

The Role of Organizational Culture on Middle Managers in the Strategy Practice

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ABSTRACT,

Organizational culture emerges from interactions of different members inside an organization, where middle managers have a significant role with their position between high-level management and the department staff. Middle managers can have different roles in the organization, which can range from communicators of strategy to a strategic function in the strategy process of the organization. This research aims to examine whether there is an influence of organizational culture on the role of a middle manager in the strategy process. Qualitative research has been conducted in the form of desk research and interviews to collect the right data to answer the research question. The findings show that middle managers often play a key communicative role, ensuring strategy alignment across departments and between high-level management and the department staff. Furthermore, this research shows findings that differences in organizational culture influence the extent and nature of the strategic role of a middle manager. In practice, companies can use their middle management for the better with respect to the culture and what contribution this makes to improving the strategy process. Recommendations for further research include examining how evolving organizational culture have an impact on the role of middle management and how this affects the different roles of middle management in the organization.

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Keywords

Organizational Culture; Middle Management; Strategy-as-Practice; Small and Medium Sized Enterprises; Internal Communication; Employee Engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem statement

Organizational culture is the “set of norms, values, and assumptions that emerge from the interactions of organizational members” (Keyton, 2005). These factors create a communication construction or some sort of social order within the organization (Keyton, 2008). Organizational culture is an essential component of an organization that is considered to have deep impact on the different organizational processes (Kenny, 2012).

Following Parsons (1937) actors that make choices in a situation, in this case the managers that are involved in the strategy-making process, are limited by objective conditions, and are governed by different normative regulations of the means and ends of an action. Actors choose their actions according to the ends that are of value for the organization which are needed to be integrated into larger assemblages that are called strategies of action (Parsons, 1937). Thus, strategies of action incorporate and depend on habits, moods, and sensibilities, but building these chains of actions is necessary since it is considered feasible to look at each action individually (Geertz, 1973).

Most of the research conducted about strategy in business-to-business organizations has focused on the role of organizational and wider societal practices in strategy-making. Strategy-as-practice research broadened the scope of what strategy explains by analyzing not only the economical practices but lays great emphasis on the analysis of social practices of a company within the strategy-making process (Maleka, 2016). Most strategy research has focused on the influence and impact of top managers in an organization’s strategy-making process, but less research is done on the roles of middle managers in this process (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Middle managers can be defined as those who have a position in the organizational hierarchy in which they face upwards to higher-level management and downwards to junior staff. The middle manager can be seen as a controller and resister of different situation that are given from higher-level management, but can be controlled and resisted by the junior staff at the same time (Harding et al., 2014)

Therefore, more research can be conducted about the role of creators, interpreters, implementers, and communicator of the organization’s strategy (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Beside those different roles of middle managers in the strategy practice, there is little known about the influence of the organizational culture on the role a middle manager has in the strategy practice (Rouleau et al., 2015). There is a need for further analysis of the effects of the organizational culture on middle managers and vice versa, and how these factors have an influence on the strategy practice in an organization. Conducting research on this topic can gain further understanding about how an organization’s culture contributes to the role of middle managers and vice versa, and how this can contribute to a better understanding of the organization’s strategy-making.

1.2 Research question

The problem statement contributes to the main question in this research that needs to be investigated: “What is the influence of an organization’s culture on the role of middle managers in the strategy practice?”.

In order to explore this question, there is a need to understand what culture is in business contexts, hence the question: “How can organizational culture be best described?”. Beside the organizational culture of the investigated firms, also the need for investigating the role of the middle managers embedded in that culture in the organization arises: “What is the role of a middle manager in the organization and how is this linked to

organizational culture?”. For both these aspects, there is the need to understand how the organization develops, communicates, and implements its strategy to get a better understanding how the role of the middle managers contributes to this process: “How is the organizational strategy made and what are the roles of different practitioners within this process?”

Through literature studies and interviews, an attempt is made to find answers to the above stated sub questions with the aim of answering the research question: “What is the influence of an organization’s culture on the role of middle managers in the strategy practice?”. After the literature review, the interviews will take place with two managers in three different organizations after which the analysis of these interviews will be central in continuing the research on the topic. Finally, the analysis of the interviews and literature will end with the conclusions and discussion.

1.3 Contributions

The contributions of this research to literature are with the literature of strategy-as-practice. This research contributes with the deepening view on the role of middle managers in the process of strategy-making through the lens of organizational culture.

This research is contributing to practice by showing how middle managers can be empowered through culture in strategy-making and what their responsibility can contribute to the strategy-making process in the organization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory has been studied on different kinds of organizational culture, and how this is seen in different organizations. For theory on strategy, there has been made use of Strategy-as-Practice theory.

2.1 Organizational culture

The concept of culture tries to help with the understanding of the different dynamics in an organization (Schein, 2010).

The organization’s culture implies some level of structural stability, which means that culture can be seen as a stabilizing force and is hard to change because the stability is valued (Schein, 2010). The organizational culture is stable, but not static, since organizational culture is a dynamic process that is continually adapting to the different environments (Keyton, 2005). An organization’s cultural norms are assumed to affect all who are involved in the organization. The organizational norms are invisible for most, but if performance needs to be improved, the organizational culture is considered the first place to implement change (Stewart, 2007). These norms are the base for the organizational culture and are considered to have a direct impact on organizational performance (Kotter, 2012). The deeply embedded norms contribute to this stability of an organization’s culture (Schein, 2010). The third characteristic of culture is that it covers all of a group’s functioning. The culture influences multiple aspects ranging from primary tasks, internal operations, and different environments (Schein, 2012). The organizational members contribute to the construct and sustain of the organization’s culture. Organizational culture is emotionally charged since the functions are deeply connected to the feelings of organizational members. (Keyton, 2005). The last characteristic of the concept of culture is patterning. It implies that rituals, values, and behaviors are tied together as a whole, and this pattern is what we name culture (Schein, 2010). Organizational culture is operating in both the foreground and background of organizational life. The current actions taken by organizational members, the foreground, are taken on the basis

of the understanding of the existing culture, the background of organizational life (Keyton, 2005).

A formal definition of organizational culture given by Schein is: "The culture of a group can be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 2010). In other words, there are two basic challenges when groups evolve: integrating individuals into an effective whole, which is the organization; and adapting effectively to the external environment to keep ahead of changes and to survive in the business environment.

Organizational culture has also been described as a set of beliefs, values, and behavior patterns that are different in each organization (Ortega-Parra & Sastre-Castillo, 2013).

Whereas Claver, et al. (2001), described organizational culture as "a set of values, symbols, and rituals, shared by the members of a specific firm, which describes the way things are done in an organization in order to solve both internal management problems and those related to customers, suppliers, and environment".

Not only defining organizational culture is important, in this research it is of relevance to know what types of organizational culture there can be, and what their different features are. Culture can be described in different ways, where Quinn (1981) distinguished four different culture types. The first one is the hierarchy culture, which has a bureaucratic organization with clear lines of decision-making. This organizational culture is internally focused and can be characterized by a formalized and structured place to work with standardized rules and procedures. It is a task-oriented culture. A different organization culture is the market culture, which refers to a type of organization that functions as a market itself. This culture is more external oriented and has a strong leader who acts based on economic considerations without regard to the interests of employees or others. In this culture there are clear objectives to maximize profits and get ahead of tough competition, a so-called result-oriented culture. The third organizational culture is a clan culture, and can also be characterized as family culture, which lays great emphasis on shared values and goals, individuality and a sense of "we-ness". Employee participation, involvement, and cooperation are central in the management of an organization with a family culture. The last organizational culture described by Quinn (1981) is the adhocracy culture, also known as the innovative culture, where a creation-oriented approach applies. Managing change, decentralization and flexibility play a major role in an innovative culture, where basic assumption is that organization can only be successful if they can respond flexibly to customer needs.

