A Study on Knowledge Sharing in The Case of a Company Acquisition

Quera Owens

Hesham Saadeldin

Supervisor: Nandita Farhad Frögren
Preface

We are two business students and as we are finishing our bachelor’s degree in business administration, a bachelor thesis must be completed. One of us have an engineering background and works as a consultant at a mid-sized company in Sweden. The company acquired recently an IT consultant company and the knowledge sharing challenges of this acquisition was to be the inspiration for the topic of this thesis. However, we read endless amount of literature on knowledge sharing and discovered a lack in the research on knowledge sharing after acquisitions, therefore we believe that our work is valuable to this field of research. Furthermore, we also hope to raise awareness about the topic of knowledge sharing amongst companies engaging in acquisitions. In our thesis, you can expect to get some clarification around the knowledge sharing challenges that arises in an acquisition and potential solutions to them.

This piece of work would never have been completed without the support and help from our supervisor Nandita, a special thank you! Moreover, we would like to thank the companies we studied for their cooperation and willingness to participate in the interviews we conducted. And lastly, we would like to thank the students of the Atlantis program for their insightful feedback and comments on this thesis.
Abstract

Knowledge sharing is of great importance for many of the companies today (Spender and Grant, 1996) and been a hot topic amongst researchers in the field of business and organization science (Alvesson and Karreman, 2001). Previous researches have been focusing on; the construction of good knowledge management systems, the general challenges of knowledge sharing including from a psychology perspective, increasing motivation to share knowledge etc. (Hahn and Subramani, 2000; Hung et. al, 2011). However, less research has been done on knowledge sharing between the organization and an acquired company specialized in a different area of knowledge (Gammelgaard et. al., 2004). Hence, the objective of this thesis is to study the arising knowledge sharing challenges during an acquisition and whether reward system can be utilized to motivate the employees to overcome these challenges by encouraging them to engage in knowledge sharing activities.

In order to conduct this study, a case of a mid-sized consultant company with approximately 600 employees acquiring another smaller consultant company in a different field of knowledge with approximately 200 employees was used. Interviews were conducted with chosen people from both companies, amongst them were both CEOs and consultants. From the findings made from the interviews, the following conclusions were drawn. The identified challenges, which arose during the acquisition, were not dividing the company, communication, motivation and the use of terminology. In addition, although reward systems would increase employees’ motivation to engage in knowledge sharing activities, in the short-term, it should be avoided since it does not influence the long-term motivation. Intrinsic motivation was found to have the best long-term effect when coupled with the culture of the organization.
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Appendix A

Appendix B
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

According to ING’s report of the engineering consultancy sector, the engineering consultancy market is characterized by competitiveness (ING, 2008). Consultant companies seek to diversify its services and overtake market shares by developing into other fields of knowledge by either attracting the professionals with the desired knowledge which we refer to as organic growth or acquisition of other consultant companies with the desired knowledge which we call acquired growth. Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are strategic tools for growth and market repositioning (Weber and Tarba, 2012). However, M&A often lead to organizational challenges (e.g. Vieru and Rivard, 2014; Vieru and Rivard, 2015). One of the post M&A challenges is about knowledge sharing, e.g. post-merger information systems integration for knowledge sharing (Vieru and Rivard, 2015).

“Knowledge is facts, information and skills acquired by a person through experience or education” (Stevenson, 2010). Knowledge has been a fundamental part of the development of humanity. The knowledge inside an organization is of great importance in every company (Spender and Grant, 1996), e.g. the knowledge to make burgers in McDonald's is what makes them able to sell the burgers to make profit and achieve growth. Knowledge is human capital and hence it is the employees inside a specific organization who have the knowledge. Therefore, many companies must engage in knowledge sharing activities in order to distribute the knowledge across the organization to achieve a uniform employee competence, so they conduct their daily tasks in the best way possible. In the case of McDonald’s, the employees need to teach new employees how to make burgers so they can start performing their daily tasks in making burgers. This resulting in the company growing. However, the degree of knowledge sharing within an organization varies with what type of company is being discussed.

Knowledge sharing between individuals has its challenges (e.g. Ajmal et. al., 2010). In global software development, knowledge sharing challenges within management, team structure, work processes, team cognition, social attributes and technology are present (Zahedi et. al., 2016). There
seems also to be some challenges in knowledge sharing between groups of different belongings. Nesheim and Hunskaar (2015) conducted a study in knowledge sharing between external consultants and internal employees, it was discovered that the people who belonged to the same profession engaged in more knowledge sharing with each other than with people of a different belonging.

Organizations always look for different ways to encourage and facilitate for knowledge sharing activities between employees and overcome the challenges (Spender and Grant, 1996). Knowledge sharing in organizations is affected by its knowledge sharing systems, organizational culture, communication etc (Ipe, 2003). Knowledge sharing is of even greater importance when companies acquire new knowledge by acquisition of specialized companies to capture the value potential of knowledge synergies (Haspeslagh and Jemison 1991; Bresman, et. al., 1999). A consultant company’s knowledge sharing activities are of major importance. It is the knowledge of its consultants which they sell as their products. In this study, focus will be put on the challenges and reward systems of knowledge sharing for consultant companies who acquire new companies with competence different from the parent company. Knowledge sharing systems can for example be an expertise-locator system, which is a complex software that scans for answers in documents, emails etc. to find answers, or best practices manuals.

To encourage knowledge sharing between employees within organizations, reward systems have been shown to be effective in the short-term (Hung et. al., 2011). Rewards often refer to extrinsic rewards. Examples of extrinsic rewards are economic rewards, reputation, and reciprocity and all of them have shown to have a positive impact on knowledge sharing (Hung et al. 2011). Vuori and Okkonen, 2012 stated that long-term motivation is mainly developed by employees having intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, companies tend to use information technology (IT) systems to facilitate the techniques of sharing knowledge known as knowledge management systems. For example, by using digital forums where questions can be asked. However, these knowledge sharing systems can not alone improve knowledge sharing between individuals (Cabrera et. al., 2006).
1.2 Problem statement
Knowledge sharing has been a popular topic in the literature (Alvesson and Karreman, 2001). Research on different subjects within knowledge sharing has been performed (e.g. Hanh and Subramani, 2000; Hung et. al., 2011). The challenges in knowledge sharing have been identified, e.g. Hanh and Subramani (2000) stated that size and diversity were challenge. Kukko (2013) identified that individuals’ willingness to share knowledge was a challenge due to retain valuable. Furthermore, Mesli (1994) stated that terminology of a company could be an obstacle for the knowledge sharing in an organization. Hung et. al. (2011) performed a research on encouragement for knowledge sharing, whether the motivation is extrinsic or intrinsic. These previous researches on knowledge sharing have had an individual based focus (Gammelgaard et. al., 2004). In conclusion, the phenomenon behind knowledge sharing has been studied widely on an individual level, including both challenges within knowledge sharing and the impact of rewards to motivate employees to engage in knowledge sharing activities. (e.g. Hung et. al., 2011; Ajmal et. al., 2010) However, there is not enough research on knowledge sharing between groups or departments within an organization after a company has acquired knowledge in the form of another company with a different profile (Gammelgaard et. al., 2004). This thesis will hence focus on whether implementing reward systems for the encouragement of knowledge sharing between departments in organizations will be effective and researching the challenges of knowledge sharing between departments, in the selected case study.

1.3 Objective and Research Questions
The objective of this study is to research the challenges of the companies and effects of reward systems during knowledge sharing in consultant companies after the acquisition of entities specialized in a different knowledge area. In order to do so, this thesis will aim to answer the following questions:

- What challenges of knowledge sharing arise during the acquisition of a consultant company?
- Whether or not reward systems be used to motivate the employees to overcome the challenges of knowledge sharing after acquisitions?
These questions will be answered by using the case of a consultant company acquiring a different consultant company specialized within IT.

