Mindfulness in the process of sales

An Action Research Project in the Service Industry

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Management summary

This research examines the relationship between mindfulness stimuli and the capacity for absorption and recollection of selling related knowledge in a recruitment setting, through action research. The main research question is as follows: 'What is the effect of mindfulness stimuli on selling-related knowledge absorption and recollection in the Dutch recruitment sector?' This question is relevant as selling-related knowledge has been argued (in previous research and established knowledge and sales theory) to have a significant positive effect on sales performance. Furthermore, contemporary literature describes a growing demand on sales employees' knowledge. This research was performed within a single Dutch recruitment agency with a sample of 59 sales employees (both in- and outbound sales employees), of which 29 received the treatment and 30 served as control. The research question was answered through the use of three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Participants who receive the mindfulness stimulation will have significantly higher average scores on the FFMQ than participants who do not receive the mindfulness stimulation.

Hypothesis 2: Participants who receive the mindfulness stimulation will make significantly fewer mistakes on the sales test than participants who do not receive the mindfulness stimulation.

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between FFMQ scores and number of mistakes will be significant for both the experimental and control group.

After conducting statistical analyses (t-test for hypothesis 1 and 2 and Pearson's regression for hypothesis 3) the results show that all hypotheses can be confirmed. Thus the results indicate that there exists a significant positive relationship between mindfulness stimuli and the capacity for absorption and recollection of selling-related knowledge, therefore granting the opportunity to improve sales performance.

Keywords: **Mindfulness • Knowledge management • Sales • Service Industry**

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1. Introduction

Customers are becoming more demanding and more dynamic. They expect sales persons to know more, respond faster, have greater berth (mobilizing resources across the organization) and depth (strong customer relations) of communication and allow for customization (Jones, Brown, Zoltners, & Weitz, 2005). This combined with hyper competitive markets, increasingly rapid developments in technology and the changes in the legal and ethical landscape, puts a large burden on sales employees as the required knowledge increases greatly (Jones et al., 2005). Mindfulness can be a tool in aiding sales employees to perform better in an increasingly more knowledge-driven economic system.

In contemporary times, knowledge management (KM) is seen as a key determinant for a company's competitive advantage (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005; Teece et al., 1997; Argote & Ingram, 2000; Bhagat et al., 2002; Tagliaventi et al., 2010). Knowledge is a valuable resource that is difficult to imitate, as it incorporates intangible assets, creative processes and routines (Renzl, 2008; Grant, 1996). The accumulation and sharing of knowledge improves the skills and competencies of organizations and supports the creation of new products and services (Liu et al., 2011; Patnayakuni et al., 2006). Knowledge can be organized, separated and defined in multiple ways such as: factual, procedural and causal (Burton & Jones, 2003), individual vs organizational (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Tsoukas and Vladimirou, 2001; Bhatt, 2002) and tacit vs explicit (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). This research in particular zooms in on tacit (or implicit) vs explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is expressed or can be expressed without attenuation (Wijnhoven, 2008), in other words, explicit knowledge is easy to express and record. Tacit knowledge is hard to communicate and record. An example of tacit knowledge would be the complex social leadership skills that are often simply referred to as charisma.

Over the past decades, knowledge has evolved to be a key concept in the context of sales (Jones et al., 2005). Sales related knowledge is one of the driving factors of sales performance (Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011). Sales related (or selling related) knowledge is defined as 'the depth and width of the knowledge base that salespeople need to size up sales situations, classify prospects and select appropriate sales strategies for clients' (Leong, Busch & John 1989, p. 164). This knowledge goes beyond knowledge pertaining to products or services and includes (but is not limited to) knowledge about markets, competitors, technological developments and clients.

As knowledge becomes increasingly more important for sales performance and the body of relevant selling related information expands constantly, sales employees need a way of dealing with these developments. Sales employees would need to increase the assimilation of sales related knowledge in order to remain competitive in a more knowledge-based economic system as well as be able to recall the assimilated information. Mindfulness is argued to assist sales employees in assimilating and recalling information. Mindfulness is a heightened state of mental attention towards current internal and external stimuli that is not inhibited by emotion or perceived understandings of concepts and is instead characterized by non-emotional and open-minded states of mind. (Chiesa, Calati, & Serretti, 2011; Moore & Malinowski, 2009; Verbeke et al., 2011; van Vugt & Jha, 2011). This study aims to fill this gap, therefore the research question that guides this effort is: *What is the effect of mindfulness stimuli on selling-related knowledge absorption and recollection in the Dutch recruitment sector?* A common used tool to measure the degree of mindfulness is the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), therefore the following hypothesis are constructed to examine the research question:

H1: Participants who receive the mindfulness stimulation will have significantly higher average scores on the FFMQ than participants who do not receive the mindfulness stimulation.

H2: Participants who receive the mindfulness stimulation will make significantly fewer mistakes on the sales test than participants who do not receive the mindfulness stimulation.

H3: The relationship between FFMQ scores and number of mistakes will be significant for both the experimental and control group.

2. Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework consists of three distinct parts. First the concept of knowledge itself is discussed, defining it as well as stating its general importance in sales. The second part discusses the relationship between knowledge and sales more in depth. Lastly the theory surrounding mindfulness is discussed, displaying the relationship between mindfulness techniques and sales performance.

2.1. Knowledge

Various classifications have been used to define types of knowledge, e.g. factual, procedural and causal (Burton & Jones, 2003), individual vs organizational (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Tsoukas and Vladimirou, 2001; Bhatt, 2002) and tacit vs explicit (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). For this research the latter classification is chosen, as it is the most cited and published in literature (Wong, 2004). This classification is covered by the semiotic distinction, and involves a focus on the issue of codifying tacit knowledge and consequently internalizing codified knowledge as part of personal believes (Wijnhoven, 2008). A third aspect of this classification is latent knowledge, which involves shared informal norms and values. The major implication of these three types of knowledge is that they involve different problems, and require different processes and solutions (Wong, 2004 ; Wijnhoven, 2008). This definition of knowledge is also known as “implicit vs explicit” knowledge (Gourlay, 2007; Ale, Toledo, Chiotti, & Galli, 2014).

Tacit knowledge is not and cannot be expressed (Wijnhoven, 2008), complex social leadership skills are for instance difficult or near impossible to communicate and often referred to charisma. Explicit knowledge is expressed or can be expressed without attenuation (Wijnhoven, 2008), for instance: project management and planning skills can be easily recorded and communicated. Latent knowledge relates to information about people with their personal knowledge, with feasible representations which can be gained from e.g. business process analyses (Wijnhoven, 2008). To operationalize the three concepts, explicit knowledge is subdivided into explicit insights, data and norms and values, and tacit knowledge will be referred to as skills. Data is everything that is registered, analog or digital. Explicit insights are (proven) methods, a set of rules for arbitrary working processes. Data and explicit insights are not difficult to extract from a person. Finally, skills are personal embedded competences, which are difficult the extract.

Gourlay's (2007) definition of implicit knowledge is close to Wijnhoven's (2008) definition of tacit knowledge. The difference being that Gourlay (2007) does believe implicit knowledge can be transferred and recorded although with great difficulty. The extraction process as well as the correct communication of this type of knowledge is considered challenging. Additionally it is impossible to know beforehand whether certain implicit knowledge is correct or whether it is the knowledge one wished to extract in the first place.