2.2 Middle management

The focus of strategy research that has shifted more towards middle managers has added much to the understanding of strategy and change. The roles and influence of middle managers have been studied in research on corporate entrepreneurship (Bower, 1970; Burgelman, 1983), strategy implementation (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Guth & MacMillan, 1986; Huy, 2002), innovation and organizational learning (Kanter, 1982; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and strategy-making processes (Currie & Procter, 2005; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Floyd & Lane, 2000; Pappas & Wooldridge, 2007; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). These different researches and their research questions shift broadly, but they share the premise that middle managers are central to clarifying key organizational results.

This research requires a deeper understanding of the different roles a middle manager can have in an organization. Various studies have worked towards definitions of middle management roles.

Middle managers take five essential roles within the organization, which are strategic, administrative, leadership, communication and cooperation, and decision-making (Rezvani, 2017). Middle managers occupy a position within the organizational structure where they interact both upwards with higher-level management and downwards with junior staff. They often function in the role as mediators, overseeing and sometimes challenging directives from higher-level management, while also managing and responding to the actions of junior staff. The middle manager's identity is formed by the different tasks and processes of the role as middle manager. This includes their role as controller, controlled, resister, and resisted, when looking upwards to higher-level management and junior staff (Harding et al., 2014). Another essential role of a middle manager during their upwards and downwards interaction is communication and cooperation. The interaction with outsiders, the interpretation and translation of strategy, filtering the information, and the networking all comes down to the middle management of an organization (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). They also set guidelines over junior staff to maintain stability, and improve the existing performance, service, and policies. Middle managers perform administrative roles such as budgeting, scheduling, hiring and firing, where they need also technical knowledge to apply in their business unit. They require both managerial and technical roles (Rezvani, 2017). Middle managers are both using transformational and transactional leadership to lead their departments. Via transformational leadership they monitor, control, and reinforce their subordinates, and to get the supports of their subordinates middle managers make use of transactional leadership (Rainey & Watson, 1996). Within the decision-making process of an organization the middle manager has a semi-autonomous role. On the one hand they are authorized to make decisions, but only to some level since there are constraints from higher-level management (Rezvani, 2017).

Via these different roles the identity of a middle manager constitutes to the organizational hierarchy (Harding et al., 2014).

2.3 Strategy practice

The strategy process in each organization can be different, but there are some steps taken in each process. The strategic planning process is subdivided into four stages: construction of assumptions or basis; great choices in strategic objectives; elaboration of the strategic plan; and implementation and monitoring of the plan (Victoria, 2019).

In the first step the mission, values, and the organizational diagnosis are central. The mission of an organization functions as a guidance and direction for the decision-making process. A mission communicates the purpose for all organizational actors, whereas the values of an organization are more a set of feelings to structure the culture and practices of the organization. An organizational diagnosis is essential to learn what the strengths and weaknesses are for the organization. This information is crucial to make the best decisions regarding an organization's strategy-making process.

When making great choices in the strategic objectives there is great emphasis on the vision of an organization. A vision encapsulates the envisioned future state that an organization aspires to achieve. It should be articulated in a concise and motivating manner to resonate with employees, fostering their engagement and ensuring alignment with strategic objectives. Strategic objectives represent the goals pursued by an organization to realize its institutional mission and fulfill its

vision for the future. They serve as the bridge connecting the organization's overarching principles to its strategic milestones.

Turning all these aspects into a written document holds significance for both disseminating the proposed ideas and facilitating its utilization as a tool for guiding the organization's strategic management. The strategic plan serves as a roadmap for leaders.

The final step consists of implementation and monitoring of the strategic plan which mainly focuses on maintaining enough attention from higher-level and middle management at implementing the strategic plan and continuing to communicate the strategic plan with the organizational actors (Victoria, 2019).

Strategy-as-practice is an emerging distinctive approach for studying strategic management, and managerial work. Strategy-as-practice offers an alternative perspective to conventional strategy research by directing focus away from solely assessing the outcome of strategies on performance. Instead, it aims for more holistic examination of the intricate processes involved in strategic planning, implementation, and other strategic activities (Golsorkhi et al., 2015). Within the research field of strategy-as-practice there is a need to develop more research that focuses more solidly on the practitioners of strategy. Several readings conducted some findings about practitioners in strategy-making regarding the economic and social practices. But there is still a need to conduct more research on the middle managers, their role as creators of strategy; interpreters as strategy; and their role as communicators of strategy. The practice perspective is mainly concerned with how social structure and human agency link together in the explanation of action. (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGY

To investigate the influence of the organization's culture on the role of middle managers, interviews will be held with different organizations. An interview is a "process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study." (DeMarris, 2004). The interviews will be semi-structured interviews where the main goal is to gather rich, more detailed information of the different organizations and their situations.

Within three different organizations there are going to be interviews with a CEO or high-level manager to learn more about how the strategy-making process in the organization is shaped and what their perspective is on the role the middle managers take in the process. Also, the organizational culture will be examined through this interview via questions to get insights on how the involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission are of influence in the organizational culture. Beside the interview with the high-level manager, there will be an interview with a middle manager of the organization to ask the questions regarding the organizational culture, the strategy-making process and what their role in the organization is. These interviews will be conducted separately and independently of another person. This is to get both the independent answers of the higher-level manager and the middle manager to compare independent similarities or differences.

To get to a definition of the organization's culture, there is a need to understand where culture comes from, how it evolves, and what the powerful influences are that influence group's behaviors (Schein, 2010). During the interview, questions will be asked about the organization's culture: "Can you describe the culture within the organization; How do colleagues treat each other in the workplace; Is there a formal or informal atmosphere;

Do you think there are factors that have an influence on the organizational culture; Are there any traditions within the organization?"

Besides the questions on organizational culture, there will also be questions asked about the strategy-making process in the organization: "What does the strategy process in the organization look like; What people are a significant part in the strategy process; How is the strategy communicated through the organization?"

For the interview with the middle manager, it is necessary to ask questions about their role in the organization: "Can you describe your role as middle manager within this organization; Do you feel the organizational culture gives you enough maneuverability to practice your function; Do you think that your role as middle manager has influence on the culture?"

The interviews with the different managers will be held in three different business-to-business organizations that can be categorized as small and medium-sized enterprises that are all operating in different sectors. Small and medium-sized enterprises are organizations that have 250 employees at most. The reason for three different small and medium-sized organizations that are operating in different sectors is to get a varying comparison. During this comparison the emphasis is mainly focused on finding similarities or major differences in the roles of the different middle managers.

