication programme and, therefore, its effect. Given the variety of barriers to an effective planning process (such as neglecting key stakeholders, lack of analysis of preferred communication activities, lack of definition of target groups), the factors influencing the quality of the process of planning a communication programme need to be researched further.

10.3 Reflection on the process

In addition to becoming more knowledgeable in the field of change communication, I have also learned a great deal about what it is like to conduct research. First of all, it is difficult to find a topic for research. Back in April 2001, I wanted to complete five different research projects, my supervisors said, but it was important to narrow the topic down in order to be able to 'dig' in sufficient depth. This way I could make an original contribution to academic knowledge. Once the topic had been chosen and access to the case study organisation had been negotiated, the main journey began.

Several experiences could be expected on the basis of the preparation undergone before starting the research. Those critical to the research findings have been outlined in detail earlier in this thesis (Chapter 4). As the quality of the data depended on the willingness of the respondents to be open and honest, it was important to recognise that some respondents had more aims than those agreed upon when beginning an interview or a meeting. For example, some respondents wanted to promote a particular point of view, air a grievance or influence the choice of future communication activities. These 'hidden' agenda had to be accepted, if not appreciated, because human beings

participated in the study, some of whom were very emotional because of the changes that lay ahead. It was important to consider these aims when interpreting statements during the interview or meeting and when analysing data later in the process.

The nature of a PhD thesis requires that it should be the work of an individual researcher and, as such, its nature and findings are inevitably the result of my interests, preferences and pre-understanding. Choices of design and methods, of issues to address and people to talk to, were made on the basis of my judgements. As the primary instrument of research, the results presented in this thesis are my interpretations of both the data and the link to existing understanding. However, in order to ensure credibility and consistency of the findings, I constantly reflected on potential biases, using different types of data as well as the literature. The use of the software package *ATLAS/ti* supported this reflection, as well the analysis process as a whole, in that it allowed searches in the data from different perspectives (such as single interview, within case or across cases) and for different purposes (such as identification of categories, specification of categories or comparison across cases). It is a tool that I can recommend to any researcher using qualitative data and even to practitioners analysing different views of certain topics.

After the completion of the first three case studies, additional case studies could have been conducted because, the more empirical data is available on the effects of different communication activities in different contexts, the more robust are the conclusions. However, this was not the aim of this research. The aim of this research was an in-depth analysis of the effects of different communication activities, focusing on the interaction of different communication activities in causing certain effects and on the relationships between different effects. The importance of understanding the relationships between different effects for the choice and design of communication activities could only be explored because of this in-depth analysis. Given this focus and given the resources and time available, a fourth case study was not considered as necessary. Instead, additional time and effort was invested in analysing the relationships between different effects across cases and in inferring the appropriateness of certain communication activities for achieving certain effects and follow-up effects.

Now that the journey is nearly completed, it needs to be said that the findings from this study – an analysis of three change projects only – need to be transferred carefully to other situations. The very strength of research which recognises the value of the uniqueness of situations and experiences necessitates caution in any suggestions that findings apply elsewhere.

10.4 Final thoughts

I have learned a great deal during the completion of this thesis about communication in the context of organisational change, about the academic world, about the business world and about myself. I feel like I have become a more fully formed human being and, hopefully, I have also emerged as a more competent researcher than I began. As could have been anticipated on the basis of the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990), the price of learning was an increasing realisation of how much more there is to know. There is a pragmatic point, however, at which a line must be drawn before the next stage can begin. In the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1996, p.208):

A work of this kind is never really finished. One only calls it finished because one has done all that is possible in the time and the circumstances available.

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Appendix A: Introductory letter ¹

Eike Wagner
Oxford Brookes University
Business School



15 March 2004

Communication about the project „Future-oriented Service“ (FOS)

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to talk with you about the project „Future-oriented Service“. I am a researcher attached to the Oxford Brookes University Business School and I am interested in how you perceived the communication before the start of the first team.

The expected benefit of the interview is to learn from past experiences in order to optimise future communication about this and other projects.

