Motivations to adopt the A3 approach to strategizing for private firms:
An explorative case study

Author: Mike Horst
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500AE Enschede
The Netherlands

ABSTRACT,
An approach of including stakeholders in strategy formulation and continuously improving it: "open strategizing", is gradually gaining more recognition. Open strategizing involves all stakeholders within an organization in the formulation of strategic plans and their realization. This approach is the opposite of the traditional top-down way of drawing up and implementing a strategy. The A3 approach to strategizing, developed by Dr. H.J. Doeleman, is within the public domain a widely adopted and recognized approach to the phenomenon of open strategizing. This study seeks to determine whether the A3 approach is also applicable to a private company and examines the motivations that might lead to the adoption of the A3 approach. This is done through an exploratory case study at private company X. In addition, the experiences, and motivations for working with A3 within three different municipalities are included in the analysis. The results from the case study show that transparency, inclusiveness, and business future are the three underlying motivations for private company X to possibly adopt the A3 approach. Comparing the motivations with those within the municipalities show that there is little difference in motivations between these sectors. In future studies, more research can be conducted on differences between sectors in terms of using open strategizing. The focus of the study is also on the 'boundary systems' lever of control that refers to putting guidelines on the behavior of employees so that the right activities are performed that contribute to the organizational goals. The study finds that a low presence of 'the boundary systems' stimulates the motivations of private company X to adopt the A3 approach.

1. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM ANALYSIS

In recent years, hundreds of organizations have used the A3 approach to strategizing. (A3 Company, 2018). As a result, we can state that the A3 approach is a widely accepted and applied approach for realizing an organization's strategy. The focus of the A3 approach lies in increasing the effectiveness of the formulated strategy while using less paperwork. It emphasizes creating annual plans in concrete terms on a single A3 sheet based on the mission and vision of the organization (Doeleman, 2022). Nevertheless, Dr. H.J. Doeleman, who is also the developer of the approach, points out that the approach has not yet reached its full potential. He mainly indicates that the adoption rate within the public domain is significantly higher than the adoption rate within the private sector. The characteristics of the A3 approach are evident, but it is not demonstrated whether these characteristics are also the direct motivations that led public organizations to use the A3 approach. In addition, it is ambiguous what has led to such differences in adoption between the two sectors. This study will look at what the motivations might be for adopting or not adopting the A3 approach to strategizing for private company X. Research is also being conducted into the motives that led municipalities to choose the approach and what the experiences are like in practice. Thus, the precise motivations that lead to the adoption of the A3 approach are still unrevealed. Is the A3 approach more applicable in the public domain? Does the A3 approach better suit employees in the public domain? Is the low adoption rate in the private sector due to the emphasis on the public network of the initiator, Dr. H. Doeleman? In short, to date, there is still too little knowledge about why the adoption in the private sector lags.

1.1 Research objective

The overarching objective of the research is to identify the motives that influence the choice of, private company X, and whether to adopt the A3 approach to strategizing. By analyzing the current approach to strategizing, insights are gained into the current way of working and its associated pros and cons. Moreover, research is conducted into the motivations within one or more municipalities that led to the adoption of the A3 approach. By doing so, observations can be made to find any differences and/or similarities between the two domains (private vs public) regarding the motivations to adopt the A3 approach. Our focus in this research is on the boundary systems lever of control, which is one of the four levers developed by Simons (Simons, 1994). The boundary systems lever of control acts as a delineator regarding the strategic pursuit and the opportunity-seeking behavior of employees, it is, therefore, critical to conduct research into what extent the boundary systems lever affects these factors (Tessier & Otley, 2012). By examining the presence of this lever, we can observe its impact on strategic decision-making and how it affects the motives that possibly lead to the adoption of the A3 approach to strategizing.

1.2 Research questions

The main research question:

What may motivate private company X, in its choice to adopt the A3 approach to strategy making and implementation?

The following sub-questions aid in answering the main research question:

Sub-question 1: What motivated the adoption of the A3 approach in municipalities and what are their employees' experiences with this approach?

Sub-question 2: What is the current approach of company X regarding strategy-making and implementation and what are the expected success conditions as well as pitfalls of this approach identified by the employees of the company?

Sub-question 3: What are the observed initial reactions of the participants during the intervention?

Sub-question 4: What motivations are suggested by the interviewees within private company X to influence the choice of whether or not to adopt and implement the A3 approach?

Sub-question 5: To what extent does the presence of the boundary systems control lever to influence the motives for the adoption of the A3 approach?

2. ACADEMICAL AND PRACTICAL RELEVANCE

2.1 Academical relevance

In the literature, there are already many scientific works that deal with strategy formulation, implementation, and monitoring. This research reveals insights into the motives on which a private company decides to adopt a strategic approach. In addition, research is also being conducted into the motives of why the public sector has integrated a widely adopted approach to strategizing (A3 approach) into business operations. Research from Baarspul and Wilderom (2011) showed that there is not a significant difference in employee behavior between employees employed in the public domain versus employees working in the private sector. This study further investigates sector differences and is, therefore, an addition to the literature because it examines between the public and private domains whether different motives lead to organizations and companies adopting a strategic approach or not.

2.2 Practical relevance

The research will also be salient in practical terms. Since a couple of hundred public organizations have adopted the A3 approach, the benefits of the A3 approach are highly recognized in the public domain. The analysis of the results from private company X in the private sector might clarify why the A3 approach is less adopted in the private domain. It might be that the A3 approach

is less applicable and that alterations need to be constructed to increase the successful adoption rate. This could result in more companies leveraging the benefits of A3. On the other hand, the outcome of this study might exhibit that the A3 approach also facilitates a private company in its strategizing and that this study depicts that the A3 approach is also well applicable in the private sector.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Strategy formation and implementation

Much research has already been done into formulating and implementing strategies within organizations. Henry Mintzberg (1978) defined strategy as the conceived plans made in advance for decision making. He made the distinction between the formation and the implementation of the strategy (Mintzberg, 1987). Strategy formation is about the process by which a company determines the overall direction of the business and how it should execute it over the long term. It is a goal-oriented process to create a competitive advantage over the competition and to improve a company's performance. Strategy implementation is about the process in which the strategy is implemented in practice and in which the results are monitored and evaluated (Gimbert et al., 2010). An organization should identify the critical activities related to the strategy execution and build one or more systems around them that empower these activities (Olson et al., 2005).

Some recent literature publications have shown that having the strategy process carried more broadly, instead of top-management solely, can contribute to the success of organizations (Adobor, 2019). Despite this, formulating an adequate strategy is already seen as a difficult task but implementing the strategy and involving all stakeholders within the organization is considered even more challenging (Hrebiniak, 2006). Hence, for a strategy to work effectively, it is crucial that the tasks of individuals within an organization are well coordinated and that the effort levels are distributed appropriately.

3.2 Strategy as an ongoing process

As stated in early publications regarding strategy making and implementation, the two strategic actions were interpreted and executed as separate business processes. However, there has been some recognition in the literature where it is mentioned that there is an erroneous belief that strategy formulation and implementation are separate actions (Adobor, 2019). The adaptive turn, proposed by Weiser et al. (2020), has shifted the focus of strategy implementation research on how organizations can enact and adapt their strategies continuously in the process of strategy implementation. According to this research, strategies can be initiated through a top-down approach, nonetheless, they can also be developed bottom-up. Top-down management can be regarded as the traditional approach where the management team sets the direction and goals of the company and the employees of the organization execute these plans. Whereas in bottom-up management, ideas about the direction, goals, and upcoming projects are initiated by teams and individuals (Cooks-Campbell, 2021). This continuous process of implementing and adapting strategy makes a shift, at present, in defining strategy as a practice which is called strategizing (Kearney et al., 2018). Other research, conducted by Nickerson et al. (2018), builds on the concept of strategizing and emphasizes the significance of collectively formulating plans to overcome a challenge.

3.3 Traditional strategy practices

Over the past decades, many strategic approaches and methodologies have been developed that have attempted to measure the performance of organizations. Hoshin Kanri, a management methodology co-evolved in the 1960s, tried to combine practices and concepts with lean production and total quality management (TQM) to ensure alignment throughout the organization regarding strategic objectives and plans (Nicholas, 2014). Another crucial study by Kaplan and Norton (1992,1993) proposed the balanced scorecard as a framework for the management of business performance. The balanced scorecard ensures that the formulated strategy is understood by the entire organization and that people inside and outside the organization execute the plans properly (Schwartz, 2005). The balanced scorecard tries to measure organizational objectives beyond financial measures solely. It divides the measurement of business performance into four areas: financial, customer, learning and growth, and internal business processes (Witcher & Sum Chau, 2007). These practices have gained much popularity over the years and emphasized the importance of measuring the effectiveness of the strategy (Doeleman et al., 2022).