The analysis of the interviews will follow an analytical process with three basic types of coding: open, axial, and selective. The answers of the respondents will be noted and then coded following three different steps, where in step one the data are broken down analytically. In step one the answers will be compared with others for similarities and differences and are given labels to group the answers. When these similarities and differences are identified, these become the basis for further sampling in step two, which consists of axial coding. Axial coding involves comparing assigned codes and merging codes that belong together within an overarching code. For axial coding, usually the overarching codes are adjusted during the process. Selective coding involves building the theory on the main categories found in the previous step. This will be done by classifying all the data and codes found within the categories and making relationships and connections between the data on that basis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Dingemans, 2021).

4. RESULTS

Some interviews needed more in-depth questions beside the questions stated in the methodology part, which means that there were questions asked during the interviews to gather a more detailed answer than just the answers that came from the questions made on forehand. The level of structure differed each interview, where some respondents gave more information applicable to further questions, some interviews needed more in-depth questions to get the right information.

The interviews were held face to face, to be able to get a more definite picture of the culture in the workplace myself, having visited the company.

The results of the interviews are categorized by organization, the answers different respondents had, will be shown per organization. This is because the differences or similarities between the different companies, organizational culture, strategy processes and the role of the middle manager is more easily shown.

4.1 Company one: production

The first company is a production company, where interviews were held with the middle manager and a managing director. First the interview was held with the middle manager where questions were asked about the organizational culture, the strategy process, and the role as middle manager in the production company. Whereafter the interview with the managing director, in this case the high-level manager, was held regarding the organizational culture and the strategy practice.

Both managers described the organizational culture as easily approachable, a flat organization where people are approachable right up to the director. As the middle manager answered: "There is little form of hierarchy, most department heads are in the department's office, and everyone is approachable right up to the director." The high-level manager mentioned that there is a certain "small-business mentality" where it is easy to approach different colleagues because there is an open-door culture. The high-level manager mentioned that the office location also has a production site where the people work in shifts and therefore people may find it harder to interact with each other. The high-level manager stated: "Because they are separate buildings, you can see a certain distance, since the way of working differentiates much." The organizational culture was described as "open" where the "workers are seen as the most important part of the organization" as stated by the middle manager. During the interviews both managers described several traditions that are in the organization to better the company atmosphere and keeping their employees satisfied outside the work-related activities. Factors that were seen as influencing the atmosphere and organization culture was work pressure stated as an influence. The middle manager said: "When pressure increases, or business cycle changes, tensions can arise and employees are more irritable, which has an impact on the organizational culture." Whereafter the high-level manager separately stated: "Tensions can arise when there is uncertainty, tensions are not bad, but too much tension is not good."

The strategy process in the company is recently changed, which means that the company is improving the process and is analyzing how they can change and improve the strategy process. The strategy process consisted of an annual strategy day, where executives, managers and a number of workers meet to review, analyze and possibly improve the strategy. Recent development in the revamped strategy process is the establishment of a strategic management team, which consists of middle managers from several departments and the managing director. Since the change from a strategy day to a strategic management team means less direct influence from employees, additional questions were asked about what the communication of strategy looks like in the revamped strategy process. The high-level manager stated: "Once the plan has been developed within the strategic management team, we plan a time for the other management members to join. [...] By then, of course, the department heads are already free to start working with their departments. [...] We will organize a session that will bring everyone together again for a while in which we will then talk about what the strategy is." The high-level manager explained that with regard to some topics the opinions of the employees will be asked. After collecting the ideas, the strategic management team will make choices on these topics and then communicate this back to the employees.

During the interview with the middle manager, questions were asked about how the organizational culture contributes to the role of the middle manager. The middle manager stated: "People are being informed to some extent [by middle managers] and people appreciate that too." It is clear that not everything discussed in the strategic management team can be directly discussed with all

employees, but the middle manager indicated that there is sufficient understanding from the employees as well.

In Table 1 several quotes of the interviews are shown, with open codes that have led to the axial codes which can be linked to various main themes. Quotes from respondent 1.1 are answers from the interview with the middle manager, where quotes from respondent 1.2 are from the interview with the high-level manager.

Table 1 Analysis of company one

Quote	Open code	Axial code
"Everyone is very accessible and approachable to everyone" <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Accessible; Easily approachable	Open
"There is an informal atmosphere, we have company parties, get-togethers, things like that" <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Informal atmosphere	Informal
"In the organizational culture, there is little evidence of any form of hierarchy that might be reflected in the structure" <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Low level of hierarchy in culture	Informal; flat organization
"In my opinion, you need a market culture within your company to keep your business running" <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Market culture	Market culture
"I believe the employee is the most important" <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Employees	Family culture
"We do have a small business mentality: everyone is approachable" <i>Respondent 1.2</i>	Approachable	Open
"We organize many things with colleagues outside working hours, but we do that because we think it is important" <i>Respondent 1.2</i>	Informal atmosphere; bonding	Informal
"We do have certain traditions" <i>Respondent 1.2</i>	Traditions	Family culture
"I think in a small company you have to leave a bit of individual freedom with people" <i>Respondent 1.2</i>	Individual freedom	Flat organization
"We should look more at how can we achieve those goals and what do we need from each department" <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Analytical; involving departments	Analytical
"Recently, we started with a strategic	Strategic management	Analytical

management team, they deal with what the policies should be to achieve those goals” <i>Respondent 1.1</i>		
“We will schedule a time when everything is worked out to share the ideas with the rest of the organization” <i>Respondent 1.2</i>	Top-down communication	Top-down
“When we are working on the plans, of course the head of department is already free to start working with their departments” <i>Respondent 1.2</i>	Top-down communication; employee engagement	Transparent; top-down
“I can’t pass on everything to my department, but the department is also understanding of that” <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Transparency; employee engagement; transitional position	Transitional position
“I notice, for example, when things are shared from the management team, that my department keeps asking how things are going” <i>Respondent 1.1</i>	Transparency; employee engagement	Transparency

The main themes that can be distinguished from the interviews for company one are an open and informal organization with aspects of a market, family, and hierarchical culture, where the strategy process consists of an analytical strategic management that functions with a top-down communication towards the employees.

4.2 Company two: business development

The second company is a company that works on business development of other companies, where interviews were held with the middle manager and the Chief Executive Officer. First the interview was held with the Chief Executive Officer, in this case the high-level manager, where questions were asked about the organizational culture and the strategy process. Whereafter the interview with the middle manager was held regarding the organizational culture, the strategy practice, and the role as middle manager in the business development company.

When entering the company building, one immediately notices the open workspaces where employees can sit and work together. As the high-level manager mentioned: “We did a study on how we want to work within the company and how we interact with each other. Since then, we [...] have been working with open offices, meaning that people had to come out of offices and were put in an open workplace with each other.” After this change, formal and informal contact between employees has grown very organically as indicated by the high-level manager, certainly contributing to the open organizational culture. The organization is international oriented which means that there are also many employees with different nationalities working at the company. Both the middle manager and the high-level manager indicate that these different nationalities and cultures have their influence on the organizational culture. The middle manager stated that for some cultures it is of great importance to have a certain hierarchy, even when this is not the culture that is wanted in the

organization: “For some cultures, it is very important to know where you stand and what role you have.” Both the middle manager and the high-level manager mentioned that the employees are responsible for their clients while working in a team. The team bears responsibility, and the managers keep the overview of the bigger picture. As mentioned earlier, the open workspace contributes to the open organization culture, although the middle manager described that since everyone is expected to work in their teams, the departments stick mostly to their own department. The middle manager said: “If you do mix a bit, then you keep better track of how other departments handle certain things.” The company has various traditions and activities to help improve the working atmosphere and compensation for the high workload, as the middle manager described: “This is necessary to keep the work a bit fun”. The company is heavily involved in personal development of employees. The middle manager explained how they use a target form to have each employee set their own personal goals annually.