Ten interviews will be conducted in your team and the interviews will last between 30 and 60 minutes.

The topics that will be covered are as follows:

- Your understanding of the project FOS
- Communication activities you got the information from
- Reasons for the helpfulness of these activities
- Role of the other activities
- Additional information that you seek about the change
- Special characteristics of your department, division and company
- Influence of these characteristics on your perception of the communication programme
- Suggestions on how to do it differently

I guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. No one will see the typed interview except you and me. No source of information will be identified and no quote from the interview will be used without your express permission. Once all interviews are conducted, I will write a report about the project. I will present the most important findings to those responsible for the project and a chapter about this project will be included in my PhD but neither the name of the project nor of your organisation will be mentioned in the thesis.

If you do have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Eike Wagner

Department 123
Change Management

Phone 012 / 34 56 78 90
Mobile 0123 / 45 67 89 0
Email eike.wagner@casestudyorganisation.de

¹ The letter was sent well before the interview. Afterwards a short phone call or personal conversation took place in order to seek informed consent. The specific procedure was slightly different in each case study, depending on how interviewees were approached.

Appendix B: Ethical review form of the Business School

ETHICAL REVIEW FORM FOR BUSINESS SCHOOL DISSERTATIONS & RESEARCH PROJECTS

All students are expected to observe the highest ethical standards when undertaking research as part of their course within the School of Business. The School expects all students undertaking research to do so with the highest standards of care, consideration and respect for research participants.

The following checklist is intended to help you reflect on possible issues of ethical concern arising from your proposed programme of research. If having completed the checklist you feel that there are ethical issues on which you require advice you should raise the matter with your module leader, course manager, or dissertation supervisor. All students are expected to attach the completed checklist to their dissertation on submission.

Ethical Review Checklist

- Working Title of Proposed Research?
The role of communication during change implementation
- Broad Research Objectives?
 - *Access factors that increase effectiveness of communication*
 - *Sank reasons why this is the case*
- Who are your proposed Research Participants?
Employees affected by organisational change
- How are you going to gather data from these participants?
 - *Interviews*
 - *Observation of meetings*
- In your view does your proposed research raise any ethical issues? Eg:
 - deception of participants
 - financial inducements
 - possible psychological stress
 - access to confidential information *X*
 - any other special circumstances

If yes, how will you address them?

Not report single employees comments or any attitude to those who let me conduct the interviews, but rather agree deliver communication model afterwards.

Name: Wagner, Eike Signature: E. Wagner

Course of Study: PhD Business
part-time

Appendix C: List of codes for Case Study IT NEW²

File:	PhD Change Communication 1 (Case IT NEW)
Edited by:	EXW
Date:	07/12/04
Filter:	All codes

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY

Article in company publication
Article in trade magazine
Departmental meeting
Email
Email-Newsletter
Management cascade
Presentation
Road show
Shared folder on network drive
Website

MESSAGE CONTENT

Big picture
Final decisions
Goal of change
Hint at other sources of information
Individual impact of change
List of abbreviations
Need for change
Past changes
Process of change

MESSAGE CHARACTERISTICS

Clear
Consistency across activities
Of personal interest
Open communication
Realistic
Specific

COMMUNICATOR

Change strategist
Group leader
HR Department

² Supercodes are in capitals. Codes are normal. The codes have been sorted manually in order to increase understanding.

TIMING

Continuous
Early

CONTEXT

Informal communication
Personal experience/knowledge
Past changes

EFFECT

Accept change
Afraid
Anxious
Ask questions
Aware of change
Believe information
Concentrated
Disappointed
Expect new information at next activity
Feel safe
Inefficient
Information overload
Interested in change
Look for hidden meaning
Motivated
Oriented
Perceive communication as coordinated
Perceive information as inaccurate
Perceive lack of competence of implementers
Perceive likelihood of success
Perceive own interests as considered
See that change is supported
Seek information actively
Perceive managers as trustworthy
Uncertain
Understand change
Use informal communication

OTHER

Combination of communication activities
Dialogue
Formal communication
Participation