3.4 Simons' levers of control

The relevant work of Simons (1994, p.4) emphasized the importance of strategy control. Simons focuses on the link between strategy and management control systems (Gray, 1990). He suggests that inherent tensions in organizations must be controlled. He refers to tensions between freedom and constraint, experimentation and efficiency, empowerment, and accountability, and between top-down direct and bottom-up creativity. As a result, Simons developed four levers of control that act as systems to balance these tensions: belief systems, boundary systems, diagnostic control systems, and interactive control systems. Belief systems inspire employees to seek opportunities while boundary systems limit employees' opportunity-seeking behavior. Diagnostic control systems motivate, monitor, and reward if specified goals are executed as proposed. Interactive systems stimulate learning opportunities throughout the organization and try to explore new strategic ways to pursue (Simons, 1994, p.7)

Research conducted by Mundy (2010) insinuates that boundary systems try to prevent employees from wasting an organization's resources. This is accomplished by plainly communicating which activities should be executed and which activities should not be performed. This asserts that the boundary processes assist to bring activities to the right endpoint. And this is done by preventing employees from going too far in finding continuous improvements, after the optimal point for improvement has already been found. Especially during a company's growth phase, it should encourage employees to find and pursue opportunities. However, guidelines are necessary, clarifying to what extent employees can go. Therein, managers must determine which behaviors are detrimental to the achievement of organizational goals (Elsye Hatane et al., 2019)

3.5 Open strategizing

The previous section demonstrated how employees are constantly involved in an organization and how the 'boundary systems lever' should constrain behavior to achieve optimal endpoints as an organization. Whittington (2011) continues the work of creating more engagement of stakeholders within an organization. He was one of the first researchers to initiate the so-called "open strategy", which could be a way of strategizing that could assist organizations to involve all stakeholders. According to his research, there are two leading reasons for

integrating open strategizing practices in an organization: it concerns increasing transparency and inclusiveness within an organization. According to research from Doeleman et al. (2022), transparency, inclusiveness, participation, and IT enablement are interpreted as the four principles of open strategizing. Transparency refers to the dissemination, visibility, and accessibility of information to internal and external stakeholders during the strategizing process. Inclusiveness concerns the search for ideas and opinions of stakeholders through active involvement and engagement. Whereas participation is interpreted as the influence people exert on decision-making so that robust decisions and assumptions are made. In a later stage, IT-enablement was recognized to be the fourth principle to open strategizing, it refers to the use of information technology to facilitate transparency, inclusiveness, and participation.

Open strategizing could bring many benefits to organizations. First, it widens the search for strategic ideas and improves the commitment and understanding throughout the organization. Consequently, an organization can leverage the knowledge and expertise of members of all parts of the organization. This makes that open strategizing entails the involvement of a broad range of organizational actors who create a shared understanding, and stronger commitment which could ultimately lead to effective implementation (Hutter et al., 2017). Bounded rationality validates this reasoning and suggests that managers do not always have full attention and access to all information. Thus, open strategizing, by involving more members, makes sure that an organization obtains more information about the environment through its possible engagement with multiple stakeholders (Mack & Szulanski, 2017).

Doeleman et al. (2021) identify three open strategizing practices: the creation of a one-page visual strategy map, frequent management dialogues, and easy online access to progress overview. The creation of the one-page visual map should be done together with managers and other stakeholders within an organization (Paroutis et al., 2015). This would subsequently lead to more transparency in the strategizing process (Gegenhuber and Dosch, 2017). According to Simons (1995), frequent management dialogues are crucial for the development and implementation of a strategy throughout the entire organization. Given that the IT-enabled progress overview is easily accessible, aligned with the one-page visual strategy map, and physically attractive, the process of strategy implementation is likely to get broader support (Bateman et al., 2016). Amrollahi et al. (2014) emphasizes the importance of IT-enablement and state that the process of open strategizing cannot be executed without information technology.

3.6 The A3 approach for (open) strategizing

Another approach to strategizing is the A3 approach, developed by Dr. H.J. Doeleman. It builds upon the 'open strategy' approach, which is seen as 'a dynamic bundle of practices that gives internal and external actors more strategic transparency and inclusion' (Hautz et al., 2017). The four open strategy principles (transparency, inclusiveness, participation, and IT-enablement), stated in the previous section form the basis of the A3 approach.

Additionally, the A3 approach of strategizing builds upon the EFQM model, which assumes that a good management system should be in place within an organization to be successful. It functions as a tool to structure the management system by a way of self-assessment. The EFQM Excellence Model is a framework built on nine criteria. Five of them are 'enablers' and the other four are 'results'. The enablers show what an organization does, and the results point out what the organization achieves. (Gómez

et al., 2011). The A3 approach represents the process 'from vision to action' with the help of the EFQM model. In 2020 the EFQM Excellence Model provokes fewer boundaries. The organization behind the EFQM Excellence Model asks organizations to define their own 'result' and 'enabler' framework (EFQM, 2020). The minimal framework consists of three elements: direction, results, and actions. This representation is done by transforming abstract ideas into concrete measures and actions on one A3 paper sheet. It applies the order of setting a direction, defining the desired results, and finally formulating the actions to achieve the intended plans. The visualization of the relations between key success factors, targets, and actions is done using different colors. (Doeleman, 2022)

In addition, the A3 approach builds on the three open strategy practices identified by Doeleman et al. (2021). The A3 approach differentiates itself by integrating the concepts of management control and leadership into three basic pillars: the A3 annual plan, the A3 progress dialogue, and A3 digital. The approach enables interaction since the A3 annual plan is produced by a team. Interaction is interpreted as a key to the effective application of performance management. Besides the occurrence of interaction, participation is also considered a key element of the approach. Since members of a team formulate the plans together, this creates a sense of togetherness, which makes it 'their' plan.

The creation of an annual plan on one A3 sheet makes the whole trajectory of the company structured and gives users an adequate overview of the business activities. The A3 progress dialogue is undeniable to discuss the progress and the status of the organization, in addition, it gives valuable information on issues. The interaction in these dialogues aids to reflect on whether the organization is still going in the desired direction. The dialogue is based on the PDCA cycle (plan, do, check, act). By applying the PDCA cycle in the A3 progress dialogues, a smooth and meaningful quality improvement process can be created. By applying this repeatedly, the continuously improved efforts could eventually achieve the desired success rate (Chakraborty, 2016). Lastly, A3 digital can be seen as an online web application that provides information that facilitates the A3 progress dialogues (Doeleman & Diepenmaat, 2014).

Given that the A3 approach is applied following the theoretical guidelines, it ensures effective transformational leadership in the organization's management control systems (Doeleman & Diepenmaat, 2014). 'Transformational leadership fosters capacity development and brings higher levels of personal commitment amongst 'followers' to organizational objectives' (Hay, 2006). The literature about transformational leadership tells us that when leaders provide inspiration, and intellectual stimulation and express their concerns about employees, they create the appropriate working conditions that maximize the performance levels of employees (Kossek et al., 2018). Whereas transactional leadership focuses on the exchanges between leaders and followers, and these allow leaders to achieve the objectives, and tasks and maintain the organizational situation. A further disparity is that employees are mainly motivated by contractual agreement and the emphasis lies on extrinsic rewards (McCleskey, 2014).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

The research design for this thesis is an explorative case study in which research is conducted within private company X. In addition, this involves a longitudinal action study that entails focusing on three measurement moments during the research period. T0 involves conducting an interview in which

participants within private company X indicate the motivations for working with their current strategy approach, as well as the perceived pros and cons of this approach when it comes to strategy formation and implementation. T1 contains the intervention in which, with the same interviewees, the A3 approach to strategizing is introduced, and this provides an initial introduction to this strategizing approach. During and immediately following T1, reactions will be measured. Finally, a week later in T2, we analyze the motivations that affect the choice of private company X to adopt the A3 approach in future business strategizing or not. Hence, after the measurement moments, we can observe and determine if the organization has started to think differently about strategy formulation and implementation and what, if any, motivations are for the company to adopt the A3 approach.

4.2 Research methods

The research methods utilized for this research are interviews and the analysis of these interviews. This is a qualitative way of data collection and analysis and fits within the requirements of this study. The interviews within the public domain were conducted at three different municipalities. The respondents all indicated that they were drivers of the A3 approach within their organizations. Furthermore, all three municipalities were working with A3 at the time the interviews took place. The interviews within the private company are conducted by using a 'focus group'. This ensures that through group interactions there is more depth and breadth in the conversation, which means that adequate information is collected for my study (Gill, 2008). All the interviews are conducted in the Dutch language. However, for this study, everything is translated into English to make it more convenient to read.

The main findings from the interviews are written down in the results section, where the focus lies on collecting data that facilitates answering the research questions. During the interviews and the intervention at private company X, the same individuals were present at all three measurement times to collect the data on possible effects. The composition of this group was deliberately chosen to have representatives from all layers of the company.

Table 1. Composition of the focus group interview

Respondent 1	General director
Respondent 2	Project manager
Respondent 3	Work planner
Respondent 4	Calculator
Respondent 5	Business manager

Besides the use of a 'focus group', the collected data was analyzed with the Gioia method. The Gioia method is a method in which the qualitative data is coded in three steps into a structured image and meaning of the results. The Gioia method can be interpreted as an inductive approach to analyzing qualitative data. The first step in the analysis is the creation of first-order codes, followed by the creation of second-order themes and ultimately the formation of aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012). For both the analysis of interviews at the municipalities and the interviews at private company X, the Gioia method is used. The Gioia analyses of the collected data from the municipalities, as well as the collected data from private company X, were both designed according to the theoretical guidelines. The first-order concepts are direct observations in which the sentences do not deviate much from exact quotes. Subsequently, the first-order concepts were grouped, and second-order themes were attached to these

groups. Finally, the themes were transformed into aggregate dimensions. The aggregate dimensions can be interpreted in this study as the motivations of municipalities and private company X to adopt the A3 approach.

In addition, in the appendix, there is a table showing the effects of the longitudinal action study. It demonstrates the results on the key elements and whether there is a difference in doing and thinking regarding strategy making and implementation at the T0 measurement compared to T2.