1.4 Relevance of The Study
When company acquisitions are taking place, it is important to carry out the gradual phasing of the new company in a successful manner (Gomes et. al, 2013). The general success factors for knowledge sharing between the companies need to be found. These are problems that will occur during an acquisition (Gammelgaard et. al., 2005). We plan to identify the challenges associated with knowledge sharing after acquisitions and determine whether reward systems help motivate the employees to share knowledge within the chosen companies. There is not a lot of research on knowledge sharing between highly specialized companies, even though it happens very frequently in today’s business world. This research is currently a demand that is not being met properly (Gammelgaard et. al., 2005).

1.5 Limitations and Simplifications
This study is going to be based on one case of acquisition, where a consultant company acquires another consultant company who specializes in a different field of information technology (IT). Therefore, this study is not generalizable for all cases of acquisitions since each different case is unique.
2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Knowledge and Types of Knowledge
Wang and Noe (2010) defined knowledge as an important resource to the organization that helps it maintain a competitive advantage in a competitive and dynamic economy. The definition of knowledge, and whether information can be included as knowledge, has not been agreed upon by the researchers. Nonaka (1994) argues that information is just a flow of messages while knowledge is justified by one’s beliefs. However, the other end believes that knowledge includes information, but information does not include knowledge (Kogut and Zander, 1992).

Huang, Hsieh, and He, (2014, Page 6) describes explicit knowledge sharing as “objective knowledge that can be articulated, codified, and expressed in formal and systematic language, such as in documents, reports, and models”. When searching for information using explicit knowledge sharing, redundancy can quickly become a problem. Most forms of this knowledge have a wide range of information available and can make it easy for the individual seeking the knowledge to get lost in the data. Because of this problem, organizations have developed systems to help them better manage their explicit knowledge. These systems are private and only available for employees use. Examples of these systems are knowledge platforms, document repositories, search engines, and intranets. This makes the searching process easier and more efficient (Obrenovic et. al., 2014).

Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is difficult to codify or communicate to other individuals because it consists of personal experiences and professional insights (Huang et al., 2014). Tacit knowledge plays a critical role in establishing teamwork within an organization. Organizations have spread tacit knowledge through things such as mentoring programs and various workshops. This type of knowledge also enables transaction memory where employees are aware of which employees have a certain kind of knowledge due to improved coordination. Obrenovic et al., (2014, Page 163) stated, “transactive memory system (TMS) refers to a shared mental model of the collective indicating which individuals know certain things and which individuals know who knows certain things and it encompasses encoding, storage, and retrieval of knowledge from
Tacit knowledge is considered a competitive advantage to teams and organizations because it improves coordination, is specific to the context, and is difficult to imitate.

2.2 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is transferring knowledge from the sender to the recipient. The sender and the recipient can be groups, communities, organization, etc. Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2016, Page 2) stated, “knowledge sharing can be defined as the transference of knowledge among individuals, groups, teams, departments, and organizations”. It is not an efficient use of time and resources trying to train employees in a field they aren’t educated in, or spending time trying to hire a new group of workers. A more efficient use of resources would be developing a way to share the knowledge that an expert has with another employee that requires it. It is easier to use the knowledge-based resources already within the organization to better inform the novices (Wang and Noe, 2010). The way that you organize this sharing of knowledge is referred to as knowledge management. Knowledge management is an important asset to the organization and aids in its success and survival (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2016). However, when defining knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange need to be mentioned and clear distinctions need to be made. Knowledge transfer includes both sharing of knowledge and the implementation of the received knowledge (Wang and Noe, 2010). Knowledge exchange is both the sharing of knowledge and seeking of knowledge (Wang and Noe, 2010).

Yeh, Lai and Ho (2010) conducted a case study of enabling knowledge sharing in two different companies in the technology sector. They investigated the knowledge sharing enablers in four different dimensions; strategy and leadership, organizational culture, people, and information technology. Yeh et. al. (2010) found that gaining leaders support were the most important enabler in the strategy and leadership dimension. When it comes to organizational culture, employees find the most important enabler to be creation of sharing culture supported by an IT system. And vice versa a support of a good IT system is limited if organizational values does not support the culture of knowledge sharing. In the people dimension, employee incentive programs were the most important enabler beside courses and other channels for learning. In the IT system dimension, employees do not only want documents to be digitized but also fast and convenient searching of information (De Long and Fahey, 2000).
Ipe (2003) developed a knowledge sharing model between individuals by reviewing the literature, see figure 1. This model illustrates the relationship between the different factors which influence knowledge sharing: culture of work environment, nature of knowledge, opportunities to share and motivation to share. In the model, the nature of knowledge, the opportunities to share and the motivation to share are all influenced by the culture of the work environment. Furthermore, the model illustrates an interdependence between nature of knowledge, motivation to share and opportunities to share. For example, individuals may not be willing to share knowledge that is of great value, but if there are any incentives to share knowledge, the willingness might increase. However, if the opportunities to share are non-existent the motivation to share will not yield in any actual knowledge sharing. All these factors have a significant impact on knowledge sharing between individuals in organization but does not have the same amount of influence on knowledge sharing. The influence of the factors in relation to each other is determined by other organizational factors such as structure, reward systems, culture etc.

Figure 1. Model that illustrates the relationship between the nature of knowledge, the opportunities of sharing and the motivation to share and their attributes and factors. Ipe (2003, p.16).
2.3 Knowledge Management
Based on the writing of Wiig, Hoog, and Spek (1997), the name knowledge management comes from the act of managing knowledge. This implies that there is knowledge that the company is attempting to manage. They claim that for the management of knowledge to be efficient there are a list of standards that the knowledge must meet. The standard for knowledge that Wiig et al. have mentioned are as followed. The knowledge must be:

- accessible at the right time
- available at the right place
- presented in the correct form
- sufficiently meets quality requirements
- obtained at the most efficient cost.

After an acquisition, Wiig et al. (1997) stated that there is a four-step process to the knowledge management cycle within an organization. The four steps are developing the knowledge, distributing the knowledge, combining the knowledge, and consolidating the knowledge. The first step is developing the knowledge, which in an acquisition means that the knowledge was bought from an outside source. The second step is distributing the knowledge. This is all the knowledge sharing methods being used by the company. The third step is combining the knowledge of the two companies to form one complete bank of knowledge. Finally, we have step four which is consolidating the knowledge. That consists of spreading the knowledge throughout the company and making sure it doesn’t disappear over time.