Appendix D: List of codes for Case Study HR NEW³

File:	PhD Change Communication 2 (Case HR NEW)
Edited by:	EXW
Date:	07/12/04
Filter:	All codes

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY

Email-Newsletter
Local events
Management cascade
Multipliers
RECRUIT workshop
Road show
Website

MESSAGE CONTENT

Benefit of the change
Big Picture
Final decisions
Goal of change
Hint at other Sources of Information
Impact of the change
Importance of employees
Need for change
Other changes
Process of Change

MESSAGE CHARACTERISTICS

Clarity
Consistency of information
Realistic information
Specific Information

COMMUNICATOR

Change strategist
Communication team
Multiplier
Project leader
Senior manager
Works council

³ Supercodes are in capitals. Codes are normal. The codes have been sorted manually in order to increase understanding.

TIMING

Continuously
Early

CONTEXT

Communication climate
Informal communication
Other changes
Personal experience

EFFECT

Accept change
Anxious
Ask questions
Attach priority to change
Aware of change
Enthusiastic
Interested in change
Oriented
Perceive ability to learn technology
Perceive dishonesty of managers
Perceive implementers as competent
Perceive communication as coordinated
Perceive inaccuracy of information
Perceive information as not relevant
Perceive likelihood of success
Uncertainty
Understand change
Satisfied
See that change is supported
See that change progresses
Seek information actively
Use informal communication

OTHER

Combination of Communication Activities
Dialogue
Influence of HR NEW Communication
Introduction postponed
Participation
Push Pull
Video

Appendix E: List of codes for Case Study FOS ⁴

File: PhD Change Communication 3 (Case FOS)
Edited by: EXW
Date: 07/12/04
Filter: All codes

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY

Individual conversation
Information day
Kick-off event
Management cascade
Multipliers
Newsletter
Poster
Presentation
Team development workshop

MESSAGE CONTENT

Benefit of the change
Big Picture
Goal of change
Impact of the change
Need for change
Process of Change

MESSAGE CHARACTERISTICS

Clarity
Realistic information
Specific Information

COMMUNICATOR

Change strategist
Group leader
Multiplier
Project leader
Project team member
Unit leader
Works council

⁴ Supercodes are in capitels. Codes are normal. The codes have been sorted manually in order to increase understanding.

TIMING

Continuously
Early

CONTEXT

Culture of organisation
Previous change

EFFECT

Accept change
Afraid
Ask questions
Aware of change
Believe information
Disappointed
Feel comfortable
Information overload
Interested in change
Motivated
Oriented
Perceive managers as trustworthy
Perceive likelihood of success
Uncertainty
Understand change
See that change progresses
Seek information actively
Use informal communication

Appendix F: Contents of research database for Case Study IT NEW

Dialogues with implementers

Type of contact / Participant(s)	Date	Purpose / Topic
Discussion with communication planner A and change manager A	24-01-2002	Introduction to IT Migration
Discussion with communication planner C and project manager A	13-02-2002	Introduction to IT Migration
Work meeting with communication planner A and change manager B	03-03-2002	Questionnaire for IT Community
Work meeting with communication planner C	28-03-2002	Communication along ECC
Discussion with communication planner C and director of Plant IT	28-03-2002	Introduction to IT Migration at plant
Phone call with communication planner C	29-03-2002	Article in CIO
Phone call with communication planner B	04-04-2002	IT Intranet
Work Meeting with communication planner D, B and E	04-04-2002	Responsibility of different departments
Discussion with Communication Planner C and project manager B	08-04-2002	Overview MITIS and access to data
Discussion with change manager C	29-04-2002	Overview Communication at IT Migration
Discussion with all project managers	06-09-2002	Presentation of findings / Definition of next steps
Work meeting with communication planner C	10-09-2002	Ideas for new communication concept
Discussion with change manager C	07-11-2002	During IT Community event