5. RESULTS

This chapter is divided into several parts. For the first sub-question, we focus on the interviews conducted at different municipalities to observe what the motivations were for choosing the A3 approach and how employees experienced working with it. The Gioia analysis of the municipalities can be found in Appendix 10.5, figure 1.

Sub-questions two, three, and four relate to the explorative case study at private company X. Section 5.2 focuses on the current approach to strategy making- and implementation and the associated pros and cons perceived by employees. Section 5.3 notes the key findings observed and measured during the intervention. In section 5.4, after the intervention, we note the findings that relate to the motivations employees have for the possible adoption of the A3 approach. It is important here to collect and measure the data to observe if the intervention influenced employees of company X in thinking about a strategic approach. As mentioned, the analysis of the interviews conducted within private company X is done by applying the Gioia method. The Gioia analysis of private company X can be found in Appendix 10.5, figure 2.

The influence of the longitudinal action study can be found in Appendix 10.6, which highlights the effects of the intervention on the thinking about strategy-making and implementation within private company X.

Section 5.5 focuses on the boundary systems lever of control. First, we note the findings to what extent the boundary systems lever is present in the company. Then, after the intervention, we note the main findings related to the relationship between the A3 approach and the boundary systems lever of control within private company X. In addition, the key findings are noted from experiences within municipalities regarding the relationship between the A3 approach and the boundary systems lever of control.

5.1 Motivations of and experiences with working with the A3 approach in municipalities X, Y, and Z

The main findings written down in this section will relate to the first sub-question and will help in answering it: *What motivated the adoption of the A3 approach in municipalities and what are their employees' experiences with this approach?*

The entire list of interview questions can be found in the appendix under the following heading: interview questions municipalities.

Transparency:

The interviewees from municipalities X and Z indicated that there was a need for more transparency within their organizations. The respondents believe that the A3 annual plan contributes to creating more clarity by visualizing the

overarching goals of the organization for all stakeholders throughout the organization.

'The municipality was in a building phase at the time and therefore it was useful to create focus per department to make clear what the goals per department were and what the overarching goals represented. By doing this, we hoped that each department was contributing to the achievement of the organization-wide goals.'

'On the one hand, the management wanted to gain insight into what was going on internally within the organization. On the other hand, all the members of the board all had strategic objectives in mind and the A3 approach was able to draw these up and visualize them well in A3online.'

Inclusiveness:

The participants within the municipalities X and Y consider the involvement of the entire organization in the formulation and implementation of plans to be one of the main reasons for using an open strategy approach, such as the A3 approach.

Municipality X started with the A3 approach in the build-up phase of the organization, the organization had just gone through a restructuring in which the organization moved to work in teams. The respondent emphasizes the importance of including all organizational members throughout the organization. *'By drawing up A3 annual plans in all the teams, we involve the whole organization with the strategic objectives and achieving them together.'*

The importance of broad involvement of the entire organization in formulating and implementing the strategy is confirmed by the respondent from municipality Y. Nevertheless, a critical note is struck, namely that the application of the A3 progress dialogue is essential in using the A3 approach so that it has its intended effect on strategy making and implementation *'We must introduce the A3 progress dialogues to ensure that the approach becomes part of the organization. It ensures that we work together on our common goals.'*

Strategic alignment:

In conclusion, strategic alignment is mentioned as one of the main motivations for adopting the A3 approach within municipalities. Because of the size of the organizations, there is a lot of stratification, which makes it difficult to have the strategy fully integrated by all layers of the organization. The participants indicated that the A3 approach fits the need to create strategic alignment so that all stakeholders within an organization contribute to the common goals.

Although the respondent from municipality X indicated that the A3 approach would contribute to the creation of strategic alignment throughout the municipality, this is not yet experienced as such in practice. In practice, the participant observes that there is still too much thinking in teams and that the consideration of the organization's goals is not sufficiently taken into account. *'By applying the A3 approach in the right way and taking the organization goals into account, we increase the integrality in our organization'.*

The participants from municipalities Z and Y suggest that the connection between teams is critical to realizing the strategic alignment. By establishing a good horizontal connection, there is an improved awareness that the annual plans of the teams influence each other. *'The sharp formulation of the goals and actions in a team's annual plans must be done with the consideration of other teams' annual plans in mind. This encourages integral working.'*

5.2 The current way of strategy making and implementation within private company X and the associated employee experiences

This section presents the main discoveries before the intervention took place. The findings relate to the second sub-question and help to answer this sub-question: *What is the current approach of company X regarding strategy-making and implementation and what are the expected success conditions as well as pitfalls of this approach identified by the employees of the company?*

The current corporate structure:

Over the past 7 years, private company X has achieved significant growth. This resulted in the company employing more employees. In the beginning, all tasks were divided among the first three employees within the company. As the company has grown, the growth has affected the current company structure. The current company structure can be found in Appendix D. The visual picture of the structure clearly shows that there is no significant stratification throughout the company. The responsible persons within the company are the general manager and the two business managers, each responsible for a few teams.

'We have grown tremendously as a company. About 7 years ago we started with three people and now we are already with about 20 employees.'

Top-down decision-making:

The management team holds management meetings in which strategic objectives are formulated and monitored. The participants involved in the management team indicate that they do not work in a structured manner. They also do not use tools such as annual plans to write down the formulated goals.

'Usually, the general director prepares the agenda items that are going to be dealt with; finances, personnel, the direction of the company, the turnover that is envisioned, and in which markets we want to achieve that.'

'You can see the management meetings as brainstorm sessions in which we jointly arrive at insights and decisions.'

Involving the employees:

As has been made clear in private company X's top-down approach to their decision-making, the other employees have no direct influence on the formulation of the plans. Nevertheless, during the information meetings, the employees are informed about the plans and their implementation.

'Once every two weeks on Monday, we hold an information meeting in which employees are informed about the course of events, such as new projects, improvements, etc.'

'In this information meeting, everyone can give input and ask questions.'

Despite the current way of involving employees in the information meetings, one of the business managers is aware that it could perhaps help the company to involve the employees more in the decision-making process. However, the respondent is diffident about whether the employees themselves are willing and enthusiastic to contribute to the drafting of plans.

'Perhaps it would be better to make the plans more broadly throughout the company. This could create more support for the plans among all employees.'

The uncertainty of the business manager in question is quickly nullified by an answer from one of the other respondents. This participant is enthusiastic about the idea of involving employees more broadly and is convinced of its value in the formulation of plans *'I think very pragmatically and try to make everything*

faster. Perhaps these kinds of insights can help in the formation of plans.'

Healthy corporate culture:

Respondents all agree on one of the company's strengths: its strong, close-knit culture. Even though employees do not have a direct influence on the decision-making, good group dynamics ensured that participation is one of the main strengths perceived by employees within the company. All employees see each other daily at the office, where an approachable culture prevails.

'The motivation is to look back at the end of the year and see that we have completed some great projects, which we have completed successfully together as a team.'

'There is a high group dynamic within the company. People want to work for each other and the atmosphere within the company is very informal.'

Low strategic consciousness:

During T1 it becomes clear that awareness around strategy implementation is still low in the organization. Respondents from the management team indicate that the importance of strategy implementation is not yet fully understood.

The general director is adamant about the current awareness *'It's underwhelming now. if I were to give it a grade it would be a 4 out of 10. We need to get busy putting structure in place to experience further growth.'*

Both business managers denote that now is the time to engage in strategy implementation actively and consciously. In addition, all three participants indicate that the focus is on creating the structure to enable further growth in the future.

'Consciously engaging with strategy implementation is something that can be improved. The awareness has improved somewhat because we hired an extern consultant, but we now really need to look at what direction the company needs to go in.'

'This is the time to actively engage in strategy implementation since we have grown enormously, and we want to continue to grow in the future.'

Lack of transparency:

Respondents all share the same opinion that clarity and insight are lacking in the current approach to drawing up and implementing plans. Annual plans are not utilized within the company where the company's mission and vision are stated for all the stakeholders. The current plans drawn up by the management team are not written down and are not transparent to the employees. In addition, the rationale behind the plans remains ambiguous to the employees. One of the respondents within the management team indicates that more insight can be given to the employees *'All updates are usually mentioned at the information meetings, but maybe we should be more transparent about the goals and their feasibility.'* The need for more insight is confirmed by the project manager who indicates that insight between teams is lacking within the company *by having insight into what other teams are doing, we can help each other and learn from each other.'*

Similarly, there is currently no use of information systems where employees can directly see the current progress of the company. This has caused wrong decisions to be made in the past. *'We now find that after a while we lose focus after setting goals. We need more interim evaluation and insight into whether we are still going in the right direction.'* This is reaffirmed by another respondent: *'We operate in a dynamic market. Insight and overview are something we need, to make difficult decisions easier.'*

Lack of result orientation:

Ultimately, members of the management team perceive that the company is not yet results-oriented enough. There is still too little distinction made between efforts and results. *'At the moment we are not yet working in a result-oriented way. We should therefore put the ownership of a project more with the employees who are then directly responsible for the efforts and the results of the project.'*

The general director believes that becoming more result-oriented is a prerequisite for future company growth *'We are an ambitious company. If we want to grow further this should improve. By creating a higher awareness among employees about the importance of the financial side of a project, I think we can improve this significantly.'*