In the company they have a so-called “mission direction team”, which is a team that consists of several employees from many different departments. This team is involved with the strategy process of the company and follows a bottom-up approach. The team asks several questions to the organization’s employees about what has changed both internally and externally over the past year. The mission direction team then selects the themes that are important and are most noted, which then will be translated to the management team and eventually to the board of directors making various decisions. When those decisions that come from the input of the employees are made, the decisions will flow through the management team that discusses how it will be implemented, whereafter it will be presented back to the employees. According to both the middle manager and the high-level manager, this works well for the company, as the middle manager told: “[...] the work floor is being probed to see what is needed and what is going on. I believe that if your employees are happy with what they are doing, they will stay longer.”

Because employees from all layers of the organization are involved in the strategy process, the middle manager in this organization is not directly involved in transmitting and communicating the strategy. The middle manager indicates that it is important to have a connection with the organization to be able to help it move forward in different areas. The middle manager believes that a layer between the employees and higher management is essential to allow the operational departments to focus on the day-to-day business, and not have to deal with subject matters in higher-level management. “I am the link between the department and the board. I need to know what is going on in the different departments and how to communicate that to the board.”

In Table 2 several quotes of the interviews are shown, with open codes that have led to the axial codes which can be linked to various main themes. Quotes from respondent 2.2 are answers from the interview with the middle manager, where quotes from respondent 2.1 are from the interview with the high-level manager.

Table 2 Analysis of company two

Quote	Open code	Axial code
“We did an internal research 15 years ago about how we want to live within the company and how we treat each other” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Research; looking at what fits within organization	Analytical

“Too many people just walked in, too many people took advantage of that openness” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Structure too open-ended	Open
“People might expect a certain hierarchy anyway” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Expectation of hierarchy in culture	Expectation of hierarchy
“We like that diversity, but we also see, for example, that different departments can sometimes be a bit culturally driven” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Diversity; cultural management	Diversity; cultural differences
“We say you work in a team, and the team has shared responsibility for the customer” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Team responsibility	Teamwork
“Sometimes you avoid those frictions by making very small adjustments” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Looking at what is good for the organization	Analytical
“The organization is very flat, everyone knows each other” <i>Respondent 2.2</i>	Flat organizational structure; open	Flat organization
“We are very international, so you also notice that cultural background plays a role” <i>Respondent 2.2</i>	International; different cultures	International
“And it has to be from those traditions too, to keep the work a bit fun too” <i>Respondent 2.2</i>	Bonding of employees; traditions	Family culture
“We look at it from different layers of the organization and with different cultural backgrounds in order to shape it as well as possible to what is needed in the company” <i>Respondent 2.2</i>	Appropriate for the organization	Analytical
“Our mission direction is bottom-up, we think that is very important” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Bottom-up communication	Bottom-up
“The mission direction team has people from different departments and functions” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Different departments and functions in strategy process	Employee integration
“Everything goes from the mission direction team to the management team to eventually the board, and then the board makes some decisions” <i>Respondent 2.1</i>	Bottom-up; integration of employees	Bottom-up

“I need to know what is going on in the department and how that is communicated to the board” <i>Respondent 2.2</i>	Keep abreast of the situation; transitional position	Transitional position
“People also like that I’m here for that, that they have a someone to contact and don’t have to go to the board right away” <i>Respondent 2.2</i>	Point of contact for employees	Transitional position
“I think it is good that there is a layer between up and down” <i>Respondent 2.2</i>	Between employees and high-level management	Transitional position

The main themes that arise after the interviews for the second organization are a flat and open organization with a family culture, where there is great emphasis on teamwork and diversity, which at times can create minor hierarchical encounters. The strategy process is bottom-up, where not only middle management, but employees of all ‘layers’ are integrated in the strategy-making. The middle manager has a function of communicator, but not of strategy since there is more of a need for a point of contact between the employees and high-level management.

4.3 Company three: installation technology

The third company is in the installation technology sector, where interviews were held with a middle manager and the branch manager. First the interview was held with the middle manager with questions about the organizational culture, the strategy process of the company, and the role as middle manager in the organization. After the interview with the middle manager, the interview with the branch manager, the high-level manager in this case, about the organization culture and strategy process was held.

Both the middle and high-level manager stated clearly that there is a family type of culture. That organizational culture is expressed in the freedom within entrepreneurship of the organization is explained by the high-level manager. According to the managers, it is an open and accessible organizational culture where you can visit anyone. The family aspects of the culture become more evident when the middle manager talks more about the learning culture within the company: “There is an openness within the culture to approach people to ask offer that help, and if there is no need at that time, we will look at it later again.” The industry is quite traditional, which means that the middle manager is involved in communicating new changes correctly to make things work. This includes continuing to motivate, stimulate, and communicate strategy well. The managers are considering whether the family culture is still appropriate for the organization since it has grown a lot, and the various projects are in more need of a hierarchical approach from a leadership perspective. The high-level manager explained: “[...] We are now trying to train our project managers [to provide] a more process-oriented approach based on project management.” The need for more hierarchy in the culture is not explicitly a must, but more of an addition to the family culture. The must of the family culture comes from the fact that the organization is a family business, founded by a father and taken over by the children, that is the origin of the family culture. “Looking at culture, we stick to that family culture, but we also look at the market. We are not leading in innovation, but our strength lies in customer loyalty and building long-term relationships with our clients.” As stated by the middle manager. With regard to the

family culture, there is an employer association that is very active within the branch and from which many traditions and activities arise.

The strategy process arises from various pillars that are indicated by the management team, which consists of managers from different departments, and later communicated to the branch managers. The organization has a top-down strategy process. From the pillars the branch managers make their own objectives, that must be converted into operational objectives with help of the managers of each division in the branch. According to the high-level manager, the objectives are discussed every quarter and assessed in a plan, check, act manner. The high-level manager states “Every year I make the objectives and using a balanced scorecard I discuss the progression every quarter with the managers. [...] The communication of the strategy follows an organic way through the organization.” The middle manager indicates that the management team that initiates the pillars every year, can be seen as senior management, since they have been in the organization for a long time. The middle manager states: “there is a new generation under that so-called senior management that also want to grow [...] you also have to let them think about the strategy, for example.”

The middle manager says that they review the workforce with the branch manager every quarter to discuss the employees and to be well informed about what is going on with the employees within the organization. With regard to the strategy, it becomes clear that when the branch manager reviews the strategy every quarter, the managers from different departments are free to communicate this through the company. Regarding the influence of the role of the middle manager, the middle manager states: “I am often present at the branch, which means I have good control of what is happening in the organization and automatically have a better influence.”

In Table 3 several quotes of the interviews are shown, with open codes that have led to the axial codes which can be linked to various main themes. Quotes from respondent 3.1 are answers from the interview with the middle manager, where quotes from respondent 3.2 are from the interview with the high-level manager.