Wiig et al. developed two tables to assist with the process of managing knowledge. Table 1 was created to help assess which individuals had a certain knowledge asset within each department of the organization. Table 2 represents how the identified knowledge assets can be link to a particular business process. These tables were created to be used together and complement each other. The results from this process can be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses within an organization. A bottleneck and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis can also be developed along with a knowledge description frame for each employee (Wiig et al., 1997).
Table 1. Table identifying the different knowledge inventory methods and their key values within each department of the organization. It helps to assess which individual have a certain knowledge. Wiig et al. (1997, p.19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge inventory method</th>
<th>Description of aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire-Based Knowledge Surveys</td>
<td>• used to obtain broad overview of an operation's knowledge status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• may provide information to almost any other KM activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• provides responses from many areas and viewpoints categorized from the questions asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analysis is based on complete responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Mapping</td>
<td>• used to develop concept maps as hierarchies or nets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• may feed into knowledge scripting &amp; profiling, basic knowledge analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• provide highly developed procedure to elicit and document concept maps from knowledge workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analysis is based on interactive work sessions, interviews and self-elicitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Scripting and Profiling</td>
<td>• used to identify the elements of knowledge intensive work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• may support almost all other activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• determine knowledge intensive steps, activities and scripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analysis is based on interviews, simulations, observations, interactive work sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Table guides how a particular knowledge can be linked to a particular business process. Wiig et al. (1997, p. 20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge inventory method</th>
<th>Description of aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Environment Analysis</td>
<td>• used to understand which knowledge assets play a role in which business processes&lt;br&gt;• may support critical knowledge functions and knowledge flow analysis&lt;br&gt;• explores and describes activities, tasks, artifacts&lt;br&gt;• analysis is based on interviews, observations and simulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Knowledge Function Analysis</td>
<td>• used to locate knowledge sensitive areas&lt;br&gt;• may support bottleneck analysis and SWOT&lt;br&gt;• identifies and characterizes areas of process related critical knowledge spots&lt;br&gt;• analysis based on observations, interviews, internal reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Use And Requirements Analysis</td>
<td>• used to link knowledge assets to business processes, not unlike task environment analysis&lt;br&gt;• may support valuation efforts, identification of bottlenecks&lt;br&gt;• identifies how knowledge is required to perform knowledge work and how it is (not) used by knowledge workers&lt;br&gt;• based on requirements gathering at different levels in the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Flow Analysis</td>
<td>• used to gain insight into the knowledge exchanges, but also knowledge 'losses and gains' in the organization&lt;br&gt;• may point to areas of reuse of knowledge, but also to problems in knowledge sharing&lt;br&gt;• determines major flow of knowledge in the organization, i.e. exchanges between departments, processes, knowledge workers and the external environment&lt;br&gt;• based on knowledge surveys and results of process modeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Communication System
Hansen, Nohria, and Tierney (1999) spent time researching what type of communication systems are used within the knowledge management of consultant companies. They found that there was
no uniform approach to managing knowledge when it came to the consultants. The organization used two different knowledge management strategies, which were the codification strategy and personalization strategy. Codification is a strategy that is centered around a computer and has information codified and stored in a database to be used later. The personalization strategy is practiced through face-to-face interactions. It focuses mainly on sharing knowledge rather than storing it. Companies pick their strategy based on the needs of their customers. It is useful for a consultant company to use a codification strategy because as consultants they are constantly dealing with similar issues. Hansen et al. stated, “in such firms, the service offering is very clear: the customer benefits because the consultants can build a reliable, high-quality information system faster and at a better price than others by using work plans, software code, and solutions that have been fine-tuned and proven successful”. This is the same strategy that Company P from our case study currently uses. For one of our case study companies, several types of knowledge are collected, including process knowledge, content knowledge, and experience knowledge. Process knowledge is the steps that you follow to achieve the desired goal. Content knowledge is the knowledge needed to understand a certain situation. Experience knowledge is knowledge that is learned through experiencing and learning from a situation. These are all the knowledge that the company has gained from the acquisition. All the information is then put into an internal knowledge bank. The information is transferred into a user-friendly portal for both companies to share and reuse knowledge. This platform is available to the employees that work within the organization. Below, a visual of this type of communication system is displayed as figure 2.
2.5 Challenges in Knowledge Sharing

This section will address the challenges that are associated with KMS (knowledge management systems). Many of the challenges linked to KMS are experienced before a system is even developed. Hanh and Subramani, (2000) stated that although many articles have been published on the general conceptual principles of knowledge management, there is a huge gap in terms of the requirements that are necessary to form a KMS. One of the first steps in knowledge sharing is to plan initiatives in knowledge management, however because of this gap in research knowledge managers are finding the process difficult despite being educated on the literature (Hanh and Subramani, 2000). Nevertheless, knowledge is seen as a competitive advantage asset and over the last decade corporate spending has increased, in all forms of business, on knowledge management initiatives (Ajmal et. al., 2010).

Ajmal et al., (2010, Page 163) stated, “an effective KM system can be the most important KM enabler, but any system can be a barrier if it is not managed properly”. Two of the main challenges when setting up a knowledge management system are the size and diversity of the knowledge being shared. If we are talking about the amount of knowledge stored in a data warehouse or put into an internal search engine, then having more knowledge to share would increase the knowledge...
at your disposal and likely improve your odds of finding the knowledge that you desire. However, if we are discussing person-to-person knowledge sharing, then having a larger amount of knowledge to share can be a negative thing. Individuals can share knowledge in many ways, including directly or through a business forum. Too many people participating in a forum can cause an information overload. It will also require more effort to participate because you must read all the conversations before you entered to be certain you are giving accurate knowledge. This can discourage people from participating after the forum reaches a certain length. On the other hand, too little participation would provide insufficient resources and make the system useless (Hanh and Subramani, 2000).

The second challenge of knowledge sharing is the diversity of the knowledge being shared. It is important for a larger company to have a well-structured knowledge management system. When a company has a high diversity of knowledge, having a loosely structured knowledge management systems can be problematic and takes too long when looking through all the available knowledge. Companies want their employees to do able to find the information they need as efficiently as possible. This problem isn’t as big of an issue in an organization containing a well-structured system (Hanh and Subramani, 2000). Another type of diversity is the diversity in the employees that work at a company. During acquisitions, the scale of the company is expanding, and the complexity of the organization is increasing. This is another reason an organization should possess a well-structured knowledge management system. When an employee is highly specialized in a field, they may not be willing to share their years of expertise after an acquisition. Some people aren’t accepting of change and will be reluctant to adapt to new systems. In situations, such as this one, it’ll be easy to see the differences in culture, management styles, and knowledge management systems. That makes the task of sharing knowledge even more complex within acquisitions (Kukko, 2013).

Another challenge that is associated with knowledge sharing is the understanding of terminology. Castellvi, Sager, and DeCesaris (1999, Page 1) described terminology as “the discipline concerned with the study and compilation of specialized terms”. When we are discussing knowledge sharing, communication is a very critical factor. Therefore, terminology is important as well. It plays a
major role in how people communicate and their ability to communicate with concern groups of people. Because we are studying the knowledge sharing of companies in different fields, terminology plays an essential part in the way that certain knowledge is shared with others. If you are communicating something to a person that is not familiar with your field of work, it would be unwise of you to use a lot of specialized terms or terminology. Mesli, (1994), stated that knowledge sharing can even often be considered impossible due to differences in the type of language used.

2.5.1 Challenges: Theoretical criticism
Although Hanh and Subramani (2000) stated that size and diversity were challenges related to knowledge sharing, they also mentioned several other challenges that play a role in making knowledge sharing difficult. They described many challenges that could arise during the process of developing a knowledge management system within an organization. Size and diversity are challenges associated the initial process of knowledge sharing. However, throughout the entire process several other challenges were discussed. These two challenges were chosen because our case study is also in the initial phase of developing a combined knowledge management system. Mesli (1994), on the other hand, only focused on one challenge of knowledge sharing and that is terminology. Even through Mesli (1994) focused on less challenges than Hanh and Subramani (2000), the findings on terminology as a challenge is much more detailed and a greater amount of research was performed on the individual challenge.

2.6 Rewards and Motivation in Knowledge Sharing
Since people’s time, energy, and knowledge is limited, they consider if the value of their knowledge is being rewarded (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). People can be motivated or encouraged to share knowledge for many different reasons. Motivation is typically divided into two categories, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is behavior which appears from the inside of the person because it is satisfying to that person. Extrinsic motivation is behavior which a person engages in to get external benefits (Anthony et. al., 2014). Hung et. al. (2011) studied the effect of intrinsic motivation and the extrinsic motivation in knowledge sharing behavior of individuals in group meetings. Intrinsic motivation factor as altruism did not show any major positive impact on the quantity or quality of knowledge contribution. However, the studied extrinsic motivation factors such as economic reward,
reputation, and reciprocity showed to have a significant effect on the quantity and quality of knowledge contribution. Reputation feedback was crucial to successful knowledge sharing (Hung et al. 2011). Lam and Lamberment-Ford (2010) added another dimension to motivation, the hedonic motivation which was proven to improve the knowledge sharing in combination with extrinsic incentives. Hedonic motivation is when an individual’s motivation is affected by whether they are driven by the pleasure of something or running from the pain of it.

According to the study about individual engagement in knowledge sharing conducted by Cabrera et.al. (2006), knowledge sharing systems cannot alone guarantee the sharing of knowledge between group of employees. Investigations of what specific variables that are key success factors has been conducted and the results varies widely. Cabrera et al. concluded that amongst the variables which had a positive impact on intra-organizational knowledge were perceived rewards, quality of knowledge management systems and support from colleagues and supervisors. Rewards has been identified as a key success factor in many different cases, in Bahrain in the Middle East it was found to be one of the as a key success factors to the knowledge sharing in both public and private sectors according to Al-Alawi, Al-Marzooqi and Mohammed (2007). However, the attitude towards knowledge sharing seems also to vary between different cultures where in Taiwanese culture the rewards do not have a significant positive impact on knowledge sharing attitude (Lin, 2007).