5.3 Initial reactions to the A3 approach

During the intervention, Dr. H.J. Doeleman gave a lecture about the A3 approach to strategizing. During and after the lecture, there was some interaction between the respondents and Dr. H.J. Doeleman. But, mainly from nonverbal cues, observations were made which showed points from the lecture that created a lot of attention among the respondents. The observations and initial reactions that stood out the most are noted as findings and contribute to helping answer the next sub-question: *What are the observed initial reactions of the participants during the intervention?*

Interest in the A3 annual plan:

During the intervention, it becomes apparent that respondents have little knowledge about annual plans and their use. Through the T1 measurement, we were able to observe that annual plans are currently not utilized. Nevertheless, during the intervention, the A3 annual plan generates the greatest interest among the participants. A participant asks about the rationale behind the A3 annual plan. From the lecture, it appears that the quality template: direction, result, and action form the basis of the A3 annual plan. *'It is especially important to keep the final goal in mind, we must continue to steer on that. The A3 annual plan could function as an accountability model where we can check each time whether we are still going in the right direction.'* The focus on direction, result, and action brings the focus of the intervention to using the A3 approach as a growth model. *"Perhaps the A3 approach would be supportive for us to add structure in our future growth.*

Initial reactions from the project manager reveal that the respondent believes that the A3 approach could improve the lucidity that is currently missing within the organization *'I think the great thing about A3 is that you work together openly and have structure. I think it's nice to have insight into what other teams are doing so that we can complement each other well.'*

Interest in more employee involvement:

During the intervention, the participants are informed about the A3 approach and how it is built upon the open approach to strategizing. One of the core characteristics of the A3 approach is that, due to the open approach, a broad involvement in the formation and execution of plans is established. From non-verbal and verbal reactions from the respondents, we deduce that there is an eager response to drawing up the strategic plans together and thinking about them with the entire company *'Especially in a smaller organization you must do it together. Of course, people must give direction, but it can help if everyone thinks along. I think that there will be more support for the formulated plans.'*

Another respondent believes that the plans will become more alive throughout the organization and that this would have a positive influence on the realization of the objectives '*I believe that opening up the objectives will ensure that the implementation of the plans will live on among employees throughout the organization.*'

5.4 Suggested motivations of employees within private company X for adopting the A3 approach

This section notes the findings measured after the intervention. The results should help answer the last sub-question: *What motivations are suggested by the interviewees within private company X to influence the choice of whether or not to adopt and implement the A3 approach?*

Create more transparency:

All the respondents believe that using an annual plan can help create more overview and structure. Respondents indicate that they have become aware of the importance of creating plans. They indicate that annual plans can help, and especially the overview of an annual plan on an A3 sheet is seen as attractive '*I think that the introduction of working with an annual plan can always help. After all, it gives a clear, visual representation of where we as a company want to go in the future.*' Respondents also indicate that they would benefit from a little more clarity around the drafting of plans '*It is unclear to me what exactly the plans of the management team are and what the rationale behind the plans is. Occasionally it is said what the plans are, but I can't find it anywhere.*'

Involving the whole organization:

In the T1 measurement, it already became clear that employees could perhaps be better involved with creating plans. However, it was not clear whether employees felt the need to have more say/influence in the formation of the plans. In this measurement moment, it became clear that employees would be extra motivated if they were more involved in the formation of the plans '*Personally I would like to be more involved in the formation of the plans as I think I can be of added value because of my ability to always optimize processes.*' Another respondent indicated that it is precisely the organization-wide formulation of plans that ensures that the plans and their realization become more alive among the employees. In addition, another participant indicated that he became enthusiastic about contributing ideas: '*I am enormously motivated to think along and to contribute to well-designed plans to continue to grow the company in the future.*'

Stimulate organizational growth:

It was already clear in T1 that all respondents indicated that results orientation was an element that needed to be improved. The respondents think that A3 can help to bring more focus to the achievement of the goals set up. The respondents all indicated that the A3 progress dialogues would add the most value for this company. During the A3 progress dialogues, the organization can use the A3 digital tool to discuss the current state of the company. According to the respondents, the talks would be useful for interim evaluations to see if the company continues to go in the right direction '*We do interim evaluations nowadays. But by including the A3 annual plan in this type of discussion, we can take a good look at where we stand as a company and whether the intended results are being realized.*' Another participant indicates that it is important to maintain focus: '*Consulting the A3 annual plans in A3online and holding the meetings can ensure that we maintain the focus on what is*

important to us. Now it is being said but not written down.*' In addition, respondents indicated that the company does need to become more results-oriented to experience the growth they envision "*By concretely setting the goals and observing the intended results, we can hopefully experience structural growth.*

5.5 The relationship between the boundary systems lever of control and the A3 approach

The results within this section relate to the presence of the boundary systems lever of control and how this presence influences the motivations to adopt the A3 approach for private company X.

Additionally, results within the municipalities that already work with A3, declare the extent to which the presence of the boundary systems lever of control influences the experiences and motivations within these organizations to work with the A3 approach. According to Simons (1994) the boundary systems lever of control limits opportunity-seeking behavior. Mundy (2010) emphasizes the importance of clear communication about tasks that should be performed and tasks that should not be performed. This should ensure that activities reach the desired endpoints.

The results should help to answer the question: *To what extent does the presence of the boundary systems control lever influence the motives for the adoption of the A3 approach?*

5.5.1 Current presence of the boundary systems lever of control within private company X

Much discretion per function:

All respondents indicated to have many responsibilities and that they are free to make their own informed decisions. '*I am free to make my own decisions and if there are any questions or problems, I can always seek advice from the management team.*'

Reporting is not consistently done, and employees often make decisions without getting direct approval from the management team. However, respondents from the management team indicate that it assumes the professionalism of the employees '*We assume that people handle their responsibilities well and that they make informed decisions.*'

One of the participants contradicts this assumption and feels that people might have too much freedom in making their own decisions '*I think that because of the lack of clarity people start filling in their positions themselves and this also leads to imbalances concerning the time and effort people put into their jobs.*'

Task ambiguity:

As mentioned, employees are given many responsibilities to make decisions within their positions. However, there is still a lack of clarity among employees about the tasks and their interpretation. All layers of the company indicate that there is too much ambiguity regarding the tasks and their interpretation. One of the business managers affirms this haziness.

'*I don't know if it is clear what is expected from all employees. I don't know if it is clear whether employees know how far they can go in their jobs to make their own decisions.*'

This is confirmed by a respondent who has now been working in the company for three years '*Three years ago I came in here, but at the beginning, I didn't know what exactly was expected of me.*' The respondent continued that nothing had changed in this

respect: *'I think that it is still difficult for new employees to know exactly what they must do.'*

5.5.2 The expected effect of the low presence of the boundary systems lever of control on the motivations of private company X to adopt the A3 approach

More transparency in tasks:

Respondents opine that the A3 approach might help the organization to provide more clarity regarding the positions of employees and the range of tasks per position. So far it remained ambiguous what exactly was expected per function and to what extent the responsibilities ran per function. Respondents indicated that A3 might be a tool that provides more structure and guidelines *'For example, we could use the A3 approach for a project to be able to report what the tasks are and how we are going to meet them.'*

The respondents reckon that the possible adoption of the A3 approach would not necessarily take away the freedom of decision-making of employees. On the contrary, they think that it would offer more clarity and insight, which would make decision-making easier. One respondent indicated that the A3 approach could function as a communication tool to improve cooperation and the distribution of tasks. *'By having insight into the current state of affairs, the A3 approach could also act as a communication tool'.*

Greater support for the plans:

By involving the entire organization in the drawing up and implementation of plans, the management team believes that the objectives would be more broadly supported by the employees of the company. Subsequently, they expect that this 'sense of togetherness' will lead to better and more conscious cooperation where there is clarity about who carries out which tasks. *'Involving the whole company would ensure that the plans are shared organization-wide.'* *'This could lead to more clarity in who carries out which tasks and this leads to even better cooperation.'*

5.5.3 The presence of the boundary systems lever of control in municipalities working with the A3 approach

The clarity in roles and responsibilities:

Municipalities X, Y, and Z all indicate that they work in teams that create A3 annual plans for each team. Within the teams, tasks are divided and members of a team report to the team managers. There is also consistent reporting of which tasks have been carried out and the team manager reports back to the board of the municipality. *'The team manager looks at which person is best suited for which tasks, and these have to be carried out maturely'.*

Given the presence of the mandate register, employees within municipalities cannot make decisions outside their mandate, unless permission is requested. This regulation ensures that employees are thus 'limited' in their decision making and it is clear to what extent they have the authority to make decisions. The respondent from municipality Y indicates to have a lot of discretion *"I have a lot of room to make decisions, but if I go outside my mandate, I have to get permission from the board.'* Municipality X assumes that employees can carry out responsibilities in a proper way ' *In our organization, the mandate register ensures that people lower down in the*

organization can also make decisions. People must be able to make decisions themselves, in a professional manner.'