Table 3 Analysis of company three

Quote	Open code	Axial code
“The business atmosphere is a family culture, which manifests itself in a kind of certain freedom within entrepreneurship” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Freedom, family culture	Family culture
“The culture here in the establishment is very approachable” <i>Respondent 3.1</i>	Easily approachable	Open
“We are doing a study because we think we have a family culture, but we want to know if this culture still fits within the company now that we are growing so fast” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Research; looking at what suits the organization best	Analytical
“Within the culture there does exist that openness to ask and approach people to offer that help, and if there is no need at that time then	Openness; asking for help	Open

we look at it again in a year” <i>Respondent 3.1</i>		
“We are not at the very front of innovation, but we are certainly not behind either” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Keeping up with innovation	Adaptive
“Trips are organized a lot by the staff association” <i>Respondent 3.1</i>	Staff association	Family culture
“This establishment is an amalgamation of 3 companies, and you still notice that there are different cultures among those different groups” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Merging; different cultures	Culture gap
“It does prevail here that everyone wants to help each other, everyone is willing to help another” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Willing to offer help	Family culture; open
“We work from a vision and mission, from that we get core values, in that we formulate objectives and then the operational objectives” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Based on vision and mission; top-down	Top-down
“Each year there are different targets for the branch, using a balanced scorecard we keep track of the targets and discuss them quarterly” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Feedback among managers	Feedback
“The intention is from top to bottom” <i>Respondent 3.2</i>	Top-down communication	Top-down
“We have a policy team that deals with those bits, which are passed on to the branches, and those arrangements are then passed on to employee level through the various departmental leaders” <i>Respondent 3.1</i>	Top-down communication	Top-down
“Then we discuss the important appointments and developments that therefore take place on the workplace. So, we tackle the problems from the bottom at the top and the middle managers pass it back to their departments” <i>Respondent 3.1</i>	Top-down communication through middle managers	Top-down

For the third company there are several main themes that became clear after the interviews. The company has an open culture and ensues a family culture stemming from being a family business, but also notes aspects from a hierarchical culture needed to improve operations. The strategy process is top-down, coming from pillars that are determined by the board of directors, whereafter objectives are determined by branch managers and further communicated to the departments. In this organization the

middle manager plays a certain role of communicator of strategy as well as the communication from bottom to top.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

After analyzing the results shown in part four, there are several main themes distinguished to answer the research question:

“What is the influence of an organization’s culture on the role of middle managers in the strategy practice?”

Several aspects in the different organizations show that when there is an open organization culture, there still can be the need for some hierarchical aspects to clarify tasks, processes, or strategies. When looking at company one, the strategic management team ensures that the strategy for the organization is clearly coordinated and feasible for every department when meeting with the operational management team. In this situation there is still a form of hierarchy in the structure, which indicates the need for a middle manager to be more of a communicator of the strategy. Beside the communicating role, the middle manager in this case is situated in the strategic management team. With the role of being a communicator, and the openness of the organization the middle manager can have insights in what is good for the company and its workers, and what needs to be implemented in the strategy. In the situation of the communicating role combined with the participating role in the strategy process, it can be seen that employees and departments are more likely to get back with the middle manager to hear the state of affairs which in turn can contribute to the openness and the organizational culture. With the information gathered from company three, this shows how a separate team of managers within the company contributes to improving a strategy process. In both companies they make use of a top-down approach, where the role of the middle manager is clear in communicating the strategy. A thing that differs is that in an open and bit smaller company, as company one, the middle manager is kept more focused on the communication of the strategy by the department and the employees, whereas in company three there is less focus on keeping track of this communication, since the company is much bigger oriented and has a more bureaucratic structure. Company three states it has a family culture and considers the employee most important. But at the same time show much of a hierarchical structure that is already slowly becoming apparent in culture. In this situation, where characteristics of both a family and hierarchical culture are shown, the middle manager is taking more of a communicative role in the strategy process. Company two is a flat and open organization that has a family culture as described by Quinn (1981), where the emphasis is on employee participation. This is not only visible in the organizational culture, but in the strategy process the employee participation is also applied. The middle manager in this organization does not automatically have a communication role in terms of strategy but can be seen as a point of contact in other ways. As indicated in the interviews, an overly open organizational culture is also not positive for operations when the expectation from employees is different from the culture in place. In the situation, it is good that the middle manager functions as a point of contact to discuss and analyze where any minor adjustments are needed.

5.2 Practical implications

From a practical viewpoint, the research can help with an innovative insight into how companies can deploy middle management in different ways. As mentioned, it is important to know what factors are important within the company and its operations to deploy middle management in the right way. When companies are able to understand how their organizational

culture influences middle managers and their role in the organization, they are better able to align strategic goals with operational activities. Through training and development, companies may be better able to align middle management with the organizational culture. This can be done, for example in the case of a family culture, with training that focuses on strengthening team connections and cooperation, as well as giving or receiving feedback to strengthen openness within the organizational culture. Insights from the research can help organizations with designing structures that optimize the role of middle managers. Firms can create flexible hierarchies that allow for both autonomy and guidance, which means that middle managers have the autonomy to make decisions within a clear strategic framework. Lastly, when the middle managers are involved in the strategic decision-making process, the decisions are well-informed and consider the operational subjects of different departments.

5.3 Theoretical implications

Part of the findings of this research can be traced back to the literature. As mentioned by Keyton (2005), the organizational culture is stable, but not static, since organizational culture is a dynamic process that is continually adapting to the different environments, which can be seen in different companies that were interviewed. In company two it became clear that when the culture is too open and too flat, the employer needs’ can be different and the culture needs some minor adjustments to make it work, whereas in company three the family culture is merging with a more hierarchical culture because the rapid growth of the organization asks for this change. With stable, but minor changes these organizational cultures adapt to the needs of the organization, which was explained by Stewart (2007). The organizational norms are invisible for most, but if performance needs to be improved, the organizational culture is considered the first place to implement change. When looking at organizational culture as described by Quinn (1981), in practice, different aspects of the organizational cultures found by Quinn (1981) can work together within an organization. In some cases, the combination of aspects from different cultures works better.

Middle managers can take five essential roles within the organization, which are strategic, administrative, leadership, communication and cooperation, and decision-making (Rezvani, 2017). After analyzing the results, this also becomes clear from the interviewed middle managers. The interviewed middle managers all had the role of a communicator, where some were communicators of strategy, and others were communicators between low-level and high-level management. Not only the communicating role resulted from the interviews, even the role of strategic emerged as a significant role for middle managers in small- and medium enterprises.

It has become clear that the roles described in Reyvani’s (2017) literature are not always reserved for middle managers. Where in company one the middle manager has a strategic role in a strategic management, and in company two the middle manager has a function in the strategy process, in contrast in company three the middle manager does not have a role of strategist. Where Reyvani (2017) appointed that these roles belong to the job of a middle manager, it can be argued that this is not always the case.

For the strategy-as-practice literature the research can add a new perspective on the function of a middle manager in the strategy process. The findings in this research show how different cultures need different roles of middle management in the strategy process of the organization.