Lee and Ahn (2007) conducted a research on rewards for intra-organizational knowledge sharing where they focus on two forms of reward systems, the first one is individual-based and the second one is group-based. Individual-based rewards were shown to be more efficient than group-based rewards. However, Lee and Ahn (2007) concluded there are a couple of aspects that needs to be considered when designing reward systems. Firstly, the managers need to take their organizational strategies for knowledge management into account. The reward system should not only be based on the amount of knowledge shared by the employees, but also the productivity of the shared knowledge and the cost of shared knowledge which practically is the shared knowledge that does not contribute to any major enhancement of the company’s performance. Moreover, group-based reward systems can create productivity problem where the employees with the productive knowledge do not participate in the knowledge sharing. Reward systems can also be supplemented
by other organizational factors such as job security. For example, the more insecure the employee feel, the less the employee is willing to share knowledge to keep stay relevant to the company. Reward systems are however more suitable in organizations where the knowledge sharing behavior is being recorded in databases and can be measured (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002).

Although several authors have said that the motivation to share knowledge, in general, is primarily extrinsic, we also need to look at the motivational factors of using an intra-organizational social media platform. Even though both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors play a part in this type of knowledge sharing, intrinsic motivational factors play a more dominant role. The use of extrinsic motivational factor, such as tangible items, has shown to help motivate individuals to share knowledge. However, their knowledge sharing is temporary and only last if the rewards are being given. It has not been proven to change the mindset of employees or their work long-term. Knowledge sharing is also affected by the culture of the organization. There are small things that the company can do to encourage and discourage knowledge sharing without realizing it. Things such as keeping doors open and enabling hallway discussions. Workers responded to words of praise as motivation, while simply receiving orders to share knowledge had the opposite effect on the workers (Vuori and Okkonen, 2012).

As a part of their research, Vuori and Okkonen (2012) conducted a questionnaire which is shown as figure 3 where they discovered that most of the motivation to use an intra-organizational social media platform came from intrinsic motivational factors. The following image displays the things that Vuori and Okkonen, (2012) found to motivate the surveyed employees to use that knowledge sharing platform on a scale of one to five. The results showed that most of the employees were motivated by intrinsic motivational factors, such as being goal-oriented and helping co-workers.
2.6.1 Reward Systems: Theoretical Criticism

Hung et. al. (2011) and Lam and Lamberment-Ford (2010), along with many other authors, performed research on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Each of these authors concluded that people are mainly motivated in the workplace by extrinsic motivational factors. All the different research was conducted on the years and made a strong argument for providing extrinsic motivation and reward systems. However, shortly after Vuori and Okkonen (2012) used some of the literature to conduct their own research. It showed that although extrinsic factors did motivation individuals, it only provided short-term motivation and was the least motivating. Vuori and Okkonen (2012) realized that long-term motivation was mainly due to intrinsic motivation. Although, their findings were only limited to the participants at two companies.
2.7 Theoretical Concerns
The theoretical concerns associated with this thesis is the fact that knowledge sharing has been widely studied by many individuals (e.g. Hanh and Subramani, 2000; Kukko, 2013; Ajmal et al., 2010). It is far from a new subject of interest. If we were simply researching knowledge sharing alone, there would be no contribution to the study. That is why we have decided to focus on the subject from the viewpoint of business acquisitions. They plan to educate people on a very specific case of knowledge sharing within a certain acquisition and hope that our acquired knowledge can to useful to others.

2.8 Theoretical Comparison
When discussing knowledge sharing, many authors have declared that knowledge is an important asset in today’s competitive work environments. However, many of the authors also have a different definition of the term knowledge. Wang and Noe defined knowledge as employees who have specific knowledge, skills, abilities, or competencies, while Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2016) described knowledge as the “lifeblood of an organization”. In their writing, they gave no true definition of the term knowledge. Other authors, such as Nonaka, are arguing that information is just a flow of messages while knowledge is justified by one’s beliefs. In our definition of knowledge for this thesis, we include both explicit and tacit knowledge. When speaking about explicit knowledge sharing, we agree with He, Hsieh, and Huang who described it as objective knowledge that can be articulated, codified, and expressed in formal and systematic language. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that is difficult to codify or communicate to other individuals because it consists of personal experiences and professional insights (He et al., 2014).

Although many authors disagree on the true definition of knowledge, many agree on the definition of knowledge sharing. Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar (2016) stated, “knowledge sharing can be defined as the transference of knowledge among individuals, groups, teams, departments, and organizations”. That is the way that several authors have described the term and how the term is being used in our thesis as well. Some authors also disagree of the motivation of employees to share knowledge. According to De Long and Fahey, in the people dimension, employee incentive programs were the most important enabler beside courses and other channels for learning.
However, Ipe (2003) was convinced that the opportunities to share and the motivation to share are all influenced by the culture of the work environment.

Several authors have spoken about the challenges that are associated with knowledge sharing, although we find it interesting that most authors aren’t addressing the same issues. Hanh and Subramani focused partially on the size and diversity of the knowledge being shared. Depending on if you have a tightly or loosely structured knowledge sharing system, the size and diversity of your company’s knowledge can be a major inconvenience. Kukko (2013) mentioned the scale of the company is expanding, and the complexity of the organization is increasing with the new diversity of employees. According to Mesli (1994), terminology is a big challenge. When discussing knowledge sharing, communication is a very critical factor. Therefore, terminology is important as well. Knowledge sharing can even often be considered impossible due to differences in the language used (Mesli, 1994).

Because of the sometimes-difficult environment for sharing knowledge, some employees would appreciate some type of reward system. People can be motivated or encouraged to share knowledge for many different reasons. Motivation is typically divided into two categories, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation (Hung et al., 2011). However, Lam (2010) added another dimension to motivation, the hedonic motivation which was proven to improve the knowledge sharing in combination with extrinsic incentives. Hedonic motivation is when an individual’s motivation is affected by whether they are driven by the pleasure of something or running from the pain of it. Reward systems are however more suitable in organizations where the knowledge sharing behavior is being recorded in databases and can be measured (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002). Vuori and Okkonen, (2012) has findings that show motivation is mostly intrinsic and reward systems do not work on a long-term basis.
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Purpose
The purpose of our research is exploratory in nature. This topic has been chosen because it is an area of study that can be further researched. There appears to be a research gap on knowledge sharing between groups or departments within an organization especially after a company has acquired knowledge in form of another company with a different profile (Gammelgaard et. al., 2004). This thesis will hence focus on whether implementing reward systems for the encouragement of knowledge sharing between departments in organizations will be effective and researching the challenges in knowledge sharing between departments, in the selected case study. We are helping to establish priorities by testing known challenges and the effect of reward systems on motivation so the company can make an informed decision on a way to approach knowledge sharing after the combining of the two companies. The research is conducted be performing secondary, formal qualitative, and informal qualitative research. This is social exploratory research because we are, in a way, studying human behavior and the reason behind their actions.

3.2 Research Philosophy
Our research philosophy is a mixture of subjective ontology and interpretive epistemology. Subjective ontology is forming assumptions about the nature of reality. Ontology focuses on things such as what the organization is like and what is it like being in the organization (Saunders et. al., 2016). Subjective ontology is part of our philosophy because our view of the world is not black and white, true or false, rather human beings hold subjective values and perceptions about things. We are studying organizations, management, and the working lives of individuals. Knowledge sharing in the workplace is something that is socially constructed within an organization or between organizations. During our research, we are studying how to motivate employees to use a knowledge sharing system and the way that knowledge is shared within an organization after an acquisition. When an acquisition takes place, there is a mixture of personalities, cultures, and skills. This is a situation where the study of human behavior is extremely useful. Human behavior is unpredictable and there are several factors that can affect an individual’s behavior. Due to this, the research that we gather is subjective and there are multiple realities. Our philosophy also consists of interpretive epistemology. Saunders et al., (2016, Page 133) stated, “epistemology concerns assumptions about knowledge, what constitutes acceptable, valid and legitimate knowledge, and
how we can communicate knowledge to others”. A part of our research includes listening to stories and understanding what type of challenges come with knowledge sharing. We hope to not only provide information that helps companies after an acquisition, but to also encourage others to do further research on this topic.