Clarity of organizational objectives:

The municipalities all work with A3 annual plans and clearly state what the goals of the municipalities are. By involving all stakeholders in the municipality, teams can work in a focused way to achieve the organizational goals. According to municipality X, this way of working ensures that teams agree on the goals that need to be achieved '*By making annual plans for each team, it is clear what needs to be done for each team. However, communication between teams is essential to realize the intended plans.'*

6. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

As described in the introduction, the A3 approach to strategizing is a widely accepted and used approach in the public domain. However, the literature does not provide specific motivations for choosing A3. In addition, the approach is widely adopted in the public domain, however, this adoption rate is significantly lower in the private sector. This section shows what the motivations are for private company X to adopt the A3 approach in the future and compares this to the motivations that led to the adoption within municipalities X, Y, and Z. The Gioia analyses of the results from the municipalities and private company X can be found in Appendix 10.5. The qualitative research does not indicate significant differences between the motivations to adopt the A3 approach. Ultimately, we address the relationship between the presence of the boundary system lever of control and the influence this presence has on the motivations to use the A3 approach.

6.1 Discussing the motivations for adopting the A3 approach

6.1.1 Interpreting the results from private company X

The results of private company X's current approach to strategy-making and implementation suggest a traditional practice. The company puts the decision-making entirely in the hands of the management team who then informs the employees. Their current approach is in line with Cooks-Campbell's (2021) top management theory, in which the management team sets the direction and the goals, and the employees try to realize them.

The rapid growth of the company has meant that the company lost its structure and there is ambiguity about the direction of the company and the division of tasks. Nevertheless, there is not a lot of stratification between the employees and the management team as there is an accessible culture where people talk to each other daily on the working floor. The strong group dynamics insinuate that getting involved would not be estimated as a difficult task. This contradicts research by Hrebiniak (2006) who indicates that engaging the entire organization is more difficult than creating an adequate strategy.

Transparency, inclusiveness, and business future are found to be the three underlying motivations that lead to the possible adoption of the A3 approach within private company X.

Firstly, the analysis suggests that motivation for possible adoption would be to create more transparency and insight by the organization. Primarily, the creation of an annual plan is seen here as being transparent and would serve as a useful tool to have the organization's goals clear to all stakeholders. This analysis is supported by Hautz et al. (2017) who indicate that the open strategy approach, such as the A3 approach, provides more strategic transparency for internal and external actors. The A3 annual plan is formulated together with managers and

organizational stakeholders, which according to (Gegenhuber and Dosch, 2017) enhances transparency. Data also showed that there is a lot of ambiguity about all the tasks and the expectations that the company has for each function. According to the A3 company (2020), the EFQM model behind the formation of the A3 annual plan clearly states the company's goals and the actions and the results associated with them. The enablers show what an organization does, and the results point out what the organization achieves. (Gómez et al., 2011).

In addition, the analysis suggests that the creation of more inclusiveness would be another motivation for adopting the A3 approach. The A3 approach builds upon the open strategizing approach in which Whittington (2011) states that "open strategizing" would help in engaging all stakeholders within an organization. Thus, the data suggests that the A3 approach would respond well to the company's need for employees to be more involved in decision-making. We can also interpret from the analysis of the results that employees think they might add value to the formation of plans within private company X. These employees' thoughts support the theory of Mack & Szulanski (2017) which state that an organization can extract more information through the involvement of more stakeholders within an organization. In addition, the analyses revealed that the company has a healthy corporate culture and there is a good group dynamic where employees work together in close-knit teams. All the interviewees share the same opinion that the A3 approach would strengthen the current culture and create additional motivation among employees since they would be able to influence the design of the plans. This analysis validates the work of Hutter et al. (2017) who suggests that sharing the same goals can create additional commitment and could ensure more effective implementation of the plans. The data collected regarding leadership suggests that the company would adopt more transformational leadership if A3 were implemented. By including employees in the decision-making process, they are intellectually stimulated and motivated to contribute to the formulation of plans. This could result in the creation of appropriate working conditions for employees, and this will ultimately lead to better performance levels of employees according to theory (Kossek et al., (2018).

The data implies as a final underlying reason for the adoption of the A3 approach, the company's business future. Participants agreed on the company's desire to pursue business growth. Respondents from the company indicate that the A3 digital tool can provide the insight needed to measure current progress. Respondents' thoughts on the importance of A3 digital are endorsed by the theory of Amrollahi et al. (2014) which suggests that open strategizing cannot be performed without information technology. In addition, results display that the company is making plans but that they are insufficiently adjusting them which results in a loss of focus. By using the A3 approach, the focus can be maintained by the constant short-cycle adjustment of the plans in the A3 progress dialogues by consulting the A3 annual plans in A3online. During the A3 progress dialogues, the company can apply the PDCA cycle which, according to Chakraborty (2016), can lead to continuous quality enhancements. Participants from the management team emphasized the importance of maintaining focus since the company operates in a dynamic market where changes are constantly occurring. The intended constant adjustment of the strategy within private company X is in line with the theory of Weiser (2020) who emphasizes the importance of constant strategy adjustment and improvement.

6.1.2 A comparison between sectors

The Gioia analyses in appendix 10.5 exhibit the results from the municipalities and private company X. Transparency and inclusiveness are two matching underlying motivations that influence the choice to adopt the A3 approach. Among municipalities, strategic alignment emerged as the third underlying motivation. This could be explained by the size of the municipalities that were interviewed. Since the stronger stratification, it is likely to be more challenging in larger organizations to have unanimity in the execution of the strategy. Therefore, Hrebiniak's (2006) theory does hold here, and bringing the organization along is more difficult than formulating an adequate strategy.

In addition, the results of this study suggest that the A3 approach fits well with the key principles of open strategizing. According to Doeleman et al. (2022), transparency, inclusiveness, participation, and IT enablement were the four principles of open strategizing. The motivations for adopting the A3 approach of private company X and the municipalities demonstrated agreement on two of the four principles, namely transparency and inclusiveness. This suggests that according to the study's results, the open strategizing principles of transparency and inclusiveness can be interpreted as direct motivations to adopt A3. Even though IT-enablement was not directly identified as one of the main motivations for choosing the A3 approach in this study, it revealed its significance. Respondents from municipalities did indicate that the A3online tool provides insight into the organization's annual plans which resulted in more transparency. Respondents from private company X confirmed the practical experiences of the municipalities and shared the opinion that the A3 digital tool could provide more transparency. These experiences and expectations are in line with the research of Doeleman et al. (2022), which states that the use of information technology facilitates transparency, inclusiveness, and participation. Within private company X, the participation principle of open strategizing was not identified as a motivation to adopt the A3 approach. During the first interview round, it was mentioned that participation was something that according to the respondents was one of the company's strengths. However, according to the literature on open strategizing, participation is defined differently and contradicts the ideas of the respondents. According to Doeleman et al. (2021), Participation is the influence people exert on decision-making so that robust decisions and assumptions are made. This result suggests that respondents have an ambiguous understanding of what participation is according to the literature on open strategizing since employees within private company X do not have direct an influence on the decision-making currently. In the municipalities, participation was also not mentioned as a direct motive that led to the adoption of the A3 approach. Given the size of the municipalities, we can assume that not all employees can influence decision-making and therefore participation is not a direct reason for adopting A3.

6.2 The effect of the presence of the boundary systems lever of control on the motivations for adopting A3

The data from private company X regarding the presence of the boundary systems lever of control shows us that there is a low presence in limiting opportunity-seeking behavior. There is a lot of ambiguity around the tasks that must be performed, and it is not clearly stated which tasks do and do not contribute to the company's goals. Nevertheless, the company wants to grow, and the theory of Elsye Hatane et al. (2019) suggests that in the growth phase managers should be clear about what behavior harms the achievement of the organization's objectives. The A3 approach ensures that the whole trajectory of the company is

more structured and gives users an adequate overview of the business activities on one A3 sheet (A3 company, 2020). These attributes are recognized by the respondents of the municipalities. Respondents within the municipalities imply that the A3 approach provides clarity around the tasks and visualizes the organization's goals through the A3 annual plans. However, municipalities work with a mandate register that ensures that employees can make decisions within a mandate. If they step outside their mandate, permission is required. This can be interpreted as limiting the decision-making space of employees, as they are restricted to solely making decisions within their mandate. This suggests that private company X, besides using the A3 approach, should implement guidelines, such as a mandate register, which should provide even more clarity around the decision-making of employees.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Limitations and future research

Due to the short time frame in which the research took place at private company X, the A3 approach could not be implemented, but an introduction to the A3 approach was chosen, through an introductory lecture. For this reason, the motivations of the exploratory case study within private company X to choose the A3 approach are based on expectations, while the motivations and experiences of the municipalities are based on practical experiences. In future research, the A3 approach can be implemented within a private company X to observe whether the experiences within the public domain of working with the A3 approach correspond to the experiences of working with A3 within the private sector. The same applies to the relationship between the A3 approach and the boundary systems lever of control.

Moreover, the results within private company X suggested that involving the organization is less challenging than formulating an adequate strategy. This contrasts with the results within the municipalities which suggested that involving an organization is more difficult than formulating an adequate strategy, these results are in line with the theory of Hrebiniak (2006). Besides the assumption that the size of the organizations would cause this contrast, future research could look at other reasons why it is more difficult to involve employees within municipalities (public organizations) than within a private company (private sector).

Also, the municipalities involved are considerably larger in size than the private company X, as we could not find organizations with similar characteristics in this short period. Moreover, there are only three municipalities where experiences were measured; a larger sample size would have offered more reliability regarding the motivations for municipalities to adopt the A3 approach. The same accounts here for the private sector, as we only conducted research at one private company. Finally, the interviewees from the three municipalities are ambassadors/supporters of A3. These individuals may be positively biased towards the A3 approach and its usefulness.