Participant observation of implementers' meetings

Name of meeting	Date
Observation of first meeting of working committee <i>Communication for IT Migration</i>	15-01-2002
Observation of second meeting of working committee <i>Communication for IT Migration</i>	21-02-2002
Observation of third meeting of working committee <i>Communication for IT Migration</i>	08-03-2002
Observation of first meeting of working committee <i>IT Communication</i>	06-02-2002
Observation of second meeting of working committee <i>IT Communication</i>	22-03-2002
Observation of third meeting of working committee <i>IT Communication</i>	06-05-2002
Observation of fourth meeting of working committee <i>IT Communication</i>	18-06-2002
Observation of fifth meeting of working committee <i>IT Communication</i>	13-08-2002

Semi-structured interviews with recipients

Name	Date	Type of Data
Interview with director of Plant IT	11-07-2002	Notes, Presentations
Interview with group leader A	23-07-2002	Notes
Interview with group leader B	25-07-2002	Notes, Drawing
Interview with group leader C	31-07-2002	Notes
Interview with employee D	25-07-2002	Notes
Interview with employee H	29-07-2002	Notes
Interview with employee L	29-07-2002	Notes
Interview with employee E	31-07-2002	Notes
Interview with employee F	01-08-2002	Notes
Interview with employee G	01-08-2002	Notes
Interview with employee I	05-08-2002	Notes

Short informal interviews with recipients

Name	Date	Topic (occasion)
Short interview with employee K	28-03-2002	Communication about part of the project (scheduled)
Meeting with director of Plant IT, group leader A, group Leader B and group leader C	03-04-2002	Introduction to IT Migration at the plant (scheduled)
Ad-hoc interview with director of Plant IT and employee K	23-04-2002	Overview communication at Plant Munich (after work meeting)
Ad-hoc interview with employee J	26-04-2002	Status quo of IT Migration at another plant (after road show)
Short interview with director of Plant IT	08-05-2002	Preparation of second departmental meeting (scheduled)
Ad-hoc interview with director of Plant IT	25-06-2002	Preparation of interviews, 25 minutes, Notes
Ad-hoc interview with group leader B	17-07-2002	After departmental meeting
Ad-hoc interview with employee D	17-07-2002	After departmental meeting
Ad-hoc interview with group leader C and employee F	22-07-2002	During visit to department
Ad-hoc interview with group leader A	23-07-2002	Before interview with another group leader
Ad-hoc interview with employee E	25-08-2002	During lunch
Ad-hoc interview with employee D	07-11-2002	During IT Community event

Non-participant observation of communication activities

Name of meeting	Date	Type of data
Observation of road show	26-04-2002	Notes, presentations held
Observation of second departmental meeting	16-05-2002	Notes, presentations held, minutes
Observation of third departmental meeting	17-07-2002	Notes, presentations held, minutes

Secondary data

MITIS Newsletter, May 2002

MITIS Newsletter, June 2002

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MITIS Newsletter, August 2002

MITIS Newsletter, September 2002

MITIS Website, Accessed several times during the case study

MITAP Website, Accessed several times during the case study

Web-trends MITIS, Usage Statistics of MITIS website, Access on 1 August 2002

Web-trends MITAP, Usage Statistics of MITAP website, Access on 1 August 2002

Anon. (2002) IT Solutions for the Future, *Company Newspaper*, May, pp.8-9

Flyer *Invitation to road show IT NEW*, distributed before road show IT NEW

Brochure *Road show IT NEW*, distributed after the road show IT NEW

Brochure *MITIS Change process*, Available at IT Infrastructure Department for all employees

Brochure *IT, Customer and Car*, Available at IT Infrastructure Department for all employees

New IT structure, Presentation held on 31 May 2001 for IT managers, Available for recipients at MITIS website, Access on 2 April 2002

New IT structure, Presentation held on 18 September 2001 for IT managers, Available for recipients at MITIS website, Access on 2 April 2002

MITIS Project assignment, Available at MITIS website

MITIS Project assignment for Plant IT, Available at MITIS website

MITIS HR Questions and Answers, Available at MITIS website

MITIS FAQ, Available at MITIS website

MITIS Approaches to communication, 06-09-2002, presentation held by internal communication consultant for MITIS project managers, forwarded by communication planner C