The reasons why our research is relevant is because our study focuses on highly specialized companies. Our case study includes two consulting companies sharing knowledge after the acquisition. The second reason is companies can use our research to improve their businesses after an acquisition. The third reason is that there is not much research done on this exact topic (Gammelgaard et. al., 2004). After an in-depth search into articles related to our topic, we discovered that there is a research gap that needs to be addressed. The final reason is that our thesis can encourage others to do further research on the topic.

3.3 Research Approach
Our research has an abductive approach with a logical sub-section. The abductive approach to theory development is a combination of both induction (theory to data) and deduction (data to theory). Abduction is integrating standing theories into new research with the outcome resulting in a new theory or an adaption to an existing theory (Saunders et al., 2016). We chose to use logical abduction because we have used our findings from the literature that we reviewed to produce an assumption. We subsequently tested this assumption through research on our selected case study (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.4 Research Strategy
We are focusing on a case study to support this thesis and develop our findings. Interviews are how our primary research was conducted. This is also how the findings was gathered for this thesis. Individual interviews were conducted with four employees from the companies in the selected case study. During these interviews, we asked the employees pre-determined questions about acquisitions, knowledge sharing challenges, reward systems, and motivation. All the answers should be clearly explained and described for the researchers.
3.5 Case Study
This study will use the case of Company P’s acquisition of Company S in its research. Company P is an engineering consultant company in Sweden with approximately 600 employees, with three different business units: Quality and Management, Systems, and Technology. Quality and Management offers services in project management, quality assurance, and business development. Systems offers services in software, electronics and automation. Technology offers services in construction, calculation, and design. Company P acquired Company S in 2018 to expand its service portfolio and to meet the long-term financial goals of the company. Company S is an IT consultant company with approximately 200 employees, specializing in digital solutions.

3.6 Interviewees
To begin the primary research, four different interviews were conducted. All four of the interviews were performed through Skype calls and professional emails. The two CEOs had interviews conducted over a Skype call that last forty to forty-five minutes. The two consultants had their interviews over a professional email system from their workplace. Emails with their detailed answers were sent back to the researchers within one to two days. To make sure that is no confusion, we will address the consultants as employee 1 and employee 2.

The first person that we conducted an interview with was the CEO of Company P. We chose this individual because of his passion for Company P and his devotion to its success and growth. He started as consultant for this organization in 1996 and worked his way up the ladder to CEO by the year 2007. During this time, he completed his business education, over the years, at multiple well-respected institutions. In 2007, he also bought his way into the organization with two other individuals and became a co-owner of Company P. When he became a co-owner the company only had 100 employees. The CEO has a strong focus on the vision, profitability, and culture of the company.

The second individual that we interviewed was the CEO of Company S. This person was chosen because of his vast knowledge in his field and his years of work experience at other companies that got him to where he is now. He has the experience of working at six different companies and begun his software and hardware career in 1985. By 1997, this individual was named the CEO of
Company S and has been working there for twenty-two years. He is also concerned with the vision, profitability, and culture of the company. The two CEOs have very similar views and have been working well with each other during this acquisition. The companies have been successfully working together for after the acquisition for the total of eight weeks.

However, we also wanted to hear the opinions of consultants. That is why we have interviewed two consultants of Company P. The first consultant (employee 1) has been working at Company P for almost three years. Because of the amount of time he has spent at the company, he has had the time to learn the culture of the company and is dedicated as a crucial member of Company P. He wants to move forward with the company and strives to help it reach any of its goals.

The final person we interviewed (employee 2) has been working as a consultant for Company P for a little more two years. We chose him because we wanted to see how the employees benefited from the acquisition and purchase of new knowledge. This employee was made available to us at the last minute and was more than happy to provide us with an interview. He knows a lot about the culture of the company and can give us detailed information about his knowledge sharing experiences at Company P. We have a total of four interviews. Three of our interviews are with employees from Company P and one employee from Company S, as depicted below in table 3.

Table 3. Interviewee Description for Company P & Company S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEW #</th>
<th>COMPANY</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Company P</td>
<td>CEO/ Co-owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Company S</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Company P</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Company P</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7 Data Analysis
Thematic analysis is the most appropriate type of data analysis for this thesis. It emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns within data (Saunders et al., 2016). The data is then identified and scrutinized to see if it correlates to the conclusion that we formed through the reviewed literature. Whether or not a correlation is present is determined based on the patterns that are displayed in the data we collected. There can be a type of correlation, no correlation, or not enough data to form a conclusion. Our analysis began with the reviewing of literature that was related to our topic. We focused on the challenges and reward systems related to knowledge sharing. After enough information was gained to form a conclusion about our knowledge sharing topics, these conclusions were then tested to see if they also applied to our chosen case study. The findings from our primary research is analyzed to determine whether the case study supports the conclusions from the literature review. If it isn’t supported, we then determine what challenges and rewards systems are relevant to our case.

3.8 Transcription of Interviews
There was a total of four interviews with participants from our case study. Half of the interviews were performed through a Skype call. During the Skype call, the audio was also recorded for future reference on a handheld recorder. The audio was later transcribed into a digital form, such as an online document. The most important data from the interviews was highlighted. The importance of the data was judged based on the relevance of it in connection to the thesis topic and our thesis questions. The other half of the interviews with the consultants were conducted through a secure email system. Questions were sent out to the consultants and detailed answers were provided back in return. The consultants also give stories about their experience sharing knowledge at Company P. The information most relevant to the thesis was used in the findings.

3.9 Construction of The Interview Guides
The interview guides, which are presented in Appendix A and Appendix B, were developed to guide the interviews in the right direction and to have a systematic interview process. The interview guide, Appendix A, was divided into four different themes; the introduction, the acquisition, knowledge sharing and the closure. There were also questions developed to learn the mindset of the consultants and hear their professional stories which can be seen in Appendix B.
The objective with the introduction was to introduce the interviewees to the purpose of our research and interview, but also to introduce us to create an atmosphere of trust between the interviewee and the interviewers. In the second part, the acquisition, a discussion about the acquisition itself was initiated, with the objective to understand the reason behind the acquisition and the how the acquisition process worked. In the third part, Knowledge sharing, a deeper discussion related to the research questions was initiated. The questions were based on the previous research made in this subject but also the objective of this study. The last part of the interview aimed to wrap it up and reconnect to interesting points that were brought up along the interview. Unfortunately, we had no time for this section in some of the interviews.

3.10 Validity and Reliability (Trustworthiness)
A high reliability of the study will be assured by conducting the interviews in a professional and systematic way. Tools such as recorders will be used in order to not miss any important parts of the interviews. A high validity of the study will be achieved by making sure that we analyze and study everything we intend to gather as research. This means that the interview questions have been carefully produced to give us relevant data that we can analyze in order to answer our research questions.

3.11 Ethical consideration
In the handling of the interviewee’s personal data, the general data protection regulation (GDPR) was followed. The studied companies are denoted Company P and Company S to not disclose their names. Moreover, the names of the interviewees will be denoted as Interviewee P and Interviewee S. Company P and Interviewee P are the parent company and the CEO of the parent company, respectively. Company S and Interviewee S are the parent company and the CEO of the subsidiary, respectively. One of the authors is a stakeholder within the organization of Company P, however, our research remains unbiased. The author has nothing to gain from the manipulation of our research data or the results of our research. All of the information gathered is purely for the sake of knowledge.
3.12 Delimitation of Studies
A major obstacle to our research would be the inability to conduct our interviews with the different companies. Our interviews are a third of our research and an essential part of our thesis. Without this knowledge, there would not be a way to complete our thesis with the level of detail that we desire. Our second obstacle is our current time limit. We only have a month and a half to finish our thesis and during that time must be extremely flexible with our availability. The interviews are dependent on the schedules of three businesspersons. Due to this, our time management skills are a critical part in the success of our work. Unclear limitations will also lead to the failure of our thesis. Because of the time limit, not putting a limitation on the research, we conduct and narrowing our topic would be an irresponsible decision.