Verbeke et al. (2011) argue in their meta-analysis that selling related knowledge is the most significant driver of sales performance among all researched factors in contemporary literature. Furthermore, cognitive aptitude is strongly related to selling-related knowledge, therefore a key skill in achieving higher sales performance. Selling-related knowledge is defined as 'the depth and width of the knowledge base that salespeople need to size up sales situations, classify prospects and select appropriate sales strategies for clients' (Leong et al., 1989, p. 164). The concept thus captures the richness and quantity of knowledge which salespeople apply when selling products and services in ways to help solve customer problems. (Kumar, Venkatesan & Reinatz, 2008). This not only includes product and/or service knowledge, but also knowledge about markets and prospect characteristics. Therefore, selling-related knowledge can serve as a measurement instrument for explicit insights, data and norms and values. If selling-related knowledge leads to sales performance, explicit insights employees should apply methods to gather this knowledge, registering this data for every prospect or client and represent these in daily business processes. Cognitive aptitude serves as a measurement instrument for skills. Cognitive aptitude is defined as 'the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation' (Weitz, Sujan & Sujan, 1986, p. 175).

2.2. The importance of knowledge in sales

Having established what knowledge is and, more specifically, what selling-related knowledge is, allows for a discussion on why it is important. Several articles discuss the importance of knowledge in sales as changing environments drive organizations and employees to change in order to keep up with customer demands.

First, Leong et al. (1989) empirically test the performance differences in knowledge in a multiline insurance company. 80 subjects were involved, all of which were full-time sales agents. A link was found between high effective salespeople and having more knowledge to be able to elaborate, be distinctive and hypothetical/ abstract. Jones et al. (2005) mention (in a theoretical paper) that there are several dimensions of change in the sales environment causing an increase in the knowledge necessary to stay competitive. Salesperson knowledge no longer only contains technological expertise and product knowledge but also market information and customer information available in the public domain. The four external dimensions of change identified by Jones et al. (2005) are the customer domain, the competitor domain, the ethical/legal domain and the technology domain.

Customers are becoming more demanding and more dynamic. They expect sales persons to know more, respond faster, have greater berth (mobilizing resources across the organization) and depth (strong customer relations) of communication and allow for customization (Jones et al., 2005). This combined with hyper competitive markets, increasingly rapid developments in technology and the changes in the legal and ethical landscape, puts a large burden on sales employees as the required knowledge increases greatly. While the external environment changes, the internal (organizational) environment changes as well. The organization has to adapt to the external changes after all. Introducing new products, mergers and acquisitions and productivity management all have an effect on the sales employees.

Lastly an article by Cron, Marshall, Singh, Spiro, & Sujan (2005), discusses the different sets of knowledge skills and abilities (KSA) necessary for salespeople in the changing environment. This article distinguishes between three types of KSA: Task-related KSA (product, market, company, selling, etc.), Growth-related KSA (adaptive, coping, goal-setting, problem-solving, improvisation, etc.) and meta-KSA (self-development/management, regulation, learning and knowledge development, etc.).

These three articles demonstrate how demanding the environment has become and how much knowledge salespeople must possess in order to function competitively. Employees need to be able to cope with this large amount of information and knowledge that is necessary to properly execute their sales function. Sales employees need to be supported in this endeavour. This is where mindfulness may have added value.

2.3. Mindfulness

Understanding that the sales related knowledge necessary to generate sales has increased, the argument can be made that the sales environment has become more demanding of the cognitive capacity of sales employees (Verbeke et al., 2011). Sales employees would need to increase the assimilation of sales related knowledge in order to remain competitive in a more knowledge-based economic system as well as be able to recall the assimilated information. There are multiple tools and ways in which management may be able to support sales employees in their endeavors. Information and communication technology (ICT) systems that record sales related knowledge are one example of a supporting tool that can be implemented by the management to improve sales employees' ability to cope with the ever increasing body of (solely explicit) information (as recorded information is explicit). Another way is mindfulness training (for both explicit and implicit knowledge), which will be the focus of this thesis.

In order to understand how mindfulness can contribute to the improved cognitive capabilities concerning information assimilation and recollection a definition is necessary. Mindfulness itself has Buddhist roots and is described as lucid awareness which reveals that what is occurring beyond conceptual and emotional classifications of what is or has taken place (Chiesa et al., 2011). As this definition is not necessarily useful for scientific purposes, different articles attempted to define mindfulness in a more scientifically workable fashion. Chiesa et al. (2011) argue that there are two main components to the definition of mindfulness, those being (1) "a mental state of full attention to internal and external experiences as they occur in the present moment" and (2) "a particular attitude characterized by non-judgment and openness to current experience". A similar definition was given by van Vugt & Jha (2011): "a psychological mode characterized by full attention to present-moment experience without conceptual elaboration or emotional reactivity (p.344)". Moore and Malinowski (2009) also acknowledge these two main points and describe it as various aspects of attention and a state of non-judgement. This thesis will thus use a definition based on these two main points:

> "Mindfulness is a heightened state of mental attention towards current internal and external stimuli that is not inhibited by emotion or perceived understandings of concepts and is instead characterized by non-emotional and open-minded states of mind." (Chiesa et al., 2011; Moore & Malinowski, 2009; Verbeke et al., 2011; van Vugt & Jha, 2011)

Having established what mindfulness is, it is now possible to move on to how mindfulness would be able to affect sales performance of sales employees by affecting their cognitive abilities.

One of the effects of mindfulness is the positive effect it has on working memory and cognition in general. Working memory is defined as: "the ability to store and manipulate information for short periods of time … an important predictor of scholastic aptitude and a critical bottleneck underlying higher-order cognitive processes, including controlled attention and reasoning." (Au, Sheehan, Tsai, Duncan, Buschkuehl & Jaeggi, 2014, p.366)

A study conducted at the University of North Carolina including 63 volunteering students who were previously interested in meditation, revealed that mindfulness training has a significant positive impact on visual-spatial processing, working memory and executive functioning (Zeidan, Johnson, Diamond, David, & Goolkasian, 2010). There are however some things to keep in mind when accessing the results of this research as a case of self-selection could have influenced results. The students were previously interested in mediation and could therefore be affected to greater extent than those who are not interested in meditation and other such practices. A meta-analysis of 209 studies showed that mindfulness training increases mindfulness as well as treats mental problems such as anxiety and depression (Khoury, Lecomte, Fortin, Masse, Therien, Bouchard & Hofmann, 2013). A different meta-study (including 23 articles) focused more on the effect mindfulness has on cognitive abilities and found that general cognitive abilities and working memory specifically are positively influenced by mindfulness (Chiesa et al., 2011). This study does advocate caution on the basis of short comings of the studies involved.

Van Vucht and Jha (2011) found that mindfulness and meditation training (in a group of 29 participants) increases information quality of given responses (by the treated group) as well as the response time. The response time also became less variable after the mindfulness training had been completed. 29 respondents is, however, not a particularly large number and the statistical results may have been impacted as a consequence of the low amount of participants. Similar results were found in a different study with 50 participants, where cognitive flexibility and attentional functions were found to be positively related to mindfulness (Moore & Malinowski, 2009).

As has become apparent, the studies that link mindfulness and cognitive abilities have found evidence supporting this relationship, there is however still plenty of space to further investigate this relationship. For example, Harrison, Shipstead, Hicks, Hambrick, Redick &

Engle (2013) note that working memory training may increase the working memory capacity but not fluid intelligence (which is important for solving problems in novel contexts) in a study with 87 undergraduate students. Au et al. (2014) did find a positive relationship between working memory training and cognitive functions in a meta-analysis of 20 studies. Other studies also argue that the relationships found between working memory training and cognitive abilities could be influenced by either measurement error or other methodology related problems as proposed by for instance the theoretical study of Shipstead, Redick & Randall (2012).