5.4 Limitations

This research is not without limitations. Firstly, this research is conducted by one researcher, which means that the analysis of the results may be biased. The analysis and coding of the interviews are subject to the assumptions of the one researcher and could be therefore inherit researcher bias. This limitation can be minimized by including multiple researchers in the analysis and research process. In this research, only six managers in three different organizations were interviewed. Although with these interviews proper information was received to answer the research question, by conducting more interviews with other managers or companies these findings could possibly have been strengthened. Furthermore, this research only includes interviews with organizations based in the Netherlands, where country culture plays a role in the operations of Dutch companies, this limitation can be reduced with involvement of organizations from other countries with other cultures. Moreover, conducting interviews with two managers per organization to get an objective view, could have been expanded to include interviews with another high-level manager and several middle managers to analyze it even more objectively.

5.5 Future research

Suggestions for future research can be in the field of further research on cultural evolution and how this affects middle management roles. These studies can track changes in organizational culture and strategy process of different organizations, providing deeper insights into cultural evolutions and its long-term impact on middle management and how this affects the roles.

Future research can also explore organizational and middle management roles in international operations operating across different cultural contexts. As seen in company three, there can be some conflicts in national and organizational culture. Comparative studies may examine how these differences influence organizational practices and the effectiveness of middle management in various cultural settings.

In the digitizing world future research can be helpful on the topic of the impact of digital transformation on organizational culture. Research can examine how digital tools influence communication, decision-making, and cultural integration within organizations and how this may affect the role of middle management in the organization.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A – Coding scheme company one

In Appendix A the coding scheme of the first two interviews with company one is shown. Respondent 1.1 is the middle manager, where Respondent 1.2 is the high-level manager in the company.

Quotes	Open code	Axial code	Thema
Cultuur bedrijf 1			
"Het is een vrij platte organisatie" Respondent 1.1	Platte organisatie	Platte organisatie	Platte organisatie
"Iedereen is heel toegankelijk en benaderbaar voor iedereen" Respondent 1.1	Toegankelijk; makkelijk benaderbaar	Open	Open
"Er heerst een informele sfeer, we hebben bedrijfsfeestjes, borrels, etc." Respondent 1.1	Informele sfeer	Informeel	Familiecultuur
"We hebben een open organisatiecultuur" Respondent 1.1	Open cultuur	Open	Open
"In de organisatiecultuur is weinig te merken van enige vorm van hiërarchie die misschien wel terug te vinden is in de structuur" Respondent 1.1	Weinig hiërarchie in cultuur	Informeel	Familiecultuur
"Het kan binnen het bedrijf heel erg wisselen qua werkdruk, en dat heeft invloed op de cultuur" Respondent 1.1	Werkdruk invloed op medewerkers en sfeer	Werkdruk	Werkdruk
"In mijn ogen heb je een marktcultuur binnen je bedrijf wel nodig om je bedrijf draaiende te houden" Respondent 1.1	Marktcultuur	Marktcultuur	Marktcultuur
"Ik ben van mening dat de medewerker het belangrijkste is" Respondent 1.1	Medewerkers zijn belangrijk	Familiair	Familiecultuur
"Wij moeten wel meegaan met innovaties en daarop anticiperen en vooruitlopen" Respondent 1.1	Meegaan in situaties	Adaptief	Innovatiecultuur
"We hebben wel een kleine bedrijven mentaliteit; het is laagdrempelig" Respondent 1.2	Kleine bedrijven mentaliteit; laagdrempelig	Laagdrempelig	Open
"We zijn een redelijk platte organisatie" Respondent 1.2	Platte organisatie	Platte organisatie	Platte organisatie
"Een deel van de werknemers werkt in 3 ploegdiensten, dus de ene ploeg werkt ongeveer tegelijk met ons, maar de andere twee ploegen zie je niet" Respondent 1.2	Kloof tussen werknemers	Langs elkaar werken	Binding
"We organiseren veel dingen met collega's buiten werktijd, maar dat doen we omdat we dat belangrijk vinden" Respondent 1.2	Informele sfeer; binding	Informeel	Familiecultuur
"We hebben wel bepaalde tradities" Respondent 1.2	Tradities	Familiair	Familiecultuur
"Soms krijg je binnen de organisatie spanningen als het bijvoorbeeld met de economie wat minder goed gaat, en die spanningen zijn niet slecht, maar te veel spanning is niet goed" Respondent 1.2	Spanning zo veel mogelijk verminderen	Kijken naar wat goed is voor organisatie	Analytisch
"Ik vind in een klein bedrijf dat je de individuele vrijheid een beetje moet laten bij de mensen" Respondent 1.2	Individuele vrijheid	Platte organisatie	Platte organisatie
Strategie bedrijf 1			
"Een aantal jaar geleden hadden we jaarlijks een strategie dag, met de directie, managers en medewerkers op uitnodiging" Respondent 1.1	Verandering van proces	Adaptief	Adaptief proces
"We zijn gaan kijken hoe we dat anders kunnen doen" Respondent 1.1	Kijken naar wat passend is voor organisatie	Analytisch	Analytisch
"We zouden meer moeten kijken naar hoe kunnen we die doelen behalen en wat hebben we van elke afdeling nodig" Respondent 1.1	Analytisch; betrekken van afdelingen	Analytisch	Analytisch
"Sinds kort hebben we een strategisch management team, die houden zich bezig met wat het beleid zou moeten zijn om die doelen te behalen" Respondent 1.1	Strategisch management	Analytisch; strategisch management	Strategisch management

"We hebben de weg dus iets anders gemaakt dan hoe het was tijdens zo'n strategie dag, naar nu een strategisch management team" Respondent 1.1	Verandering van proces	Analytisch	Analytisch
"In het strategisch MT hebben we ook nog een beetje moeite met hoe we het goed kunnen communiceren binnen het bedrijf" Respondent 1.1	Lastige communicatie	Kijken naar wat goed is voor organisatie	Analytisch
"Als we ons plan uitgewerkt hebben, gaan we zitten met het operationele team... later zullen de ideeën via afdelingshoofden naar verschillende afdelingen gecommuniceerd worden" Respondent 1.1	Top-down communicatie	Top-down	Top-down
"De bijeenkomsten van het strategisch MT zijn nu nog maandelijks, maar als het plan verder is uitgewerkt zal dat afnemen naar eens per 3 maanden" Respondent 1.2	Structureel strategisch proces	Structureel; analytisch	Structureel
"We zullen als alles uitgewerkt is een moment plannen om de ideeën met de rest van de organisatie te delen" Respondent 1,2	Top-down communicatie	Top-down	Top-down
"Als we bezig zijn met de plannen, staat het afdelingshoofd natuurlijk al vrij om met hun afdelingen aan de gang te gaan" Respondent 1.2	Betrokkenheid medewerkers via afdelingsleiders	Top-down communicatie	Top-down
Middle manager bedrijf 1			
"Ik kan niet alles doorspelen aan mijn afdeling, maar daar heeft de afdeling ook begrip voor" Respondent 1.1	Transparantie; betrokkenheid medewerkers; tussenpositie	Tussenpositie	Middle management
"Men wordt tot op bepaalde hoogte op de hoogte gehouden" Respondent 1.1	Transparantie; betrokkenheid medewerkers	Transparantie	Familiecultuur
"Ik merk bijvoorbeeld als er dingen vanuit het MT gedeeld worden, dat mijn afdeling en collega's wel blijven vragen hoe het er voor staat" Respondent 1.1	Betrokkenheid medewerkers	Betrokkenheid medewerkers	Familiecultuur

Appendix B – Coding scheme company two

In Appendix B the coding scheme of the two interviews with company two is shown. Respondent 2.1 is the high-level manager, where Respondent 2.2 is the middle manager in the company.