3.13 Research Methods and Data Collection
The research we have conducted has a qualitative research design. It goes well with our research approach since we have partially used an interpretive philosophy. We performed a single-method qualitative study which means we have used one qualitative data collection technique and corresponding analytical procedure (Saunders et al., 2016). Our data collection includes the review of literature and interviews that relate to our thesis topic. The sampling technique consists of using pre-identified stakeholders from both companies. Those pre-identified stakeholders are the CEOs of both companies and two other employees from Company P that will be discussing knowledge sharing on a smaller level.

3.14 Description of Interview with CEO of Company P
The interview with Interviewee P was arranged by a direct email contact. The interviewee was very positive to the interview request and was happy to be able to help and participate. An interview could be booked easy and immediately. Due to the limitations of time resources in this study, the interview with Interviewee P who is based in Stockholm was decided to be conducted over Skype with a camera recording for a more authentic interview experience. The time for the interview was set to 45 minutes, from 3:15 pm to 4:00 pm the 26th of April 2019.

The researchers were preparing the interview by making sure that there were no technical issues during the interview, but also by rehearsing the interview guide and by prioritizing the questions
in case the time for the interview was not long enough. The questions with the strongest connection to the reviewed theories and to this study were given a higher priority and the questions with less connection were given a lower priority. The most relevant questions were marked in green and the less relevant questions were marked in red, in that way the researched could easily navigate in the interview guide.

The interviewee was approximately five minutes late and hence the time of interview was reduced to 40 minutes. Thereby, the researchers felt pressured to keep up a good pace in order to ask all the prepared questions. However, it was agreed before the interview to try to make the interviewee elaborate his answers by being a little stubborn. After the introduction of the researchers and the purpose of the interview and its usage, the interviewee explicitly said that he has no problem with answering any questions. As the interview proceeded, the researchers discovered that many of the upcoming questions were already answered. This was because of the semi-structured interview approach and the mindset to make the interviewee elaborate on his answers. Moreover, the interviewers felt comfortable to ask questions and felt like the answers from the interviewee was genuine.

The interview was finished on time. The interviewee confirmed that the interview was professionally conducted, and good questions were asked when he was asked to evaluate the interview process according to the interview guide. Furthermore, the interviewee was open to be asked further questions over email if it was needed.

3.15 Description of Interview with CEO of Company S
The interview with Interviewee S was arranged by direct email contact. The interview was rescheduled once requested by the interviewee. The interview was conducted over a Skype call due to the same scheduling issues as the interview with Interviewee P. However, this interview was conducted with no possibility to see each other. The interview with Interviewee S was conducted six days after the first interview and the time for the interview was set to one hour.
The same type of preparation as for the previous interview was made. However, the interviewers were struggling with the sound for a couple of minutes until an acceptable solution was found. Thereby, the interview was characterized by poor sound quality.

The interview started at the agreed time and since there was no personal relationship with Interviewee S, the interviewers were tenser and more retracted from pressuring the interviewee. The same interview guide was used for this interview as for the previous interview, see Appendix A. However, more time was put on the introduction section and follow up questions since the interviewers did not have the same background knowledge in Company S as for Company P. The interviewee tended to take too much time with his answers and it was hard to interrupt him. Therefore, some of the questions that were prepared was answer along the interview. The interview finished in time. The interviewee confirmed that he felt comfortable during the interview.

3.16 Description of consultants’ Interviews
The last conducted interviews were with consultants of Company P. The prepared questions were emailed to them due to the short amount of time to set up the interviews. The answers were later sent back to the researchers. Conducting the interviews through email worked very well. The researchers would get the answers almost instantly as if it was a chat. If there were any uncertainties in the answers, the researchers asked the interviewees to elaborate and explain their answers. Since there was a well-established relationship with the interviewees, the discussion and the answers felt very open and authentic. Thereby, the researchers could obtain and interpret the underlying answers. The interviews were stopped when the researches felt they had enough material.
4. Empirics

4.1 CEO of Company P Interview

Company P purchased Company S to improve their market position. When making the decision to begin the acquisition process, Company P wasn’t just concerned with filling more job positions. They inspired to find a software company that would complete their company and make it more well-rounded. The CEO stated that their type of company needs more software and digital knowledge to adapt with the current competitive changes. In 2018, Company P met with twenty-five to thirty companies to decide which one they wanted to form an acquisition. The CEO stated, “for most of the companies, not only was their knowledge not enough, but the culture and structure of the companies played a major role in Company P’s final decision”. According to the CEO the structure of the subsidiary company is important during an acquisition. If there isn’t an agile structure, then you are just increasing the number of employees and not actually building the company up to succeed. The result of this acquisition is a new market position that makes the company much more attractive to their clients. They are creating a digital company in an industrial sector and combining the knowledge from both companies to offer something new to their clients.

Before the acquisition, Company P used a knowledge sharing forum called Connect to share information throughout the company. After the acquisition, the CEO is trying to develop a mobile application for sharing explicit and tacit knowledge throughout the company. They are using this application so knowledge can to spread anywhere. Employees who are out of the city, or country, can use this application and quickly share or find anything they need. The CEO of Company P stated that “one of the hardest challenges faced during an acquisition is to not divide the company”. Developing an amazing knowledge sharing system is easier said than done. Company P currently has a loosely structured knowledge sharing system because of the difficulty of developing one. A part of this difficulty is due to the diversity and size of the knowledge being shared. According to the CEO, “it is predicted that the companies will be efficient in sharing knowledge in approximately 1.5 years”. Terminology is also a difficulty but seen as a challenge. Many employees can find it difficult to work with people who are accustomed to using a different profession language, or terminology, then themselves. However, it is seen as more of an inspiration than a problem. It is an inspiration to make the combined company better. Each company will
work together to inspire each other. The inspiration is to see the new goal, the new market position, and the value of being one company. Knowledge sharing is not easier or harder on different levels of communication, for example between departments or companies. The level of difficulty is rooted in the individual that is sharing the knowledge.

The CEO doesn’t believe the motivation of the employees is a challenge for the company. He claimed, “it is the manager’s job to make their goals clear in the beginning and knowledge sharing is part of the goal”. During the hiring process of the current employees, the company asked if the individual likes to share knowledge and wants to be a part of a bigger company. Each employee is there to make the company greater than its current state. The company currently doesn’t have any type of reward system for knowledge sharing and the CEO doesn’t have plans for creating one. Knowledge sharing is a part of the Company P’s culture and is something that each employee participates in. The CEO of Company P stated, “When employees are not good at sharing knowledge then you should look at management, or leadership, within the company. Their manager may be encouraging the employees to interact more and share knowledge with their coworkers. The motivation of knowledge sharing comes more from leadership than monetary bonuses”. Employees of Company P need to be people with high ambitions and dedicated to their work. Employees who would do not share knowledge because they want to “remain valuable” to the company are not welcomed at Company P and their employment probably wouldn’t last long. The CEO stated that when you share knowledge your value to the company is higher.

4.2 CEO of Company S Interview
Company P and Company S were connected through an advisor that had contacts with both organizations. The advisor believed that both companies would benefit from an acquisition. One and a half years before the acquisition, the CEO was partially convinced this was a good idea by a report titled The Perfect Storm. This writing described two ways to proceed in the work of IT consultants. One way is selling small pieces (hours or gigabytes). You are developing business through transactions. The other way is to work through business transformation. A new combination of skills is needed to go through a concern level of transformation. Both companies were unable to obtain these skills without each other. Company S has the IT and cloud skills necessary, however they need a better portfolio of knowledge to complete a transformation. The
The CEO stated, “Company P has the customer relationships that Company S wants to achieve, and Company S has skills the Company P would like to obtain”. The CEO of Company S currently has 3 jobs that includes running Company S, working on the corporation with Company P, and integrating the two companies. He plays a hand in almost every activity because he is the CEO of a smaller company. After the companies combine, his job will go from leading Company S as the CEO to working on the integrate of the companies. The long-term goal of Company S is to form one company and is not remaining a subsidiary.