All in all the results are mixed and there are methodological challenges to measuring whether mindfulness (or working memory training in general) can in fact improve working memory or cognitive abilities. There is however enough evidence to support the notion that working memory may be positively influenced by mindfulness (or other working memory specific training). Despite the methodological issues discussed previously, mindfulness remains an interesting concept to explore. If mindfulness training can increase working memory as well as general cognitive capacity, sales employees receiving this training could be enabled to better deal with the information-rich sales environment. Allowing them to better assimilate, sort, prioritize and deal with the information required to close a sale.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the research design and data collection & analysis methods are discussed.

3.1. Research Design

Traditional scientific research generally attempts to create a universal truth (e.g. applicable for every company), preferably based on big sample sizes. However, this universal truth is based on a mean, and there are many outliers which potentially have different truths (Freire, 1972 ; Habermas, 1979). Methods such as action research address these outliers and focus on uncovering local truths (e.g. specific for one organization or specific section of the population). Action research fits within the qualitative research paradigm, as its results are not based on vast quantities of data but a fundamental understanding of the underlying variables (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). It follows the action research cycle, shown in figure 1.

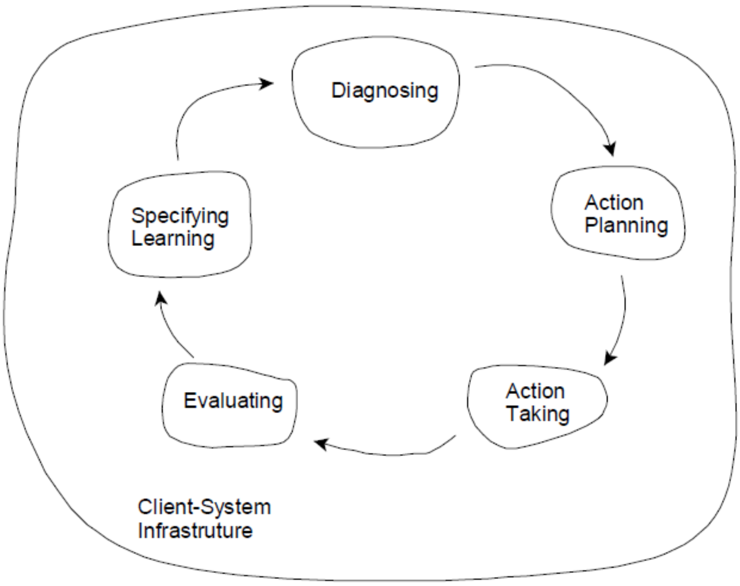

Figure 1: The action research cycle (Baskerville, 1999).

The action research cycle comprises a pre-step (i.e. client-system infrastructure) and five main phases (i.e. diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating and specifying learning. (Baskerville, 1999).

The starting point of the action research cycle is the **pre-step**, in which the client-system infrastructure is defined. During this phase the research environment is specified and agreements are made. The first of the five main steps is **diagnosing**, during which the occurring issues are named as a working hypothesis with certain theoretical assumptions, in turn functioning as a base for planning action. The second step, **action planning**, derives from the analysis of the client-system infrastructure, the assessment of the issue, and is consistent with them. The plan sets the target for- and approach to change. Subsequently, the plans are implemented and interventions are made during the '**action taking**' step. Furthermore, the outcomes of the action are **evaluated** to examine the correctness of the original diagnosis and the taken actions, if these actions were taken in an appropriate manner and if the theoretical effects of the action were realized. Lastly, during the **specifying learning** stage, the gained knowledge can restructure organizational norms or function as a base for diagnosing in subsequent action research interventions, depending on the successfulness of the change.

3.2. Sample Selection

The researched organization is a job agency with approximately 140 employees. Sales is a vital component of the company and many employees are involved in it, making it suitable to conduct this research. Their core business consists of employment related activities such as recruitment and payroll and their operations are nationally represented by 38 locations of which 3 are franchisers. The organization incorporates a strong family culture, where open communication is highly valued. The organization is also involved in special projects (e.g. the Johan Cruyf foundation), for which they recruit all volunteers.

As unit of analysis, the employees who fulfil the core tasks of a job agency (i.e. acquire new companies to deliver services for and provide employees for existing clients) are selected. Approximately 70% of all employees are involved in these tasks. The units of observation, besides the employees fulfilling the core tasks, also include top and middle management. This provides a broad view of the sales process, from the employees who set the policies and working processes to those who must apply them in their daily work.

3.3. Data Collection

The qualitative data analysis was conducted according to the procedure of Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of four interrelated phases, i.e. data collection, data reduction, data display, verifying and conclusion drawing. As the analysis of underlying motivations and behaviours are important aspects in working processes, this study has gathered qualitative data via semi-structured interviews and focus groups during the first stage of action research. A set of open questions was developed for every distinction of knowledge (i.e. explicit insights, data, norms and values and skills) to cover all necessary information, however, additional questions were asked during the interviews to either clarify or gain added information. The core questions asked during every conversation are shown in table 1.

Distinction of knowledge	**Core questions**
Explicit Insights	*Which methods do employees apply during the sales process?* *In which way are employees trained in using these methods?*
Data	*What data is registered?* *What data is shared with other employees?*
Norms and Values	*How would you describe 'the way things are done' at this company?*
Skills	*Which skills do employees embark on during the sales process?* *Which skills determine discrepancies in sales effectiveness?* *In which way are employee skills trained?*

Table 1: Core questions of semi-structured interviews

The interviews were conducted at employees' job locations and employees were contacted via the company's internal social media (SpeakApp). The duration of the interviews was 20 minutes on average, the focus groups both took approximately 30 minutes. Individual interviews were conducted with the sales director (top management), sales operational manager (middle management) and HR-manager to provide a view on the set policies and working processes. Two focus groups were conducted with the sales employees, as they operate in teams, and provided information on the daily practices. No further data was gathered as the results showed that there were no company policies or working processes designed for the sales process, and no new information could be gained with more interviews. The interviews and focus groups were recorded and notes were taken during the conversations, to ensure that every question was answered (Opdenakker, 2006). The findings of the interviews and focus groups were combined with secondary data sources (i.e. system usage analysis), improving the reliability of the research (Mathison, 1988). The results of the conducted interviews indicate a potential need for mindfulness. Subsequently, an experiment was conducted in the action taking stage to investigate if the in theory described advantages also apply in this setting.

The sample for the experiment consists of 59 employees working in inbound and outbound sales. These employees will be split into two groups via a process of random assignment using a coin toss to decide whether an employee belongs to the treatment or control group. The treatment group will be administered a treatment and a post-test, whilst the control group will only have a post test. To summarize: This research uses a treatment and post-test group (no pre-test is administered) and a post-test group without treatment. The employees from the sample are randomly assigned to one of the two groups. This can be represented visually with the following diagram:

XO

R

O

(Diagram 1: research design)

The treatment consists of an auditory stimulus delivered via headphones (to isolate outside noises). The stimulus was a ten minutes recording which has the purpose of inducing or enhancing a state of mindfulness. In order to test whether this is actually achieved, a FFMQ assessment was administered after the stimulus had been delivered (see appendix 1). The FFMQ is a 39-item questionnaire that measures five facets of mindfulness (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Tony, 2006): describing (8 items, e.g., I'm good at finding the words to describe my feelings), observing (8 items, e.g., I notice the wind breezing through my hair), nonreactivity (7 items; e.g., I experience my emotions without getting lost in them), acting with awareness (8 items; e.g., I can be easily distracted) and non- judging (8 items, e.g., I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions).