Quote	Open code	Axial code	Thema
Cultuur bedrijf 2			
"Wij hebben 15 jaar geleden intern een onderzoek gedaan over hoe wij binnen het bedrijf willen leven en hoe we met elkaar omgaan" Respondent 2.1	Onderzoek; kijkend naar wat past binnen organisatie	Analytisch	Analytisch
"Sindsdien werken we paperless en hebben we open kantoren" Respondent 2.1	Open werkruimte; digitalisering	Open cultuur	Open
"Er liepen te veel mensen zomaar binnen, er werd te veel van die openheid gebruik gemaakt" Respondent 2.1	Structuur te open	Open cultuur	Open
"Men verwacht misschien toch een bepaalde hiërarchie" Respondent 2.1	Verwachting van hiërarchie	Hiërarchie	Hiërarchische cultuur
"Cultuur speelt dan ook een hele grote rol" Respondent 2.1	Cultuur; verschillende waarden en normen	Internationaal; cultuurverschillen	Cultuurverschillen
"Het stukje formeel en informeel omgaan met elkaar is heel organisch gegroeid na die eerste stappen van hoe willen we werken, hoe zitten we, etc." Respondent 2.1	Organisch overnemen van veranderingen	Organisch	Familiecultuur
"Die diversiteit vinden we leuk, maar we zien bijvoorbeeld ook dat verschillende afdelingen soms wat cultureel aangestuurd kunnen worden" Respondent 2.1	Diversiteit; culturele aansturing	Diversiteit; cultuurverschillen	Cultuurverschillen
"Wij zeggen dat je werkt in een team, en het team heeft gemeenschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid voor de klant" Respondent 2.1	Verantwoordelijk voor team; teamwork	Teamverband draagt verantwoordelijkheid	Teamverband
"Als we horen dat een afdeling toch weer meer cultureel aangestuurd wordt, gaan we terug naar het managementteam om dit te bespreken" Respondent 2.1	Terugkoppeling; cultuur verschillen	Terugkoppeling	Familiecultuur
"Soms voorkom je die wrijvingen door hele kleine aanpassingen" Respondent 2.1	Kijken naar wat goed is voor organisatie	Analytisch	Analytisch
"De organisatie is heel plat, iedereen kent elkaar" Respondent 2.2	Platte organisatiestructuur	Platte structuur; weinig hiërarchie	Platte organisatie
"We zijn heel internationaal, waardoor je ook merkt dat culturele achtergrond ook een rol speelt" Respondent 2.2	Internationaal; verschillende culturen	Internationaal	Cultuurverschillen
"We willen meegaan in de ontwikkelingen, we hoeven niet vooraan te lopen maar willen ook zeker niet achterlopen" Respondent 2.2	Bijhouden innovatie	Adaptief	Adaptief
"We hebben een open organisatie cultuur" Respondent 2.2	Open cultuur	Open cultuur	Open
"We willen hier als team samenwerken" Respondent 2.2	Samenwerken als team	Teamwork	Teamverband
"Als je je gezicht hier niet laat zien ben ik van mening dat je je binding met de organisatie een beetje kwijtraakt" Respondent 2.2	Binding met de organisatie	Binding	Binding
"Er is nog best een scheiding tussen beneden en boven; mensen zitten toch snel bij hun eigen afdeling" Respondent 2.2	Scheiding tussen afdelingen door kantoorpand	Scheiding door omgeving	Omgevingsfactoren
"En dat moet ook wel van die tradities, om het werk ook een beetje leuk te houden" Respondent 2.2	Tradities om het werk leuk te houden	Tradities	Familiecultuur
"Voor sommige culturen is het heel belangrijk om te weten waar je staat en welke rol je hebt" Respondent 2.2	Verschillende verwachting	Cultuurverschillen	Cultuurverschillen

"We zijn bezig met het managen van veranderingen en zoals eerder gezegd willen we niet voorlopen maar ook zeker niet achter" Respondent 2.2	Kijken naar wat past binnen organisatie	Analytisch	Analytisch
"We focussen ons als bedrijf heel erg op persoonlijke ontwikkelingen en werken we jaarlijks met een targetform concept" Respondent 2.2	Persoonlijke ontwikkeling; jaarlijkse targets	Persoonlijke ontwikkeling	Familiecultuur
"Je moet wel tijd vrijmaken om aan die persoonlijke ontwikkeling te werken en je merkt... dat zo'n bonussysteem wel kan bijdragen aan het behalen van die persoonlijke doelen" Respondent 2.2	Persoonlijke ontwikkeling; bonussysteem	Persoonlijke ontwikkeling	Familiecultuur
Strategie bedrijf 2			
"We bekijken het vanuit verschillende lagen van de organisatie en met verschillende culturele achtergronden om het zo goed mogelijk te kunnen vormen naar wat er nodig is binnen het bedrijf" Respondent 2.2	Passend voor organisatie	Analytisch	Analytisch
"Ik geloof erin dat als je medewerkers happy zijn met wat ze doen dan blijven ze langer" Respondent 2.2	Tevreden medewerkers	Analytisch	Analytisch
"Eens per drie jaar werken we aan onze mission direction" Respondent 2.1	Structureel strategieproces	Structureel strategieproces	Structureel
"Onze mission direction is bottom-up, dat vinden wij heel belangrijk" Respondent 2.1	Bottom-up communicatie	Bottom-up	Bottom-up
"We willen hem dus creëren vanuit de organisatie en wat die nodig heeft, en terwijl we die creëren zijn we tegelijkertijd bezig met het implementatie proces" Respondent 2.1	Passend aan wat organisatie nodig heeft; implementeren in organisatie	Analytisch kijken naar organisatie	Analytisch
"Het mission direction team heeft mensen van verschillende afdelingen en functies" Respondent 2.1	Verschillende afdelingen en functies in strategieproces	Integratie van medewerkers	Bottom-up
"De vervolgstap is dan de organisatie in, en het stellen van vragen wat er zowel intern als extern is veranderd" Respondent 2.1	Terugkoppeling met medewerkers	Integratie van medewerkers	Bottom-up
"Met een corporate perspectief kan je de mensen veel makkelijker bij elkaar krijgen" Respondent 2.1	Corporate perspectief	Corporate perspectief	Corporate perspectief
"Alles gaat van het mission direction team, naar het MT naar uiteindelijk de board, en dan neemt de board een aantal besluiten" Respondent 2.1	Bottom-up	Bottom-up	Bottom-up
"Als dat gedaan is, dan komen we weer samen met het managementteam en hoe kijken we dan nog naar die dilemma's en dan sluis je dat weer door naar het mission direction team en uiteindelijk presenteren we de strategie ideeën in de organisatie" Respondent 2.1	Bottom-up communicatie	Bottom-up	Bottom-up
Middle manager bedrijf 2			
"Voor mij is het belangrijk om die binding wel te hebben om ook een beetje de organisatie vooruit te helpen" Respondent 2.2	Binding met organisatie	Binding	Binding
"Ik moet weten wat er op de afdeling speelt en hoe dat naar het board gecommuniceerd wordt" Respondent 2.2	Op de hoogte zijn van stand van zaken	Toezicht	Binding
"Dat vinden mensen ook fijn dat ik daar voor ben, dat ze een aanspreekpunt hebben op de vloer en niet met alles meteen naar de board hoeven" Respondent 2.2	Aanspreekpunt van medewerkers	Communicatie met werknemers	Aanspreekpunt
"Ik denk dat het goed is dat er een laag tussen boven en beneden zit" Respondent 2.2	Tussen de werknemers en higher-level management	Tussenpositie	Tussenpositie
"Het is goed dat als er frustratiepunten zijn, dat ik er tussen zit om de boodschap te kunnen filteren" Respondent 2.2	Filteren van frustraties	Filtering	Tussenpositie

Appendix C – Coding scheme company three

In Appendix C the coding scheme of the two interviews with company three is shown. Respondent 3.1 is the middle manager, where Respondent 3.2 is the high-level manager in the company.