MITIS Change process, presentation Available at MITIS website

MITIS Status report, 06-02-2002, presentation Available at MITIS website

MITIS Status report, 16-04-2002, presentation Available at MITIS website

MITIS Status report, 13-06-2002, presentation Available at MITIS website

MITIS Overview, 11-03-2002, presentation held by project manager B for contacts in technology division

MITIS Overview, 24-04-2002, presentation held at MITIS workshop

New IT Applications Department, 20/21-03-2002, presentation held at Communication Market

New IT Applications Department, presentation Available at MITAP website

ECC Overview, presentation forwarded by communication planner C

ECC Manual, presentation forwarded by communication planner C

ECC Lessons learned, presentation forwarded by communication planner C

Corporate goals, Presentation Available at corporate website, Access on 10-06-2002

Employee directory of the case study organisation, Access at different points in time

Personnel statistics of the case study organisation, Available at HR department, forwarded by colleague on 10-06-2002

Director of IT Infrastructure Department (2002) IT and cars, *International IT Magazine*, March, pp.66-68 (article title and journal name changed to preserve confidentiality)

Appendix G: Contents of research database for Case Study HR NEW

Dialogues with implementers

Type of contact / Participant(s)	Date	Purpose / Topic
Discussion with project member B	10-01-2002	Introduction to project and past communication activities
Discussion with project member C	14-01-2002	Introduction to project and past communication activities
Phone call with project member G	19-02-2002	Ideas for discussion forum in intranet
Discussion with change manager I	26-08-2002	Discussion of my PhD / Prerequisite for an effective rollout
Discussion with programme leader, leader project RECRUIT and change manager B	27-08-2002	First ideas for face-to-face events
Short discussion with change manager F	11-09-2002	Cooperation between plants / during break of workshop
Short discussion with change manager G	11-09-2002	General use of intranet in plant / during break of workshop
Email by HR manager A	08-10-2002	Need for more communication
Email by project member A	24-10-2002	Peripheral view of HR NEW
Short discussion with change manager F	26-10-2002	Plant-specific communication / during lunch
Short discussion with HR manager A	07-11-2002	Communication activities before and after roadshow
Discussion with project members A, D, E and F	18-11-2002	Estimation of peripheral view of HR NEW
Email by change manager E	02-04-2003	Feedback on mini-workshops
Short discussion with change manager G	05-04-2003	Feedback on second multiplier workshop
Email by change manager A	14-05-2003	Status quo of IAS rollout
Email by project member D	02-06-2003	Status quo of programme HR NEW

Participant observation of implementers' meetings

Name of meeting	Date	Type of data
Participant observation of first <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	21-01-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of second <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	25-02-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of third <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	25-03-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of fourth <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	22-04-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of fifth <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	03-06-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of first meeting of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	14-07-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of sixth <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	30-07-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant-Observation of planning meeting for IBS rollout	08-08-2002	Notes, presentations held
Participant-Observation of planning meeting for event HR NEW in dialogue	08-08-2002	Notes
Participant-Observation of planning meeting for IBS rollout	12-08-2002	Notes, presentations held
Participant observation of second meeting of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	11-09-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of seventh <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	30-09-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of third meeting of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	11-10-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of eighth <i>Change Management Leader Circle</i>	28-10-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of fourth meeting of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	04-11-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of fifth meeting of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	06-12-2002	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of sixth meeting of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	25-02-2003	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of seventh meeting of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	16-05-2003	Notes, minutes, presentations held
Participant observation of one-day workshop of working committee <i>Change Management / Communication for HR NEW</i>	20-05-2003	Notes, workshop documentation

Semi-structured interviews with recipients

Name	Date	Type of Data
Interview with multiplier A	05-06-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier B	22-05-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier C	18-06-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier D	23-05-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier E	13-06-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier F	04-06-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier G	13-06-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier H	05-06-2003	Notes
Interview with multiplier I	23-05-2003	Notes
Interview with employee B	23-09-2003	Notes
Interview with employee C	23-09-2003	Notes
Interview with employee D	31-07-2003	Notes
Interview with employee E	21-08-2003	Notes
Interview with employee F	26-08-2003	Notes
Interview with employee G	31-07-2003	Notes
Interview with employee H	30-07-2003	Notes