The Dutch FFMQ and short form, utilized in this research, was developed by translation and back-translation of the original FFMQ and has shown sufficient construct validity and test-retest reliability (Veehof, ten Klooster, Taal, Westerhof, & Bohlmeijer, 2011).

After administering the FFMQ assessment, the employees move on to a case. The case consists of two company descriptions. The descriptions are provided in a realistic format, the way they would be displayed if an employee would try to find company information on a website. Each employee has eight minutes to read the six pages of information, after which he or she receives a questionnaire. This questionnaire contains a set of five multiple choice questions for every company description (10 in total). The questions focus on several aspects of selling-related knowledge. The interviews from the diagnosis indicate that selling-related knowledge aspects as branche, collective labour agreement, organizational information and organizational processes are important for this specific organization. The questions relate to all of these aspects with the exception of collective labour agreement. The operationalisation of the dependent variable is the amount of mistakes made on the questionnaire. The rationale behind this is that the amount of mistakes made should reflect the amount of selling-related knowledge absorbed. The fewer mistakes, the greater the knowledge absorption. The case and question list can be found in appendix 2 and 3 respectively. The employees had a total of five minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The following table describes the entire action taking stage for the treatment and control groups:

Group	Step	Activity
Treatment	1	Mindfulness stimulus
Treatment	2	FFMQ assessment
Treatment	3	Case
Treatment	4	Case related questionnaire
Control	1	FFMQ assessment
Control	2	Case
Control	3	Case related questionnaire

(table 2: action taking stage for treatment and control groups)

3.4. Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and the qualitative analysis method of Miles and Huberman (1994) was applied. First, the data was reduced by open coding into four conceptual categories (i.e. explicit insights, data, norms and values and skills). All relevant statements were organized under the appropriate code. Secondly, the qualitative data was reread to search for possible overlooked statements that may fit in any of the categories. Lastly, combined with the system usage analysis, comparisons to sales literature can be made and indicate the needs for training. The FFMQ and sales questionnaire for the experiment were conducted on paper and the outcomes were subsequently entered into SPSS for analysis.

4. Reporting the action research cycles

For each of the five action research stages the events and analysis are presented and the results are discussed.

4.1 Diagnosing

The results of the analysed data derived from the interviews and focus groups will be discussed for every individual aspect of knowledge. This is combined with a gap analysis between theory and practice.

Explicit Insights

When examining an organization wide applied sales method, responses were clear and unanimous:

> *Ok, well there is no fixed method for that (….) a method to state this and how we are going to conduct sales, no. (….) Employees receive little to no training in sales methods. It's really like coaching on the job.*

This results in a situation where every individual employee decides their own sales method, mostly influenced by direct colleagues:

> *In the current situation it's based on your own expertise, the way you think about sales. (….) But especially joining colleagues and learning from each other's ideas. (….) Considering that I think there is much to be gained and at this point we are dependent on the person, the individual, how he performs and gives meaning based on his skills. So I feel that there is room for more guidance.*

To give an impression on which sales methods are currently applied by individual employees, some examples are given:

> *That is your warm acquisition which derives from a lead you receive from your personal network, and two is the cold acquisition where you get in your car and just visit a company. A third is gathering a reference, for example via employees (….) Everybody makes his own plan from a hitlist of 30 companies that fit the IP culture. Consequently you bombard these companies with e-mails, visits, marketing actions, with certain actions just to get in, networking. With every network meeting where concerned customers partake, you are actually present. So many actions on networking. (….) What I do a lot at this point is looking for collaboration with other employees to see how we can create a good proposition for a sales story. What is IP? So if this is clear for you then you will present yourself this way in the market. And yes we do that by calling, I like calling a lot, I like cold acquisition.*

Described above are a few examples of currently applied methods and indicate a main focus on networking with and the mapping of prospects (i.e. potential customers). However, the employees describe no method to gain selling-related knowledge, which is a crucial aspect of sales according to the theory. Employees did however confirm that selling-related knowledge is important in their daily work after suggestively asking their opinion on the subject. They were also able to clearly clarify the important types of selling-related knowledge for their line of work. However, as mentioned, there is no training nor focus on gaining selling related-knowledge and the internet is mainly utilized for additional info.

Data

Along with the interviews and focus groups, the main system employees utilize in their daily work was also analysed for this aspect. This system (FMS) is broadly applied by almost all job agencies in The Netherlands. It allows employees, in the context of sales, to register a great variety of selling-related knowledge. The main aspect to be registered is a visit report and company information:

> *Well the entire visit report, so who is the customer and what is their potential. What is the possible amount of employees they need, who are the competitors. And of course what is the aspect in which you can trigger the customer to do business with IP. (....) Yes tender moments, what type of profile they look for. (....) So actually the entire stocktaking of a company, who can be important people to trigger and can lead you to that specific person with decision authority.*

Although the system allows for a great diversity of registered information, the current data bank is rarely filled. The reason for this, according to the employees, is indicated by a sales person's nature and the lack of training:

> *Could be better. You are dealing with sales people and in general they are more doers, so stepping out of the process to register what they are doing can be a challenge (....) An honest answer would be not. At the moment employees start a colleague shows them FMS. We do have a manual but that's quite thick, so at the moment employees are not really trained in that, expect for just doing it, on the job. (....) It is almost an inheritance, passing it on to the other. When a new employee arrives en show them this is FMS and this is how I work with it. So the new employee starts imitating the way you use the system. There has never been a clear structure or training in that.*

When the colleague who trains the new employee doesn't use the system as suggested by the manual, the new employee will automatically take over these bad habits. The result indicate an improper utilization of the system. The importance of this aspect is emphasized by the following phrases:

Because not everything is registered and documented, this can be very difficult when I'm not there and somebody has to take over and can't read up or is unknowing. (....) So it's a pretty wide range of information that is important to register for us, but also for potential follow-up steps. If you are not there somebody else should be able to see what was discussed with who, if you are on a vacation and a customer has a question then it is very important that you can see the information.

The current lack of registration of selling-related knowledge can have a negative effect on sales performance. Not only in the situation where the responsible sales agent is (temporarily) absent and a colleague has to take over, but also because important selling-related information need to be looked up/gained over and over again. Some selling-related knowledge, e.g. industry trend, can be generalized across entire regions. Registering this knowledge could save precious time and prevent other colleagues from re-inventing the wheel.

Norms and values

The way 'things are done' at the researched organization can be characterized as collegially and unstructured:

I think team effort is very important, this because we are not very structured as an organization. People who then really hold on to their job descriptions won't fit with us. So you must also have the flexibility to help your colleagues at the moment where you are less busy. (....) Collegiality, very important in this role. Fulfil what you say, that is for me very important in sales. There is only room for 1 error, I can make promises to a customer but if those are not fulfilled, you're done. Mouth to mouth is just very important. (....) The way you work is how you deliver. That doesn't mean that this is the wish of the company, but you just do it because environmental factors such as bustle influence you.

The lack of structure allows employees to be flexible in their day-to-day work, which they explain to have a positive effect on their motivation. However, unstructured more than often leads to chaos and working overtime to maintain customer satisfaction. As customers are becoming more demanding and dynamic, more structure could lower the possible risk of failing to make a deadline or uphold appointments. More structure could be applied in such a degree that it enhances business processes without diminishing current flexibility.