Quote	Open code	Axial code	Thema
Cultuur bedrijf 3			
"De bedrijfssfeer is een familiecultuur, die uit zich in toch een soort bepaald vrijheid binnen het ondernemerschap" Respondent 3.2	Vrijheid, familiecultuur	Familiecultuur	Familiecultuur
"De cultuur hier in de vestiging is heel laagdrempelig" Respondent 3.1	Laagdrempelig	Laagdrempelig	Open
"We zijn bezig met een onderzoek, omdat we denken dat we een familiecultuur hebben, van goh past die cultuur nog binnen het bedrijf nu we zo snel groeien" Respondent 3.2	Onderzoek; kijkend naar wat past bij de organisatie	Analytisch	Analytisch
"De familiecultuur is een eis vanuit de directie, maar vanuit een stuk situationeel leiderschap moeten we misschien iets meer hiërarchische aspecten toepassen" Respondent 3.2	Kijkend naar passende mogelijkheden; hiërarchie	Analytisch; hiërarchie	Hiërarchie
"Die familiale cultuur binnen de vestiging bestaat wel, maar we proberen onze projectmanagers nu wel op te leiden om vanuit een stuk projectmanagement iets ander gedrag toe te passen" Respondent 3.2	Aanpassen om goede resultaten te halen	Flexibel	Adaptief
"De realiteit leert, op het moment dat je meer een hiërarchische cultuur hebt, is je resultaat niet hoger" Respondent 3.2	Resultaat niet beter in andere cultuur	Analytisch	Analytisch
"We hebben geen afrekencultuur" Respondent 3.2	Geen afrekencultuur	Familiair	Familiecultuur
"Binnen de cultuur bestaat er wel die openheid om mensen te vragen en te benaderen om die hulp aan te bieden, en als er op dat moment geen behoefte is dan bekijken we het over een jaar weer" Respondent 3.1	Openheid; vragen om hulp	Open	Open
"Het helpt gewoon uiteindelijk de gehele organisatie verder als mensen blijven" Respondent 3.1	Bijscholing	Leercultuur	Leercultuur
"Het nakomen van die afspraak maar ook het motiveren van de werknemer om terug te komen als er nog niks gehoord is van de werknemer om terug te komen als er nog niks is gehoord van de leidinggevende, zijn dingen die wij binnen de leercultuur heel erg stimuleren" Respondent 3.1	Afspraken; motivatie; wederhoor	Familiair	Familiecultuur
"We lopen niet voorop met innovatie, maar we lopen ook zeker niet achteraan" Respondent 3.2	Bijhouden innovatie	Adaptief	Adaptief
"We houden ons vast aan dat familiale, maar we kijken ook naar de markt. We lopen niet voorop in de markt met innovatie. Onze kracht ligt meer bij klantenbinding en lange relaties opbouwen" Respondent 3.1	Minder innovatie, meer klantenbinding en relaties	Relatie	Familiecultuur
"Uitjes worden vanuit de personeelsvereniging veel georganiseerd" Respondent 3.1	Personeelsvereniging	Familiair	Familiecultuur
"Deze vestiging is een samenvoeging van 3 bedrijven, en je merkt nog steeds dat er verschillende culturen bij die verschillende groepen zitten" Respondent 3.2	Samenvoeging; verschillende culturen	Cultuurverschil	Cultuurverschillen
"Het heerst hier wel dat iedereen elkaar wil helpen, iedereen is bereid om een ander te helpen" Respondent 3.2	Bereid hulp te bieden	Open	Open
"Toch zie je dat het lastig is om iedereen bij elkaar te krijgen. Dat heeft dan misschien te maken met versnipperde cultuur" Respondent 3.1	Versnipperde cultuur	Cultuurverschil	Cultuurverschillen
Strategie bedrijf 3			
"We werken vanuit een visie en missie, daaruit krijgen we kernwaarden, daarin formuleer je doelstellingen en daarna de operationele doelstellingen" Respondent 3.2	Vanuit visie en missie; top-down	Top-down	Top-down

"Aan de hand van plan, check, act, loop ik die thema's van de vestiging en doelstellingen door met de afdelingshoofden die verantwoordelijk zijn" Respondent 3.2	Terugkoppeling tussen managers	Terugkoppeling	Top-down
"Per jaar zijn er verschillende doelstellingen voor de vestiging, aan de hand van een balanced scorecard houden we de doelstellingen bij en bespreken we die elk kwartaal" Respondent 3.2	Terugkoppeling tussen managers	Terugkoppeling	Terugkoppeling
"De bedoeling is van boven naar beneden" Respondent 3.2	Top-down communicatie	Top-down	Top-down
"We hebben afdeling overleggen, daar wordt het plan gedeeld en op een organische manier wordt dat doorgevoerd van boven naar beneden" Respondent 3.2	Organische communicatie	Organisch	Familiecultuur
"Ik denk dat je meer draagvlak aan de onderkant moet creëren om het aan de bovenkant te laten werken" Respondent 3.2	Draagvlak van onderin organisatie	Bottom-up	Bottom-up
"In de pijlers staan de vastgestelde doelen waar elke vestiging en afdeling zich aan houdt" Respondent 3.1	Vastgestelde doelen van bovenaf	Top-down	Top-down
"Er is nu best een oud management team, daaronder zit een andere generatie te drukken die ook willen doorgroeien, dus die moet je wel laten meedenken of tools geven" Respondent 3.1	Mensen buiten MT ook laten meedenken	Inspraak	Integratie
"Er is een prestatie manager die de pijlers in de gaten probeert te houden. Dat is om de terugkoppeling te krijgen en om te beoordelen hoe goed de strategie nageleefd wordt" Respondent 3.1	Prestatie manager; naleven strategie	Toezicht	Controle
"We hebben een beleidsteam die zich bezighoudt met die stukken, die worden doorvertaald naar de vestigingen, en die afspraken worden dan doorvertaald naar medewerkers niveau via de verschillende afdelingsleiders" Respondent 3.1	Top-down communicatie	Top-down	Top-down
Middle manager bedrijf 3			
"Ik heb een plan waar ik mij aan hou, ik zit met onze vestigingsmanager en dan bespreken we de stand van zaken" Respondent 3.1	Terugkoppeling tussen managers	Terugkoppeling	Bottom-up
"Dan bespreken we de belangrijke afspraken en ontwikkelingen die zich dus op de werkvloer spelen. Zo tackelen we de problemen van onderaf aan de bovenkant en voeren de middle managers dat weer door naar hun afdeling" Respondent 3.1	Top-down communicatie	Top-down	Top-down