7.2 Conclusion

The basis and main emphasis of this research were to investigate if the A3 approach to strategizing is also applicable in the private sector. The low adoption in the private sector raised the suspicion that the strategizing approach is more applicable in the public domain. This study adds to the literature since it shows the motivations of, a company within the private domain, to adopt the A3 approach, an open-strategy approach. To properly investigate if the A3 approach was applicable and aligned with private company X, a longitudinal action study was chosen. This way of research gave insight into whether the A3 approach could be useful for private company X. By comparing these motivations with the public domain, we chose to conduct interviews with three different municipalities that were working with the A3 approach at the time the interviews were conducted. Transparency, inclusiveness, and business future emerged as underlying reasons for adopting the A3 approach within private company X. These results are in most parts consistent with the collected literature regarding open strategizing. The A3 approach might provide the transparency that is lacking within the company's current way of working. Thereby, the A3 approach fits well with one of the improvement points of the company to involve employees more in the decision-making process. Finally, respondents from the management team of private company X think that the A3 approach can help with the future growth that the company wants to pursue. The analyses of the interviews conducted at the municipalities revealed three underlying motivations that guided the municipalities to adopt the A3 approach: transparency, inclusiveness, and strategic alignment. These outcomes, like the motivations of private company X, are most consistent with the collected literature on open strategizing. The findings of this study hint at no significant difference in motivations for adopting the A3 approach. The small difference between the sectors in the motivations for choosing the A3 approach can be seen as an unexpected result since the difference in adoption between the sectors is significant. Thus, the outcomes of this study suggest that the lower adoption rate in the private sector is not related to the attributes of the A3 approach. Future research may further reveal what are other (possible) reasons why the adoption rate within the private sector lags behind the adoption rate within the public domain.

In addition, the study focused on the relationship between the presence of the boundary systems lever of control and the A3 approach. Interview questions at private company X regarding the boundary systems lever of control during the current approach of strategy making-and implementation revealed that there was a low presence of the lever. After the intervention, questions were again asked about the boundary systems lever of control and the effect of any implementation of the A3 approach on this lever. All the participants within private company X expected that the A3 approach would provide more clarity in tasks and curb opportunity-seeking behavior, thus indicating a higher presence of the lever if the A3 approach is implemented. These results were confirmed by interviews at the municipalities, respondents among the three municipalities suggested that the A3 approach, in practice, provided clarity in the division of tasks and clarity in the responsibilities and discretion of employees within their positions. Based on the results of this study, a low presence of the boundary systems lever of control stimulates the motivations to adopt the A3 approach.

9. REFERENCES

A3 Company. (2018, 13 juli). *Ervaringen gebruikers*. A3 Methodiek. Retrieved April 17, 2022, https://a3methodiek.nl/ervaringen-gebruikers/

A3 Company. (2020, 17 April). *A3 strategy execution chart*. A3 Approach. Retrieved June 6, 2022, https://onepaperstrategy.com/a3methodiek/a3-annual-plan/

A3 Company. (2022, 7 februari). *Home - A3 Methodiek - Uw jaarplan op een A3-tje*. A3 Methodiek. Retrieved April 7, 2022, https://a3methodiek.nl

Adobor, H. (2019). Opening up strategy formulation: Benefits, risks, and some suggestions. *Business Horizons*, *62*(3), 383–393. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2019.01.005

Amrollahi, A., Ghapanchi, A., and Talaei-Khoei, A. 2014. "Using Crowdsourcing Tools for Implementing Open Strategy: A Case Study in Education," *Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS)*.

Baarspul, H. C., & Wilderom, C. P. (2011). Do Employees Behave Differently In Public- Vs Private-Sector Organizations? *Public Management Review*, *13*(7), 967–1002.

Bateman, N., Philp, L., & Warrender, H. (2016). Visual management and shop floor teams – development, implementation and use. *International Journal of Production Research*, *54*(24), 7345–7358. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2016.1184349

Chakraborty, A. (2016). Importance of PDCA cycle for SMEs. *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering*, *3*(5), 30–34. https://doi.org/10.14445/23488360/ijme-v3i5p105

Cooks-Campbell, A. (2021, 7 September). *Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Management: What Is the Best Fit?* BetterUp. Retrieved June 14, 2022, https://www.betterup.com/blog/top-down-vs-bottom-up-management-approach

Doeleman, H., & Diepenmaat, M. (2014). *One paper strategy* (1ste editie). Deventer: Vakmedianet

Doeleman (2022), *Strategie op één A3*, Amsterdam: Koninklijke BOOM Uitgevers.

Doeleman, H. J., Van Dun, D. H., & Wilderom, C. P. (2022). Leading open strategizing practices for effective strategy implementation. *Journal of Strategy and Management*, *15*(1), 54–75.

Elsye Hatane, S., Gabrielle, L., & Febe Angelina, S. (2019). The Levers of Management Control System in Organizational Life Cycle. *KnE Social Sciences*, *3*(11), 188. https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i11.4007

Gegenhuber, T. and Dobusch, L. (2017),"Making an impression through openness: how open strategy-making practices change in the evolution of new ventures", Long Range Planning, Vol. 50 No. 3,pp. 337-354

Gill, P. (2008, 22 Maart). *Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups*. Nature. Retrieved April 17, 2022, https://www.nature.com/articles/bdj.2008.192?error=cookies_not_supported&code=6cd1099b-dacf-4bb0-82c0-2c6a6c5c8ad6

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2012). Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research. *Organizational Research Methods*, *16*(1), 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151

Gimbert, X., Bisbe, J., & Mendoza, X. (2010). The Role of Performance Measurement Systems in Strategy Formulation Processes. *Long Range Planning*, *43*(4), 477–497. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2010.01.001

Gómez Gómez, J., Martínez Costa, M., & Martínez Lorente, N. R. (2011). A critical evaluation of the EFQM model. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, *28*(5), 484–502.

Gray, B. (1990). The enactment of management control systems: A critique of Simons. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, *15*(1–2), 145–148. https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682(90)90019-q

Hautz, J., Seidl, D., & Whittington, R. (2017). Open Strategy: Dimensions, Dilemmas, Dynamics. *Long Range Planning*, *50*(3), 298–309.

Hay, I. 2006, 'Transformational leadership: Characteristics and criticisms', *E-Journal of Organizational Learning and Leadership*, vol. 5, no. 2.

Hrebiniak, L. G. (2006). Obstacles to Effective Strategy Implementation. *Organizational Dynamics*, *35*(1), 12–31.

Hutter, K., Nketia, B. A., & Füller, J. (2017). Falling Short with Participation — Different Effects of Ideation, Commenting, and Evaluating Behavior on Open Strategizing. *Long Range Planning*, *50*(3), 355–370.

Kaplan, Robert S., and David Norton. "The Balanced Scorecard: Measures that Drive Performance." Harvard Business Review 70, no. 1 (January–February 1992): 71–79. (Reprint #92105.)

Kearney, A., Harrington, D., & Kelliher, F. (2018). Strategizing in the micro firm: A 'strategy as practice' framework. *Industry and Higher Education*, *33*(1), 6–17

Kossek, E. E., Petty, R. J., Bodner, T. E., Perrigino, M. B., Hammer, L. B., Yragui, N. L., & Michel, J. S. (2018). Lasting Impression: Transformational Leadership and Family Supportive Supervision as Resources for Well-Being and Performance. *Occupational Health Science*, *2*(1), 1–24

Mack, D. Z., & Szulanski, G. (2017). Opening Up: How Centralization Affects Participation and Inclusion in Strategy Making. *Long Range Planning*, *50*(3), 385–396.

McCleskey, J. (2014). Situational, Transformational, and Transactional Leadership and Leadership Development. *Journal of business studies quarterly*. https://media.proquest.com/media/pq/classic/doc/3386176251/fmt/pi/rep/NONE?_s=pyMqNIHUp4ACGu7Y9jVCdJWNcco%3D

Mintzberg, H. (1978). *Patterns in Strategy Formation*. Institute for operations research and the management sciences

Mintzberg, H. (1987). *Crafting Strategy*. Harvard Business Review.

Mundy, J. (2010). Creating dynamic tensions through a balanced use of management control systems. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, *35*(5), 499–523. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aos.2009.10.005

Nicholas, J. (2014). Hoshin kanri and critical success factors in quality management and lean production. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, *27*(3–4), 250–264.

Nickerson, J., & Argyres, N. (2018). Strategizing Before Strategic Decision Making. *Strategy Science*, *3*(4), 592–605. https://doi.org/10.1287/stsc.2018.0066

Olson, E. M., Slater, S. F., & Hult, G. T. M. (2005). The importance of structure and process to strategy implementation. *Business Horizons*, *48*(1), 47–54.

Paroutis, S., Alberto Franco, L. and Papadopoulos, T. (2015), "Visual interactions with strategy tools: producing strategic knowledge in workshops",British Journal of Management, Vol. 26 No. S1,pp. 48-66

Schwartz, J. (2005). The Balanced Scorecard versus Total Quality Management: Which Is Better for Your Organization? *Military Medicine*, *170*(10), 855–858. https://doi.org/10.7205/milmed.170.10.855

Simons, R. (1994). *Levers of Control*. Reed Business Education.

Simons, R. (1995), The Levers of Control, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Massachusetts, MA

Tessier, S., & Otley, D. (2012). A conceptual development of Simons' Levers of Control framework. *Management Accounting Research*, *23*(3), 171–185.