Short informal interviews with recipients

Name	Date	Topic / Occasion
Ad-hoc interview with employee A	27-08-2002	HR NEW Newsletter / During break of meeting
Ad-hoc interview with employee I	10-09-2002	Role of central recruiting function / During lunch
Ad-hoc interview with employee J	20-05-2003	Usability of HR NEW Intranet / During break of meeting
Ad-hoc interview with employee K	23-05-2003	Communication activities at third location / Scheduled
Email by multiplier E	17-06-2003	HR NEW Newsletter / I asked for a statement and the research participant suggested to send an email

Non-participant observation of communication activities

Name of meeting	Date	Type of data
Observation of event for all HR managers	15-13-2002	Notes, presentations held
Observation of road show HR NEW at first location	12-12-2002	Notes, presentations held
Observation of road show HR NEW at second location	21-01-2003	Notes, presentations held
Observation of road show HR NEW at third location	23-01-2003	Notes, presentations held
Observation of first multiplier workshop	16/17-01-2003	Notes, presentations held, documentation, summary
Observation of second multiplier workshop	24/25-03-2003	Notes, presentations held, documentation, summary

Secondary data

HR NEW Newsletter July 2002

HR NEW Newsletter August 2002

HR NEW Newsletter October 2002

HR NEW Newsletter March 2003

HR NEW Newsletter May 2003

HR NEW Newsletter July 2003

HR NEW website, Several sites accessed several times during the case study

HR NEW website, Feedback Forum, Statements downloaded 14 February 2002

HR NEW Management Information, 28 July 2003, sent via email to all managers in the case study organisation

RECRUIT Toolkit, Available from 24 March 2003

Documentation of first multiplier workshop, 22 January 2003

Documentation of second multiplier workshop, 31 March 2003

Results of work groups of second multiplier workshop, Presentation compiled by external change management consultants and sent to implementers on 1 April 2003

Summary of first multiplier workshop, Presentation compiled by external change management consultants and sent to implementers on 20 January 2003

Summary of second multiplier workshop, Presentation compiled by external change management consultants and sent to implementers on 4 April 2003

Lessons Learned from multiplier workshops, Presentation held for Board of HR Directors, 7 April 2003

Change initiative HR NEW, Presentation held at event for all HR managers, 15 March 2002

Project RECRUIT, Presentation held for Board of HR Directors, 17 September 2002

Project RECRUIT, Presentation held at first multiplier workshop, 16 January 2003

Project RECRUIT, Presentation held at meeting of all HR employees of of fourth location, 7 April 2003

Project RECRUIT, Presentation held at management information meeting at fourth location, 23 May 2003

RECRUIT rollout process, Presentation held at first multiplier workshop, 16 January 2003

RECRUIT standard presentation, provided by central implementers for communication about RECRUIT, Available from 1 April 2003

Introduction of HR NEW, Speech held by change strategist at the beginning of road show HR NEW, 12 December 2002

HR NEW Milestone plan, 10 February 2003, PowerPoint slide forwarded by project manager

Overview HR NEW Communication, 22 November 2002, Presentation compiled by communication planner for project managers

Overview RECRUIT Communication, 24 March 2003, Presentation compiled by communication planner for project managers

Overview HR NEW Communication for fourth location, Presentation forwarded by multiplier, 7 April 2003

Overview HR NEW Communication for third location, Presentation forwarded by multiplier, 15 May 2003

Overview HR NEW Communication for first location, Presentation forwarded by multiplier, 28 May 2003

Overview HR NEW Communication for second location, Presentation forwarded by multiplier, 29 May 2003

HR NEW Visions, objectives and approach, Presentation held for group of managers, 14 January 2003

HR NEW Visions, objectives and approach, Presentation held at International HR Conference, 18 November 2002

HR NEW Visions, objectives and approach, Presentation at HR IT meeting, 19 March 2003