Skills

For salespersons' skills, the employees emphasized on having good communication skills:

> *You have to be able to level with the customer, should it be the production manager or the director. You have to be able to convince them that we are important for them, not the other way around. Also, that he needs us and he wants to do business with us, and not because he has to do business with us. (….) It's an open door, but of course communicative skills, to be an equal levelled conversation partner, and that sometimes involves a certain work and think level.*

The organization has no general training program for new employees to enhance their sales skills:

> *Well that's pure training on the job. If you take a look at the new colleague; he's in, gets put at his location and then it's just learning by doing.*

The lack of any organizational focus on skills can be problematic for new employees, also forcing them to reinvent the wheel. As employees emphasize, it is important with communication to be an equal discussion partner. This means e.g. knowing the organization's market at the same level as your conversation partner. When referring to the theory, an important aspect of the communication skill in sales is having a sufficient level of selling related knowledge. The results indicate that the organization invests no time or resources in knowledge management, however does realize that selling-related knowledge is important in the sales process. No steps are taken into facilitating the absorption and recollection of selling-related knowledge. In this regard, mindfulness could be a valuable tool.

This also relates to the types of knowledge. An individual who is mindful (as per the definition given in section 2.3) is more aware of his or her own implicit knowledge. The essence of mindfulness is recognizing one's own preconceptions which allows for an open state of mind and thus improving the ability to recognize and absorb implicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is easily transferable but the preconceptions of an individual may still hamper one's judgement. Consequently, discerning between what is and isn't important knowledge becomes more difficult if an individual is not aware of this.

4.2 Action planning

The action planning stage precedes the action taking stage and contains a description of the experiment that is to be executed during the action taking stage. The description is thoroughly discussed in chapter 3.3 and summarized in table 2 in the same chapter.

4.3 Action taking

The employees were randomly assigned to the the experimental group and control group. This resulted in 29 participants in the experimental group and 30 in the control group. Participants were contacted via email and phone to arrange a time and date for the experiment. The experiments took place at job locations under quiet circumstances where participants would not be disturbed, mostly in meeting rooms. These job locations were mainly in the big cities of the Netherlands, as the researched organization is nationally represented. The duration of the experiments was approximately 30 minutes for the control group participants and 40 minutes for the experimental group. To prevent contamination, participants were explicitly requested not to contact other employees about the contents or nature of the research. The data was collected over a period of three months. The FFMQ and sales questionnaire were conducted on paper and the outcomes were subsequently entered into SPSS for analysis.

4.3.1 Results

The outcomes of the FFMQ and sales questionnaire were analyzed via SPSS and the results will be discussed in this chapter.

The mean FFMQ score for the experimental group is 89.10, with a highest score of 101 and lowest of 71. The mode is 89, indicating that outliers have a limited effect on the mean. This is also underscored by the fact that both the kurtosis (.732) and skewness (-.344) fall well within the bounds necessary to assume the distribution is normal. For the control group, the mean FFMQ score is 81.50, with a highest score of 99 and lowest of 66. The mode (78), the skewness (.073) and kurtosis (-.066) once again suggest these scores are normally distributed.

In the scoring of the FFMQ the category ‘average mindfulness’ ranges from 54 – 88, the category 89 – 120 is considered ‘higher than average mindful’. This places the experimental group in the ‘higher than average mindful’ category, but only by a small margin. The control group is placed in the ‘average mindful’ category.

The mean number of mistakes for the experimental group is 2.97 with a mode of 3, as well as a highest score of 5 and lowest of 1. Both the kurtosis (.798) and the skewness (.066) suggest a normal distribution. For the control group, the mean number of mistakes is 3.63 with a mode of 3, as well as a highest score of 6 and lowest of 2. These results are also normally distributed as suggested by the kurtosis (-.651) as well as the skewness (.506) To compare the results between the two groups and to examine if the found differences are also significant, a t-test was conducted.

On average, participants given the mindfulness stimulation scored higher on the FFMQ test ($M = 89.10$, $SE = 6.847$) than those not given the mindfulness stimulation ($M = 81.50$, $SE = 7.324$). This difference, -7.6, BCa 95% CI [3.909, 11.298], was significant $t(57) = 4.121$, $p < .001$. This result indicates that the first hypothesis ‘Participants who receive the mindfulness stimulation will have significantly higher average scores on the FFMQ than participants who do not receive the mindfulness stimulation’ should be assumed.

On average, participants given the mindfulness stimulation made fewer mistakes on the sales exam ($M = 2.97$, $SE = .823$) than those not given the mindfulness stimulation ($M = 3.63$, $SE = 1.159$). This difference, 0.66, BCa 95% CI [-1.194, -0.142], was significant $t(57) = -2.544$, $p = .014$. This results indicates that the second hypothesis ‘Participants who receive the mindfulness stimulation will make significantly less mistakes on the sales test than participants who do not receive the mindfulness stimulation’ should be assumed.

In order to examine whether there exists a relationship between the FFMQ test and the amount of mistakes made on the questionnaire, a Pearson regression analysis was conducted. The expectation is that there exists a negative correlation between the two variables. For the experimental group, the FFMQ scores were significantly related to the number of mistakes on the sales test, $r = -.716$, BCa CI [-.884, -.399], $p < 0.01$. For the control group, the FFMQ scores were also significantly related to the number of mistakes on the sales test, $r = -.676$, BCa CI [-.892, -.363], $p < 0.01$. This result indicates that the third hypothesis ‘The relationship between FFMQ scores and number of mistakes will be significant for both the experimental and control group’ should be assumed.

4.4 Evaluating

The statistical tests have presented new insights allowing for better understanding of the relationship between mindfulness and selling-related knowledge absorption and recollection (which is theorized to have a positive effect on sales performance).

Starting with the first hypothesis, we can surmise that the mindfulness stimulus does induce a higher state of mindfulness as shown by the significant difference in FFMQ scores between the groups. This hypothesis therefore confirms that auditory meditational stimuli positively influence the state of mindfulness within a subject. The FFMQ test was, however, directly administered after the stimulus was given to the subjects. There is no guarantee that the heightened state of mindfulness will persist throughout longer periods. The mindfulness theory discussed earlier, indicates that stimuli (in this case mindfulness training) should be given to the subjects over longer periods of time in order to self-induce and maintain heightened states of mindfulness.

The second hypothesis states that mindfulness training will improve the performance (measured in amount of mistakes) of the subjects that were exposed to the auditory meditational stimuli. This hypothesis was also confirmed, meaning that a heightened state of mindfulness (as was measured with the FFMQ test) has reduced the amount of mistakes made on the case tests by a significant margin. The discussed theory also confirms this idea. The test and theory both suggest that the absorption and recollection of selling-related knowledge is improved by mindfulness (through the improvement of working memory).

The last hypothesis examines the relationship between the FFMQ score and the amount of mistakes made on the case tests. The expected relationship proved to be both significant and in the right direction (negative). This relationship holds true for both groups, indicating that not only those who were exposed to auditory meditational mindfulness stimuli display the relationship. This would mean that the state of mindfulness affects the test performance independent of whether stimuli were administered or not, Confirming the belief that the state of mindfulness is what affects the performance.

Through these hypotheses, the research question can be answered. The research question, as stated in the introduction was: “What is the effect of mindfulness stimuli on selling-related knowledge absorption and recollection in the Dutch recruitment sector?” The answer to this question is that the effect of mindfulness stimuli on selling related-knowledge absorption and recollection is both significant as well as positive. Therefore it can be assumed that sales performance will increase as mindfulness increases. This research therefore connects the sales, mindfulness and working memory theory. Having shown that mindfulness can improve working memory and therefore the absorption and recollection of selling-related knowledge which in turn improves sales performance (as argued by sales theory).