Prior to the acquisition, Company S had a loosely structured knowledge sharing system. Some of the individuals at the company don’t have access to the scope of knowledge at the company. They did not know what their co-workers are working on or what knowledge the company possesses. In an effort to do something about that problem, the company restructured and changed their knowledge sharing system. The company looked at their employees’ knowledge and experience. They also had conversations with each individual and discussed the goals of the individual. After this, they began to use the knowledge sharing platform called ARUBA. The company also participates in weekly internal seminars every Thursday called Company S Talks. Company S’s system for knowledge sharing consists of blogs, KX (knowledge exchange), Time Slack, conferences, and documentation. Within one week from the time of our interview, Company S will be using Connect and sharing the same internet as Company P. This is one of their first steps in sharing knowledge between the two companies. The companies having similar digital knowledge sharing is important.

The CEO of Company S identified some of the challenges of knowledge sharing as lack of communication and awareness of knowledge. Diversity and terminology are great assets and not viewed as challenges. He stated, “a key point of the acquisition is to invite more knowledge and diversity within the company”. There have been employees that decided to join Company S after the acquisition because they wanted to be a part of this new adventure. There are also current employees that would like to relocate to different cities but keep their current positions. Because Company P is a larger organization, the employees have more options for relocating. It increases their opportunities of learning new skills and changing positions within the company as well.
The CEO also stated he thinks having reward systems would motivate employees, however he doesn’t personally believe in having monetary reward systems for knowledge sharing. According to him, “monetary rewards don’t work well with motivation, but other incentives, such as acknowledgement or speeches, are better ways of motivating the employees to share knowledge”. When people know you are well informed then they will be more inclusive and open toward working with you in the future. This builds trust and teamwork at the same time.

4.3 Employee 1 Interview
Our final interview was conducted with an employee from Company P. We had this interview to express the mindset of consultants in the company. These are the people that build and reinforce the culture of the company. The interviewee stated that for personal matters he uses search tools such as google. However, in professional settings he uses the company system called Connect for asking questions and finding different specialist groups and documents. According to him, “Connect is a Facebook like website where you have groups, profiles, walls, etc.”. On this platform, you can find all kind of different questions and discussions. He also participates in informal knowledge sharing by having many conversations with his colleagues.

Terminology was often a challenge in his daily work process. When consulting a new company, he would have to adapt to their terminology and language to understand different problems. When he would ask for help in different subjects for co-workers as well. He solves that by asking many follow up questions and asking what different terms mean. Many companies have their own dictionary where many abbreviations are explained.

His motivation is primarily extrinsic. He feels like his knowledge is valuable and that the company need to show that. The employee stated, “The company is making money on my knowledge anyway. Why shouldn’t I also be able to earn some more money for my knowledge?”. For him personally, the motivation for knowledge sharing would be some kind of bonus and recognition from his superiors or increasing his chances to be promoted and thereby earn more money. It would also be attracting to engage in knowledge sharing if the company could somehow measure how much he has contributed to sharing and after basing his next year salary on that or a yearly bonus.
4.4 Employee 2 Interview
When asked what kind of knowledge sharing this individual uses daily, he responded by saying he uses both face-to-face communication and technology systems. He uses the internal chat for contacting the people that he needs help from and people usually contact him over phone or through a chat for help. The chat system is a part of the knowledge sharing tool that the company possesses called Connect. It is easier to communication around the schedule of others when they can respond every time from their phone or computers. He can inquire about information and ask follow up questions without worrying about disturbing the work process of his co-workers. This employee also frequently participates in weekly meetings for news and advice to ease his daily workload. That is another way that this individual described his use of knowledge sharing within the company. The weekly event is organized and lead by the department’s team leader. Whenever an employee is looking for a certain type of knowledge, the team leader connects them to someone or tells the employee where they can find the knowledge they’re seeking.

The interviewee stated that dealing with terminology is often a problem for him in the workplace. He stated, “Whenever I do something new, I don’t understand a thing even if I’m consulting for the same company but in a different department”. Each department has their own set of terminology that they use on a daily basis. He finds it difficult to share knowledge when he is constantly having to pause his work to translate different terminology. Although he enjoys learning new terms and being educated by others, this kind of situation is not time efficient. It takes time to learn and memorize new terms. Terminology isn’t a step that you can skip over then it comes to knowledge sharing. The interviewee stated, “if you don’t know the terms, you can’t really engage in knowledge sharing activities”.

Motivating employees to use a knowledge sharing system can also be difficult at times. When questioned, the employee claimed that “the best way is feedback and appreciation from colleagues and managers”. In consultant work, your reputation is an important factor that people take into consideration. If people know that you are trustworthy and well-informed, they will be more inclined to work with you. This will improve your status professionally and give you the opportunity to learn from even more individuals. However, this individual mentioned that he is driven by the idea of career development and his motivation is primarily extrinsic. He said that
although he would not ask for economic rewards for sharing knowledge, the company providing them would definitely help his motivation. Another thing that motivates him to share knowledge is a well-working knowledge sharing system. He does not find it difficult to share knowledge at this organization. The company currently uses connect, conferences, Forward Talks and etc. to share knowledge. All of these systems tend to work well. The interviewee commented, “Connect is easy to use and easy to contact all the 700 employees”.
5. Findings

5.1 Knowledge Sharing Systems
Both companies had similar knowledge sharing cultures and activities right before the acquisition. However, Company S had more knowledge sharing systems before the acquisition. Company S was struggling with the communication between its employees. Therefore, they invested in a communication system called ARUBA, which was a more systematic way of sharing knowledge between the employees more like Company P’s way of sharing knowledge. After the acquisition, both companies will share the same knowledge sharing systems. Company S will be phased into Connect, Company P’s knowledge sharing platform, with the aim to develop a new mobile knowledge sharing system within the coming years. Since the companies had similar knowledge sharing systems before the acquisition, it is predicted that this integration will be done quite effortlessly.

From the interviews conducted with the different companies, the type of knowledge sharing systems used before the acquisition could be identified. Company P does not believe in any particular knowledge sharing system which requires any major investment. The company does instead believe that the organizational culture has the greatest impact on the amount of knowledge sharing activities. The notion about organizational culture was mentioned many times during the interview with the CEO of Company P and seems to be of great importance and value to the company. Company P has however a communication portal for its employees Called Connect. Connect is an internal Facebook-like website for the employees of Company P where each employee regardless of what kind of business unit they belong to has a profile with information about areas of expertise and ongoing tasks and projects they are involved in. At Connect, employees can post questions to all the colleagues in order to get answers and input from the other colleagues, but also pictures and other kind of information that might not be job related. This was, however, not the case with Company S before the acquisition. Company S was struggling with the communication between its employees. Employees were isolated from each other and did not really have any knowledge about what projects the others were involved in, neither did they know what kind of competence their colleagues possess. This was a result of the rapid growth the company experienced. Therefore, Company S invested in a communication system called
ARUBA, which was a more systematic way of sharing knowledge between the employees more like Company P’s way of sharing knowledge. However, this was an investment to increase the communication between the employees not a new knowledge sharing system, even if it serves as one. The employees seem to appreciate this loose structure of knowledge sharing where the companies only try to facilitate for communication and do not impose on any forced knowledge sharing. The knowledge sharing is driven by the organizational culture. Convenience seems to be the single most important thing in such communication channels. The employees from Company P have stated that they appreciated this type of communication platform, since the communication between each other is on their own terms and it is easy to use for contacting colleagues and asking questions.