Weiser, A. K., Jarzabkowski, P., & Laamanen, T. (2020). Completing the Adaptive Turn: An Integrative View of Strategy Implementation. *Academy of Management Annals*, *14*(2), 969–1031. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0137

Witcher, B. J., & Sum Chau, V. (2007). Balanced scorecard and *hoshin kanri*: dynamic capabilities for managing strategic fit. *Management Decision*, *45*(3), 518–538.

10. APPENDIX

10.1 Interviews private company X

Interview questions for private company X before the intervention:

- To what extent is strategy implementation something your company is consciously doing?
  → Could you rate the awareness with a number from 1 to 10?
- What method do you currently use for strategy implementation?
  Do you have a method → what does it look like?
  No method → what are the main principles and procedures?
- What is the main reason for adopting this approach (motivations)?
- What aspects are most important to the company and why (added value)?
- What are the internal points of attention or areas for improvement (improvement)?
- Are annual plans being used within the organization and how are they shaped?
- How are employees involved in the development of the annual plans (strategic objectives) and informed after the adoption of the annual plans (strategic objectives)?
- How do you keep working with the strategic approach exciting? How do you keep the attention and energy on it? (attractive)
- To what extent do you differentiate between measurable results versus efforts? Does, an action have to have a directly measured result?
- How is there communication with employees about interim progress on performance and actions?
- To what extent is the strategy recognizably translated into action by employees (are intended plans executed as intended, operationally)?
- Who has the most important stimulating roles for strategy implementation, and what do they look like? (How do the relevant persons do this?)
- To what extent do you experience a broad involvement in the formulation of the strategy and its implementation?
- In what ways are employees involved?
- To what extent is the provision of information connected to the progress of the strategy? (Information systems within organizations do not show overlap with intended plans, they tend to focus on the past)
- To what extent do employees have access to the progress information?
- What was the best moment surrounding the application of the strategic approach?
- Have there ever been critical incidents around the strategy implementation?
- How would you rate working with the current strategic approach on a scale of 1 to 10?

Interview questions for private company X after the intervention:

- Has awareness of the importance of strategy implementation changed after the A3 introduction session?
  → Could you rate the awareness with a number from 1 to 10?
- What are the biggest differences between the current way of working regarding annual planning and A3? What was the biggest eye-opener, if any?
- What are the main similarities between the current practice regarding annual planning and A3?
- What added value do you see in adopting the A3 approach? Why would you choose this approach (Motivations)?
- What is/are the reason(s) for not applying A3 as presented? (Motivations)
- Which parts of the presented A3 approach appeal to you the most and why? (Added Value)
- Which part of the A3 approach do you think has the potential to have the greatest impact on your business?
  -> What about the other two pillars?
- To what extent could A3 provide solutions for the concerns and areas for improvement regarding strategy implementation? (improvement)
- Are there adjustments needed to make A3 fit the requirements and characteristics of the company? If so, which?
- To what extent do you think the annual plans according to A3 have added value compared to the current way of making annual plans?
- To what extent does A3 contribute to the involvement of employees in the development of the annual plans, objectives, and strategy?
- To what extent do you expect that working with A3 can increase the pleasure around strategy implementation compared to the current way of working? If not, how can this be achieved?
  -> On which elements of A3 do you base this? (attractive)
- To what extent do you think the A3 approach can contribute to improving the company's results orientation?
- To what extent can A3 progress discussions with employees improve communication about interim progress of performance and actions?
  → On what do you base this?
- To what extent can A3 contribute to the translation of the strategy so that it can be translated into action by employees in a recognizable way? (Are intended plans being executed as intended- operational)
- To what extent can the A3 approach contribute to improving the alignment of information systems with the progress of the strategy?
- To what extent can the A3 approach contribute to improving the accessibility of progress information for employees?
- With what grade would you rate the expected effectiveness/attractiveness of the A3 approach for your company?
  → Can you focus this on the three pillars of A3?

10.2 Interview questions: Municipalities

- What is your personal commitment to the A3 approach?
- What was the reason for the organization to choose A3 (motivations)?
- What is the main added value experienced? Can you focus that on the three pillars of the A3 approach?
  A3 annual plan
  A3 management dialogue
  A3 digital support
- What areas of concern or improvement are there internally (improvement)?
- An approach is used a lot if it is also experienced as fun. How do you keep working with A3 exciting? How do you keep the attention of the energy on it? (attractive)
- Who are the most important 'drivers' in your organization (leadership) and how do they do this?
- What was the best moment concerning the application of A3? (inspiration) appreciative inquiry
- Were there also one or more moments of problems? (Critical incidents) these could also be problems that you encounter.
- What is your most important recommendation for other municipalities?
- How would you rate working with A3 on a scale of 1 to 10?
- How is employee behavior understood? As in; to what extent does the discretion to make decisions lie with the employees themselves?
- Do you sometimes have an example of a situation in which an employee took the initiative to make his own decision?
- To what extent does the organization fill in an employee's job description?
- Are there 'behavior manuals' (desired behavior/ core values) present and how is this enforced within the organization?
- What are the consequences of not adhering to the standards of conduct set within the organization?

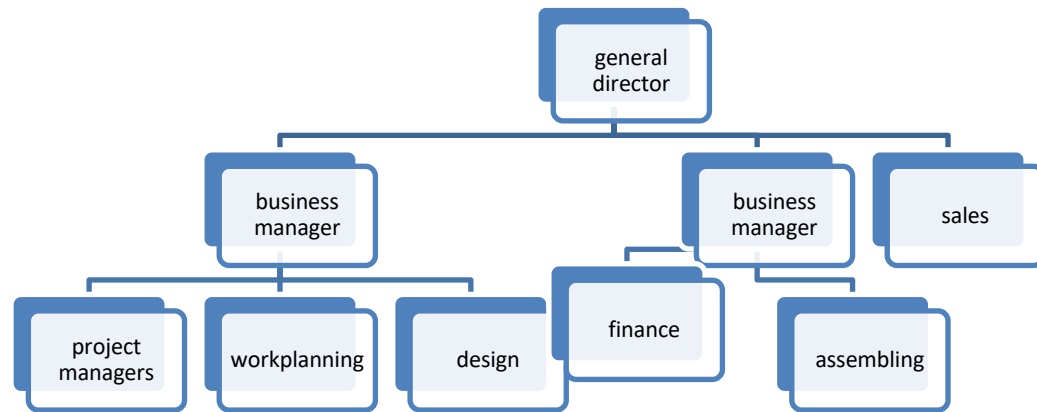## 10.3 Boundary systems lever of control-related interview questions

Interview questions relating to the boundary systems lever of control before the intervention:

- How is employee behavior understood? As in; to what extent does the discretion to make decisions lie with the employees themselves?
- Do you sometimes have an example of a situation in which an employee took the initiative to make his/her own decision?
- To what extent does the organization fill in an employee's job description?
- Are there 'behavior manuals' (desired behavior/ core values) present and how is this enforced within the organization?
- What are the consequences of not adhering to the 'standards of conduct' set within the organization?

Interview questions relating to the boundary systems lever of control after the intervention:

- To what extent do you expect the A3 approach to provide more room for employees to make their own decisions?
- To what extent would the implementation of the A3 approach have a positive effect on the observance of behavioral norms within the company?
- Would the implementation of A3 contribute to a more result-oriented (effort measurable result) working atmosphere within the company?
- To what extent do you expect that the implementation of the A3 approach will provide more support for the chosen strategic objectives?

10.4 Corporate structure private company X

```
                          ┌──────────────┐
                          │   general    │
                          │   director   │
                          └──────┬───────┘
         ┌───────────────────────┼─────────────────────┐
   ┌─────┴──────┐          ┌──────┴──────┐       ┌──────┴──────┐
   │  business  │          │  business   │       │    sales    │
   │  manager   │          │  manager    │       │             │
   └─────┬──────┘          └──────┬──────┘       └─────────────┘
   ┌─────┼─────────┬──────┐  ┌────┴─────┐
┌──┴───┐ ┌─┴────┐ ┌─┴────┐│┌─┴──────┐┌──┴────────┐
│project│ │work- │ │design││ finance ││ assembling│
│manage-│ │plan- │ │      ││         ││           │
│rs     │ │ning  │ │      ││         ││           │
└───────┘ └──────┘ └──────┘└─────────┘└───────────┘
```