The insight this research has given in this relationship is strongly connected to its practical relevance. Mindfulness can have practical value by meeting the increasingly demanding needs on sales employees’ knowledge, as described in the theory, or as employees in the researched organization describe as ‘being able to level with the person across the table’. As stated in the theory, selling-related knowledge is one of the driving factors of sales performance. By incorporating mindfulness in sales training programs organizations can enhance their sales employees’ selling-related knowledge assimilation and recollection, thereby increasing sales performance. With this knowledge, HRM professionals, managers and operational employees alike, can better judge the value of investments of time and resources in sales performance improving training and in particular mindfulness training.

4.5 Specifying learning

Several implications for subsequent iterations of the general action research model can be derived from the results. Mainly, future research is needed to examine the relationship between auditory mindfulness stimuli and FFMQ scores when the time span between receiving the stimuli and taking the FFMQ is increased. This would also require multiple mindfulness stimuli on a longer term (e.g. 4-6 weeks). Furthermore, the time span between the mindfulness stimuli and the sales questionnaire can also be increased to simulate a more realistic setting. In practice, the moment where a sales employee absorbs the selling-related knowledge can be hours or days apart from the moment of recollection during sales conversations.

Further iterations can be conducted to examine if similar results will be gained in a sales context when the time span between knowledge absorption and recollection is increased. Additionally, the concept of selling-related knowledge can be interpreted with a broader view in future iterations, including aspects such as organizational process knowledge and/or the translation of new legislations for employee management. This would provide a more complete picture of how sales employees can meet with current knowledge demands.

5. Limitations

In this chapter the limitations of this research will be noted. The research consists of a single study conducted for one organization in one sector. Although there is little to indicate that the findings will not apply in other recruitment agencies, the generalizability of the findings still needs to be tested. Furthermore, the researched group consisted of employees exclusively involved in sales as well as employees who were also involved in other tasks (e.g. customer relationship management). However, this distribution to sales inbound and sales outbound was recently executed by the organization, thus all participants were involved in the tasks currently executed by sales outbound employees. As mentioned in chapter 4, it cannot be concluded that the state of mindfulness would also be effective on the long term, which would be necessary in a practical setting. Furthermore, the sample size of 59 is limited, and further research is needed to examine if these results will be similar in larger sample sizes. Also, the study relies mainly on self-report questionnaire data. Several forms of response bias (e.g. common method variance, ‘halo effects’) can present a potential source of invalidity to substantive interpretation. Lastly, some of the tools used in this research, such as the auditory mindfulness stimuli and the case (as well as case questions), have not previously been validated in other academic research. These tool have been taken from practice as the academic world did not have the tools available. The effects of the mindfulness stimuli, however, have been controlled for by using the FFMQ test which has been validated multiple times.

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7. Appendix

7.1 FFMQ-SF

1. Ik ben goed in het vinden van woorden om mijn gevoelens te beschrijven

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 01					

2. **Ik kan makkelijk mijn overtuigingen, meningen en verwachtingen onder woorden brengen.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 02					

3. **Ik observeer mijn gevoelens zonder dat ik me er helemaal door laat meeslepen.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 03					

4. **Ik zeg tegen mezelf dat ik me niet zo zou moeten voelen als ik me voel.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 04					

5. **Het is moeilijk voor me om de woorden te vinden die mijn gedachten beschrijven.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 05					

6. **Ik let op lichamelijke ervaringen, zoals de wind in mijn haar of de zon op mijn gezicht.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 06					

7. **Ik oordeel of mijn gedachten goed of fout zijn.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 07					

8. **Ik vind het moeilijk om mijn aandacht te houden bij wat er op dit moment gebeurt.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 08					

9. **Als ik verontrustende gedachten heb of beelden zie, dan laat ik me daar niet door meevoeren.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 09					

10. **Ik let in het algemeen op geluiden zoals het tikken van een klok, het fluiten van de vogels of het voorbijrijden van een auto.**

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 10					

11. Als ik iets in mijn lichaam voel, kost het me moeite om de juiste woorden te vinden om het te beschrijven.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 11					

12. Het lijkt alsof ik op de 'automatische piloot' sta zonder dat ik me erg bewust ben van wat ik doe.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 12					

13. Als ik verontrustende gedachten heb of beelden zie, voel ik me kort daarna weer rustig.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 13					

14. Ik zeg tegen mezelf dat ik niet moet denken zoals ik denk.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 14					

15. Ik merk de geur en het aroma van dingen op.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 15					

16. Zelfs als ik heel erg overstuur ben kan ik dit op een of andere manier onder woorden brengen.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 16					

17. Ik doe activiteiten gehaast zonder dat ik er echt aandacht voor heb.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 17					

18. Als ik verontrustende gedachten heb of beelden zie, kan ik ze opmerken zonder iets te doen.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 18					

19. Ik denk dat mijn emoties soms slecht of ongepast zijn en dat ik ze niet zou moeten voelen.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 19					

20. Ik merk de visuele aspecten van kunst of de natuur op, zoals kleur, vorm, structuur of patronen van licht en donker.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 20					

21. Als ik verontrustende gedachten heb of beelden zie, merk ik ze op laat ze los.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 21					

22. Ik doe mijn werk of taken automatisch zonder dat ik me bewust ben van wat ik doe.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 22					

23. Ik merk dat ik vaak dingen doe zonder er aandacht aan te besteden.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 23					

24. Ik keur mezelf af als ik onlogische gedachtes heb.

	Nooit of bijna nooit waar	Zelden waar	Soms waar	Vaak waar	Heel vaak of altijd waar
Vraag 24					

7.2 Case

Organisatie 1: Nexus
NEXUS is specialist in cultuur en onderwijs en adviseert scholen, culturele aanbieders en gemeenten op een creatieve en inspirerende manier. NEXUS wil met leerkrachten en docenten, bovenschoolse managers, culturele aanbieders en gemeenteambtenaren op verschillende manieren samenwerken aan een omgeving waarin kinderen en jonge mensen leren de wereld om hen heen te begrijpen en betekenis te geven door middel van cultuur-educatie. Het advies van NEXUS is praktijkgericht en deskundig en kan bestaan uit een enkel gesprek, een begeleidingstraject, een inspiratiedag of een training. NEXUS levert altijd maatwerk.

Missie en visie
"De missie van NEXUS wordt gevormd door de drive om kinderen en jonge mensen te helpen in hun poging de wereld om hen heen te begrijpen en betekenis te geven door middel van cultuur-educatie." De medewerkers van NEXUS doen dat door te bevorderen, dat cultuur-educatie een geïntegreerd onderdeel uitmaakt van onderwijsprogramma's in basis- en voortgezet onderwijs. Daartoe vormen wij een inspiratiebron voor – en de verbindende schakel tussen – onderwijs – en cultuurinstellingen. Wij doen dat op basis van onze deskundigheid en organisatiekracht op het gebied van de onderwijsvraag en het cultureel aanbod."

Strategie
Het netwerk van Nexus strekt zich uit tot meer dan twintig landen en ruim 800 partnerorganisaties. NEXUS *informeert* alle spelers in het cultuur-educatieve veld via website, internetgroepen, print media, elektronische nieuwsbrief en gerichte mailing. Adviseurs *adviseren* het primair en voortgezet onderwijs over cultuureducatie en adviseren cultuurmakers bij de ontwikkeling van kwalitatief goed cultuur-educatief aanbod. NEXUS *organiseert* jaarlijks onder andere culturele jaarprogramma's en cultuur-educatieve programma's voor het primair onderwijs; cultuurroutes langs culturele instellingen voor het voortgezet onderwijs; workshops en gastlessen in alle kunsten- en erfgoeddisciplines door ervaren vakdocenten en kunstenaars; cultuureducatiemarkten en evenementen; de inzet van kunstenaars en ervaren docenten in alle kunstdisciplines. NEXUS *onderzoekt* de tevredenheid van haar klanten om zo de kwaliteit van haar kennis en haar producten te waarborgen. Tenslotte *ontwikkelt* NEXUS zelf cultuureducatieve producten die ingezet worden bij lessen, projecten en andere activiteiten waarin kunst, cultuur en educatie centraal staan.