Concept HR NEW in Dialogue

HR NEW website usage statistics, provided monthly by external IT provider

Budget HR NEW Communication, PowerPoint Slide, 12 December 2003

Feedback of local implementers on RECRUIUT workshops, Presentation compiled by central implementers, 25 May 2003

Masters student (2003) *Thesis on change communication in case study organisation*, Unpublished masters thesis, XY University, (title of thesis and name of university changed to preserve confidentiality)

Appendix H: Contents of research database for Case Study FOS

Dialogue with implementers

Type of contact / Participant(s)	Date	Purpose / Topic
Dialogue with change manager A	04-06-2003	Personal view of role of communication in change projects
Dialogue with change managers B and C	21-07-2003	Overview of change project
Dialogue with change managers B and C	28-07-2003	Details of the change management activities planned
Email from change manager B	22-09-2003	Flyer No.2
Dialogue with change managers B and C	17-11-2003	Planning process and communication activities / Received internal documents on communication activities
Email from change manager B	18-11-2004	Received internal documents on planning process
Phone call with change manager B	19-11-2004	Clarification of issues before presentation in meeting of project team
Dialogue with project leader and change manager B	20-11-2003	Discussion of additional communication activities available
Phone call with change manager B	21-11-2003	Coordination of next steps
Dialogue with change manager C	28-11-2003	Answering open questions
Dialogue with external consultant	01-12-2003	Answering open questions
Dialogue with change manager B	08-03-2004	Role of flyer/newsletter
Dialogue with project manager D	09-03-2004	Personal view of change and communication activities used
Dialogue with project manager C	19-03-2004	Personal view of change and communication activities used
Dialogue with project manager B	21-03-2004	Personal view of change and communication activities used
Work meeting with change manager B	02-04-2004	Design of communication programmes
2 phone calls with change manager B	14-04-2004	Preparation of meeting with project leader
Dialogue with project leader	14-04-2004	Presentation of first findings and clarification of open issues

Participant observation of implementers' meetings

Name of meeting	Date	Type of data
Participant observation of meeting of core project team	25-11-2003	Notes

Semi-structured interviews with recipients

Recipient	Date	Type of Data
Team leader	29-03-2004	Notes
Group leader	29-03-2004	Notes
Employee A	29-03-2004	Notes
Employees B and C	30-03-2004	Notes
Employees D	01-04-2004	Notes
Employees E	01-04-2004	Notes
Employees F	01-04-2004	Notes
Employees G	01-04-2004	Notes
Team leader	01-04-2004	Notes

Secondary data

FOS Communication Concept from 13-05-2003

FOS Communication Concept from 27-05-2003

FOS Newsletter, No.1, July 2003

FOS Newsletter, No.2, September 2003

FOS Poster, July 2003

FOS Poster, February 2004

Event *Presentation of Due Diligence*, 27 May 2003, 2 June and 6 June 2003, Agenda

Event *Presentation of Due Diligence*, 27 May 2003, Recipients' evaluation of presentation

Event *Presentation of Due Diligence*, 2 June 2003, Recipients' evaluation of presentation

Event *Presentation of Due Diligence*, 6 June 2003, Recipients' evaluation of presentation

List of multipliers

Event *Multiplier briefing*, Invitation, Sent to all multipliers on 11-06-2003

Event *Multiplier briefing*, Concept from 27-05-2003

Event *Multiplier briefing*, presentation held, 25-06-2003

Event *Multiplier briefing*, 25-06-2003, Minutes

Workshop *Multiplier exchange*, 15 and 17 September 2003, Aims

Workshop *Multiplier exchange*, 15 and 17 September 2003, Agenda

Workshop *Multiplier exchange*, 15 September 2003, Minutes

Workshop *Multiplier exchange*, 17 September 2003, Minutes

Team Development Workshop, 12/13 February 2004, Agenda

Team Development Workshop, 12/13 February 2004, Internal review document

Team Development Workshop, 12/13 February 2004, presentation held about FOS

FOS Project structure

Organisational chart of the distribution centre, Available on the website of the relevant division, Access on 1 October 2003