10.5 Gioia analyses

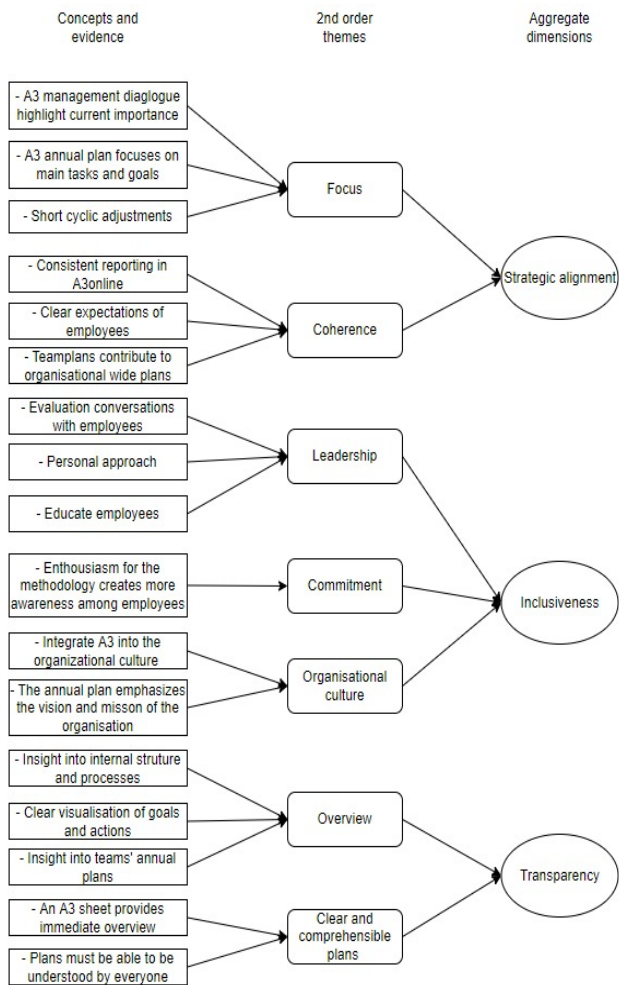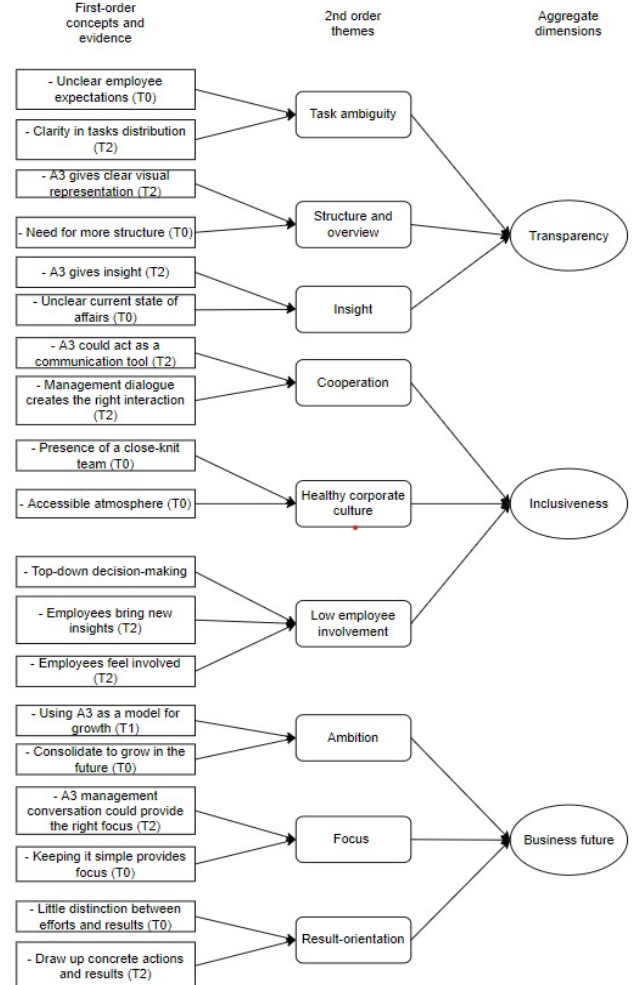**Figure 1. Gioia analysis: Municipalities**

Figure 2. Gioia analysis: Private company X

10.6 Results on important and reiterated concepts before and after the intervention

Key concepts	T0 (Results before the intervention)	T2 (Results after the intervention)
Strategic consciousness	**Low strategic consciousness** *'Consciously engaging with strategy implementation is something that can be improved. The awareness has improved somewhat because we hired an extern consultant, but we now really need to look at what direction the company needs to go in.'* *It's really underwhelming now. if I were to give it a grade it would be a 4 out of 10. We really need to get busy putting structure in place to have further growth.'* *'This is the time to actively engage in strategy implementation since we have grown enormously, and we want to continue to grow in the future.'*	**Increased strategic consciousness** *'Lectures like this always help. It mainly creates more awareness among the management about the importance of realizing your strategy.'* *'Awareness has certainly increased through this lecture. However, I think it needs to be repeated so that we actually engage with it.'*

Employee involvement	Low employee involvement in decision-making	Higher expected employee involvement
	'Once every two weeks on Monday we hold an information meeting in which employees are informed about the course of events, such as new projects, improvements etc.'	*'I am enormously motivated to think along and to contribute to well-designed plans to continue to grow the company in the future.'*
	'In this information meeting, everyone can give input and ask questions. In addition, there is an accessible corporate culture where employees can ask questions at any time and raise problems they encounter. In addition, the input from the employees is included in the management meeting and we always include critical notes in the evaluation process.'	*'Personally, I would like to be more involved in the formation of the plans as I think I can be of added value because of my ability to always optimize processes.'* *'Drawing up plans together may be able to ensure that everyone feels involved and this may ensure that the plans are more widely supported'*
	'Basically, we have nothing to do with the decision making. The decisions are made by the management team, and we are informed.'	
	'Perhaps it would be better to make the plans more broadly throughout the company. This could create more support for the plans among all employees.	
Transparency	**Low transparency**	**Higher expected transparency**
	'I don't know if it is clear what is expected from all employees. I don't know if it is clear whether employees know how far they can go in their jobs regarding making their own decisions.'	*'I think that the introduction of working with an annual plan can always help. After all, it gives a clear, visual representation in A3online of where we as a company want to go in the future.'*
	'We now find that after a while we lose focus after setting goals. We need more interim evaluation and insight into whether we are still going in the right direction.'	*'It is unclear to me what exactly the plans of the management team are and what the rationale behind the plans is. Occasionally it is said what the plans are, but I can't find it anywhere.'*
	'We operate in a dynamic market. Insight and overview are something we need to make difficult decisions easier.'	*'I think that because of the lack of clarity people start filling in their positions themselves and this also leads to imbalances in relation to the time and effort people put into their jobs.'*
		'We have too much now that other people deliver more work than others. This can be prevented by getting sharper about exactly what

		tasks are expected with what positions.' *'I would like to have a little more insight from the work of other project teams. After all, I think we can learn from each other.'*
Results-orientation	**Low results-orientation** *'At the moment we are not yet working in a result-oriented way. We should therefore put the ownership of a project more with the employees who are then directly responsible for the efforts and the results of the project.'* *'We are an ambitious company. If we want to grow further this should really improve. By creating a higher awareness among employees about the importance of the financial side of a project, I think we can improve this significantly.'* *'By reporting better and more accurately, we can better understand what efforts and hours are associated with a project.'*	**Higher expected results-orientation** *'We do interim evaluations nowadays. But by including the A3 annual plan in this type of discussions, we can take a good look at where we stand as a company and whether the intended results are being realized.'* *'Consulting the A3 annual plans and holding the meetings can ensure that we maintain the focus on what is important to us. Now it is being said but not written down.'* *'By concretely setting the goals and observing the intended results, we can hopefully experience structural growth.'*
Annual plans	No annual plans are used.	**Expected added value of an annual plan** *'I think an annual plan can definitely help us focus on what we want to accomplish in the upcoming year.'*

		'I think that the introduction of working with an annual plan can always help. After all, it gives a clear, visual representation of where we as a company want to go in the future.' *'An annual plan on an A3 sheet also ensures that the plans are formulated simply and clearly, otherwise I think that employees will not read it at all.'* *'It is unclear to me what exactly the plans of the management team are and what the rationale behind the plans is. Occasionally it is said what the plans are, but I can't find it anywhere.'*
Corporate culture	**Healthy corporate culture** *'In addition, there is an accessible corporate culture where employees can ask questions at any time and raise problems they encounter.'* *'The motivation is to look back at the end of the year and see that we have completed some great projects, which we have completed successfully together as a team.'* *'There is a high group dynamic within the company. People really want to work for each other and the atmosphere within the company is very informal.'* *'We, as employees, can go to the management team at any time if there are issues, we are facing.'*	**Expected strengthened corporate culture** *'The A3 management conversation complements the strength of the company as we now put more focus in our interactions. It creates the right dialogue through which collaboration could become even more enjoyable.'* *'It is precisely because we are a small and dynamic company that we can quickly adapt to changes in our environment. By having a clear picture of where we stand as a company in A3, we can anticipate any fluctuations in the environment even better.'* *'We talk to each other every day in the office and often run to each other with questions. The clarity that A3 provides can only make us work together even better and this can only strengthen the group dynamic.'*
Leadership	**Mix between transactional and transformational leadership** *'We do motivate employees by addressing them personally'* *'We need a pleasant workplace with all the facilities to work well.'* *'Occasionally we have workshops where we take employees to learn things.'*	**Towards more transformational leadership** *'By involving employees in decision-making, they are taught new skills.'* *'I am very motivated to have more of a say as I have always aspired to do so.'*
Presence of boundary systems lever of control	**Low presence of lever**	**Expected higher presence of lever**

	'I think that because of the lack of clarity people start filling in their positions themselves and this also leads to imbalances concerning the time and effort people put into their jobs.'	*'A3 can provide more clarity on who is responsible for what tasks and therefore I think we will get to the right end goals in a more focused way'*
	'I don't know if it is clear what is expected from all employees. I don't know if it is clear whether employees know how far they can go in their jobs regarding making their own decisions.'	*'By having insight into the current state of affairs, A3 could also act as a communication tool'.*
	'I think that it is still difficult for new employees to know exactly what they must do.'	*'As I mentioned earlier, checklists are something we can start with. On the other hand, A3 can provide handles for all employees so they have more insight into whether they are working on the right tasks'*
	'I often make decisions without the approval of the general manager. If it is in the best interest of the company.'	