Organisatiestructuur
In totaal werken er ongeveer 50 mensen bij NEXUS. De organisatie staat onder leiding van een directeur, ondersteund door een manager bedrijfsvoering, de controller en de staffunctionaris human resources.

De organisatiestructuur heeft het karakter van een matrix. Dat wil zeggen dat er een horizontale as is die bestaat uit vijf programmagebonden teams en een verticale as die bestaat uit drie regiogebonden teams.

De *programmateams* bestaan uit adviseurs die gespecialiseerd zijn in een specifiek werkveld zoals dans, muziek of kunstgeschiedenis. Zij realiseren cultuurprogramma's voor scholen, begeleiden trajecten van productontwikkeling door lokale of regionale cultuurmakers en adviseren bij het ontwikkelen van een lokaal of regionaal coördinatiepunt.

De *regioteams* zorgen ervoor dat binnen iedere regio een goede samenhang en verbinding bestaat tussen de vijf programmalijnen en vormen als team hét aanspreekpunt voor alle partijen in de regio. De regioteams waarborgen ook dat adviseurs zich kunnen blijven ontwikkelen door middel van coaching en collegiale consultatie.

De adviseurs worden ondersteund door de *back-office*, het team dat bestaat uit planning & organisatie, systeembeheer, het team financiën, het kenniscentrum en de facilitaire dienst.

Bedrijfscultuur
Er zijn vier bedrijfsculturen met verschillende karaktertrekken te onderscheiden, namelijk de stoere jongens-cultuur, de procedure-cultuur, de werk hard-cultuur en de alles op één kaart-cultuur. De bedrijfscultuur van NEXUS is denk ik een combinatie van de procedure-cultuur en de alles op één kaart-cultuur.

De procedure-cultuur bestaat uit: hiërarchie; duidelijke functies; laag risico; rustig tempo; geen winstverplichting. De alles op één kaart-cultuur bestaat uit: lange termijn-denken; niet direct gericht op omzet/winst; teamwork; hoog risico; kennisintensief; ontwikkeling.

Formeel zijn er bij NEXUS hiërarchische verhoudingen maar in de werkpraktijk voelt dat niet direct zo aan. Er is juist veel samenwerking en overleg: teamwork. Er heerst over het algemeen een goede sfeer tussen collega's. De functies liggen duidelijk vast maar vaak moet je in de praktijk met collega's bepalen wie wat doet van een bepaald project. Zo kun je bepaalde onderdelen binnen de ontwikkeling van een programma zelf doen als projectmedewerker Erfgoededucatie.

Veel medewerkers hebben zich gespecialiseerd in een bepaalde discipline binnen cultuur en educatie. Zij passen hun kennis in grote mate toe om hun werkzaamheden goed uit te kunnen voeren. Het hangt af van het project en je eigen achtergrond in hoeverre je je moet inlezen in het onderwerp van een nieuw project.

Ontwikkeling staat centraal. De organisatie is een goed geoliede machine maar het kan altijd beter. In het algemene beleid streeft men naar verbetering maar ook elke afdeling en elk team stelt eigen doelen voor de toekomst.

Er is geen winstverplichting en de risico's die mensen aangaan binnen projecten zijn laag. Je probeert immers altijd je in te leven in je doelgroep.

Nieuw beleid

Bij de aftrap van het nieuwe jaar in september, werden er door directeur Loek Sijbers twee belangrijke doelen gesteld voor de organisatie. In de komende jaren staan twee dingen centraal: kwaliteit van producten en professionalisering van de werkzaamheden van elke medewerker. Professionalisering is mogelijk door de besteding van werkuren aan een bepaald project te verantwoorden en standaard bij elk project een begroting te maken.

Er zijn drie nieuwe afdelingshoofden aangesteld: voor de afdeling Instellingen, de afdeling Voortgezet Onderwijs en de afdeling Planning & Organisatie. Zij hebben de taak voorop te staan bij de realisering van deze twee doelen, hun medewerkers te adviseren en hun werkzaamheden te beoordelen

Organisatie 2: Felix

De organisatie heet Felix, voorheen heette deze de Alexa Zorggroep. Felix is een zorginstelling in de regio's Arnhem, Rheden en De Liemers. Het heeft dan ook ziekenhuizen op verschillende locaties, namelijk in Arnhem, Zevenaar, Velp, Dieren en Arnhem-Zuid. Allemaal bieden zij ziekenhuiszorg van topklinische kwaliteit, dat betekent hooggespecialiseerde medische zorg in een opleidingsziekenhuis, maar ook de basiszorg. Het is een doelgericht samenwerkingsverband. Bij heel Felix werken zo'n 5500 medewerkers die zorgen voor de patiënten, dit zijn er jaarlijks ruim een half miljoen. Van deze medewerkers zijn er meer dan 300 specialisten, bij Felix kun je ook terecht voor 29 verschillende specialismen. Felix is de grootste werkgever in de zorg in de regio en een van de grootste zorgaanbieders van Nederland.

De missie en visie

Voor het woord missie wordt vaak de Engelse term missionstatement gebruikt. Het is de doelstelling van een organisatie, dit zorgt voor meer samenhang binnen het bedrijf. De missie is dus het doeleind dat waargemaakt moet worden. In het 'Alexa Zorggroep Jaardocument 2010' wordt de missie van Felix op de volgende manier beschreven: *"Vanuit onze gezonde instelling bieden wij patiënten hoogwaardige diagnostiek, behandeling en zorg. Met onze gezonde instelling verhogen wij het niveau van de gezondheidszorg en daarmee het welzijn van de inwoners van onze regio."*

De shared values gaan over de bedrijfsopvatting, de bedrijfscultuur en hun identiteit, dit wordt ook wel de visie genoemd. Deze zorgen voor samenhang en sturing in de bedrijfscultuur van deze organisatie. Dit zijn de waarden en normen van het bedrijf: wat vinden zij van belang en wat vinden zij nodig om deze in praktijk te brengen? De shared values van Felix zijn:

- Wij bieden uitstekende ziekenhuiszorg van topklinische kwaliteit.
- Wij werken op basis van een gezonde bedrijfsvoering.
- Wij bieden een aantrekkelijke en inspirerende werkomgeving.
- Wij vervullen landelijk een voorbeeldfunctie met onze opleidingen en doen hoogwaardig toegepast wetenschappelijk onderzoek.

De missie en visie gaan meestal samen en ook hier sluiten ze goed op elkaar aan. In de missie gaat het over de gezonde instelling van Felix zelf, in de visie wordt beschreven dat dit gebeurt door een aantrekkelijke en inspirerende werkomgeving en het vervullen van een landelijke voorbeeldfunctie en hoogwaardig toegepast wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Daarnaast wordt in de visie vermeld dat de ziekenhuiszorg van topklinische kwaliteit is, hierdoor kunnen ze de rest van hun missie waarmaken: de patiënten hoogwaardige diagnostiek, behandeling en zorg bieden en het niveau van de gezondheidszorg verhogen in de regio.

De strategie

Felix wil op een bepaalde manier om gaan met patiënten, verzekeraars etc., deze manieren zijn vastgelegd in de kernwaarden van de organisatie:

- Warm: wij stralen warmte en betrokkenheid uit;
- Vernieuwend: wij leveren vernieuwende zorg;
- Samen: wij werken in uitstekende samenhang en afstemming met patiënten, verwijzers, verzekeraars, elkaar en andere partijen.

Dit zijn de manieren waarop Felix de doelstellingen wil bereiken die vastgesteld staan in de missie, dit is hun strategie. De medewerkers moeten hieraan meewerken om het tot een succes te laten komen. Zij moeten waarde toevoegen aan de organisatie om de patiënten tevreden te maken en te houden. De medewerkers moeten hiervoor wel gemotiveerd worden, maar zelf moeten zij ook tevreden, productief, kundig en loyaal zijn. Dit zal uiteindelijk voor goede resultaten zorgen en zo worden de doelstellingen bereikt.

Om de doelstellingen te bereiken zijn er ook middelen nodig. De overheid heeft gezorgd voor een vermindering van het middelenkader waardoor het vergoedingenniveau onder druk staat. Felix moet zoeken naar een balans tussen de vergoedingen van verschillende middelen.
De ziekenhuizen hebben steeds meer dure geneesmiddelen nodig en kunst- en hulpmiddelen. Daarbij is er ook nog een tekort aan gekwalificeerd personeel. Felix moet zeer efficiënt te werk gaan en blijft zich richten op een goede financiële positie op de lange termijn.

De medewerkers

Het personeelsbeleid wordt gebaseerd op de doelstellingen van de organisatie, maar ook op de strategie. Felix vindt dat er goed voor zijn medewerkers gezorgd moet worden, zodat deze goed voor de klanten zorgen en dit weer positief uitwerkt op de organisatie. Dit principe is ontstaan door Human Relations: mensen zijn meer dan machines, zij zijn mensen die invloed kunnen uitoefenen op de patiënten en kunnen precies doen wat de patiënt graag wilt. De medewerkers worden ook wel staff genoemd, zonder hen zouden alle processen niet plaats kunnen vinden.

Felix moet blijven bestaan uit competente, gemotiveerde, loyale, betrokken, vitale en productieve medewerkers en goed uitgeruste managers. Hiervoor is wel de juiste persoon op de juiste plaats nodig. Dit gebeurt met behulp van de volgende vier pijlers:

1. Arbeid en gezondheid
2. Leren en ontwikkelen
3. Planning en bezetting
4. Leiderschap en organisatie

De organisatie wil vooral zijn medewerkers behouden, zij kunnen binnen het bedrijf dan ook doorgroeien naar een hogere functie. Wanneer er een nieuwe baan ontstaat in de organisatie kan er eerst intern gezocht worden naar een geschikte medewerker. Dat betekent dat er iemand gezocht wordt die al bij Felix werkt, maar een andere functie heeft. Daarnaast wordt er veel aandacht besteed aan leren binnen de ziekenhuizen op de gebieden kwaliteit en veiligheid en digitaal werken.

De managementstijl

In 2009 was de communicatie tussen werknemers en werkgevers niet optimaal; er was geen helderheid over taken en geen goede inrichting van de organisatie, de afstand tussen deze twee partijen was te groot. Om deze reden is de style, de manier waarop de manager de medewerkers behandelt, aangepast. Deze aanpassing hield het volgende in:

- Het benoemen van
  - een medisch manager Zorg;
  - een manager Bedrijfsvoering;
  - capaciteitsmanagers;
- Aanpassen van de overlegstructuur

Dit moest onder andere zorgen voor een trendbreuk, goede benutting van middelen, cultuurverandering binnen het bedrijf, maar vooral voor de bereidheid om samen aan oplossingen te werken.

Ambities
De belangrijkste ambitie van Felix is dat deze in verbinding staat met de omgeving. Hierbij wordt gereageerd op de vraag van de omgeving. Dit geldt voor de inhoud van de zorg, maar ook voor de manier waarop deze wordt aangeboden en de manier waarop hierover wordt gecommuniceerd. Ook biedt Felix een aantrekkelijke en inspirerende werkplek, waarbij het opleiden en behouden van gekwalificeerd personeel belangrijk blijft. Deze opleidingen moeten hun kwaliteit behouden en onderscheidend zijn.

Door de toenemende complexiteit van zorg moet er altijd multidisciplinair gewerkt worden, dit geldt voor alle vormen binnen het zorgaanbod. Ook moet er een gezonde bedrijfsvoering blijven bestaan om de dienstverlening te verbeteren en middelen efficiënt in te zetten. Hierbij moet er ook onder andere optimale kwaliteit en veiligheid zijn, maar ook aandacht voor duurzaamheid. Ten slotte moet de structuur per locatie gerealiseerd worden, dit is de regionalisatie.

7.3 Questionnaire

1. In welke branche bevindt Nexus zich?

a. Transport en logistiek
b. Onderwijs en onderzoek
c. Juridische dienstverlening
d. Handel en retail

2. In de strategie beschrijving van Nexus worden 5 kerntaken genoemd. Welke van de onderstaande opties noemt drie van deze kerntaken?

a. Informeren, produceren en onderzoeken
b. Ontwikkelen, reguleren en adviseren
c. Organiseren, ontwikkelen en onderzoeken
d. Informeren, onderzoeken en produceren

3. Wat is de organisatiestructuur van Nexus?

a. Netwerkorganisatie
b. Projectorganisatie
c. Matrixorganisatie
d. Productgerichte organisatie

4. Nexus onderscheidt vier verschillende soorten bedrijfsculturen; De stoere jongens-cultuur, de procedure-cultuur, de werk hard-cultuur en alles op één kaart-cultuur. Door een combinatie van welke twee bedrijfsculturen is Nexus te typeren?

a. De procedure-cultuur en de alles op één kaart-cultuur
b. De werk hard-cultuur en de alles op één kaart-cultuur
c. De stoere jongens-cultuur en de alles op één kaart-cultuur
d. De procedure-cultuur en de werk hard-cultuur

5. De directeur van Nexus, Loek Sijbers, heeft twee belangrijke doelen centraal gesteld voor de organisatie. Welke twee?

a. Verhogen van de omzet en professionalisering van de werkzaamheden
b. Kwaliteit van producten en professionalisering van de werkzaamheden
c. Kwaliteit van producten en verhogen van de klanttevredenheid
d. Professionalisering van de werkzaamheden en verhogen van de omzet

6. In welke branche bevindt Felix zich?

a. Financiële dienstverlening
b. Handel en Retail
c. Onderwijs en onderzoek
d. Gezondheidszorg en welzijnszorg

7. Welke van onderstaande antwoorden is een shared value van Felix?

a. Wij werken op basis van gezonde bedrijfsvoering
b. Wij investeren in de toekomst
c. Wij hechten veel waarde aan duurzaamheid en zijn zeer betrokken bij onze omgeving
d. Wij stimuleren creativiteit en innovatie

8. Felix noemt een drietal kernwaarden van de organisatie. Welke van onderstaande antwoorden is juist?

a. Vernieuwend, samen, klantvriendelijk
b. Vernieuwend, innovatief, samen
c. Warm, innovatief, samen
d. Samen, warm, vernieuwend

9. Felix noemt vier pijlers m.b.t. haar medewerkers. Welke van onderstaande antwoorden is geen pijler?

a. Planning en bezetting
b. Leren en ontwikkelen
c. Innovatie en creativiteit
d. Leiderschap en organisatie

10. Wat noemt Felix als haar belangrijkste ambitie?

a. Verhogen van de omzet
b. In verbinding staan met de omgeving
c. Een aantrekkelijke en inspirerende werkgever zijn
d. Duurzaamheid