Even if the companies did not believe in any major investment for complex knowledge sharing systems, both companies invest in knowledge sharing activities. Company S had knowledge sharing activities that was identical with Company P, they included conferences and seminars. In Company S, they also worked a lot with documents and blogs. The documents could contain for example tips for the new employees and also solution to problems that have risen before. The blogs, were similar to the documents and contained more solutions to daily problems that employees faced. It can therefore be concluded that both companies had similar knowledge sharing culture and activities right before the acquisition. However, Company S had more knowledge sharing systems before the acquisition. In table 4, the knowledge sharing platforms and knowledge sharing activities of each company before the acquisition are visualized. As can be seen, both companies have very similar knowledge sharing structure.
Table 4. Knowledge Sharing Techniques within each company visualized in relation to each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledges sharing activities</th>
<th>Company P</th>
<th>Company S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge sharing platform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARUBA</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the acquisition, both companies will share the same knowledge sharing systems. Company S will be phased into Connect, with the aim to develop a new mobile knowledge sharing system within the coming years. This is a great tool to have when trying to connect two companies that are in different physical locations. This is in addition to some of their other current practices. It was predicted that the companies will be efficient in sharing knowledge in approximately 1.5 years. Since the companies had similar knowledge sharing systems before, it is predicted that this integration will be done quite effortlessly. Including the competence from Company S in Connect would diversify the content and benefit both companies with new knowledge. Both CEOs agreed on that similarity was a major key to a successful acquisition.

5.2 Challenges in Knowledge Sharing
Based on the answers from the four interviews that were conducted, it has been discovered that the two CEOs agree on a lot of topics discussed throughout the interviews, including the challenges. However, the consultants working for Company P had a different mindset when it came to knowledge sharing challenges. The CEOs don’t see the size, diversity, or the use of terminology (professional language) at the companies as challenges but rather as inspiration for the development of the combined companies. Although the CEOs stated that none of these challenges applied to their companies, they were able to identify some challenges that occurred during the acquisition. The CEO of Company P said, “one of the hardest challenges faced during an acquisition is to not divide the company”. The CEO of Company S mentioned some of the
challenges with knowledge sharing as lack of communication and awareness of knowledge. These are the things that the CEOs believe are the true challenges of knowledge sharing after an acquisition. The consultants, on the other hand, stated that terminology is often a challenge during the knowledge sharing process, along with the motivation to share knowledge with others. These findings are depicted below, in table 5.

Table 5. Knowledge Sharing Challenges that’s based on four interviews with CEO’s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges from Case Study</th>
<th>Company P</th>
<th>Company S</th>
<th>Employee 1</th>
<th>Employee 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Dividing the Company</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews were conducted to test whether the three challenges that were identified during the literature review (size, diversity, and terminology) applied to the selected case study. The CEO of Company P claimed that he didn’t see the size of his company as a challenge. Although he stated that the company has a hard time developing a tightly structured knowledge sharing system due to the size and diversity of the knowledge being shared, size is not seen as a challenge during the knowledge sharing process. The CEO of Company S also stated that the size of his company and the size of the knowledge it contains is not a challenge. However, Company S is a smaller company, in comparison to Company P, so their knowledge is easier to handle and spread throughout the company. Despite this fact, the company does have a history of communication problems among employees.

There was a similar mindset for the diversity of the companies and their knowledge as well. The CEO of Company P stated that diversity is an asset and gives the company a competitive advantage in offering their customers something new. The CEO of Company S also saw diversity as something that is openly welcomed throughout the company. They seek diversity so that they can obtain and create more well-rounded employees, while having more knowledge to offer the customer. The CEO of Company P explained that size and diversity is not a problem for both their
organizations because they have a similar culture and an agile business structure. He claimed that they are trying to build both companies up so they can eventually form one overall stronger organization and aren’t just trying to increase their number of employees.

The third challenge that we tested was terminology. Although the CEOs didn’t consider the use of terminology to be a challenge, the consultants stated that it is a challenge they face every day while knowledge sharing. Both CEOs look at the use of terminology as a learning experience for their employees. They claim that they possess a culture that encourages knowledge sharing and that assists with the use of different terminology among the employees. Employee 1 agrees that this is a learning experience and there are many tools that help aid with the use of terminology. However, he does see it as a challenge when trying to share knowledge throughout the company. Employee 2 mentioned that although he has learned from the use of different terminology, it is a constant challenge while trying to share knowledge. He said that it makes the process more time consuming and wastes time that he could be spending on other tasks.

After going through our interviews, we have found three other challenges that the employees believe are associated with the companies in this case study. These challenges are not dividing the company, communication or unawareness of the knowledge available, and the motivation to share knowledge.

5.3 Rewards in Knowledge Sharing
Rewards to increase and overcome knowledge sharing challenges divided the company in two groups; the management and the consultants. From the interviews with the CEOs of each company, it was clear that they didn’t like the concept of financially rewarding employees for sharing knowledge. Both CEOs were trying to avoid bringing that up as the interviews proceeded and seemed not to like the question about the impact of implementing rewards. The consultants stated that monetary rewards would motivate them to overcome what they saw as knowledge sharing challenges after acquisitions. Consequently, none of the companies had any reward systems for knowledge sharing before or after the acquisition.
The CEO of Company P did not believe that rewards would solve any kind of knowledge sharing challenges. However, CEO of Company S recognized the impact of rewards in knowledge sharing but was not positive to it and believe that feedback and reputation had an even greater impact. The CEO of Company P believed that, instead of solving the challenges of knowledge sharing with rewards, lower level managers should help to overcome these challenges and encourage employees to engage in knowledge sharing activities. For example, CEO of Company P stated that “the motivation to share knowledge comes more from leadership than monetary bonuses”. The second group was the consultants and they seemed to agree, with each other, on that monetary rewards would motivate the employees to overcome the knowledge sharing challenges there are after acquisitions. Both employees recognized the positive impact rewards would have, one of the consultants even stated that “the company is making money on my knowledge anyway. Why shouldn’t I also be able to earn money for my knowledge”. To summarize, the CEOs thinks that the motivation to share knowledge and to engage in activities to overcome the challenges is intrinsic while the consultants say that the motivation is extrinsic.

Reputation and feedback seem to be factors that both groups of people agree are important motivating factors. However, the consultants believe these factors still seem to be extrinsic because it could result in monetary rewards. In the interviews with the consultants, it always boiled down to being appreciated by gaining rewards. The management seem to think that rewards stop at giving feedback and the consultants having a good reputation. Moreover, feedback has a more short-term effect while reputation has a more long-term effect on the motivation to engage in knowledge sharing.
6. Analysis

6.1 Knowledge sharing system
Company P is in possession of a knowledge sharing system, called Connect. This system has a similar conceptual framework to the one created by Hu (2008). Although, the two knowledge sharing systems differ in certain ways. For example, Connect stores and displays information differently than the knowledge sharing system developed by Hu (2008). However, both systems can be used for sharing knowledge during multiple projects. Hansen et. al. (1999) also mentioned a similar system being used at other consultant companies. They stated that it is useful for a consultant company to use a codification strategy because as consultants they are constantly dealing with recurring issues. Knowing the knowledge of others is important among consultant companies. Wiig et al. (1999) created two tables were used to identify the knowledge of each employee, in each department, and use that information to effectively use those employees. There are even examples of this strategy in Company P’s Connect system and an interviewing process at Company S.

Hu (2008) developed a conceptual framework for a knowledge sharing system that is similar to the communication system being used at Company P called Connect, which Company S is also utilizing after the acquisition. It begins with several types of knowledge being collected, including process knowledge, content knowledge, and experience knowledge. That is the new knowledge that Company P has gained from the acquisition, which will surface in discussions on Connect. All the information is then put into an internal knowledge bank. However, Connect does not store all its knowledge into a bank. Posts about different information and problems can be found within different online groups that focus on certain competencies or on the general wall on Connect. In the model from Hu (2008), the information is then transferred into a user-friendly portal for both companies to share and reuse knowledge. This differs from Connect, which does not have a user-friendly interface for the employees to find information, since it was thought to mainly be used as a communication system and not a knowledge sharing system. Instead, the consultants need to search for old post by using the keywords they are looking for. Hu (2008) stated that this system is effective for sharing knowledge during multiple projects. Since consultant companies usually are involved in many projects simultaneously, Hu’s (2008) suggested system can be used by the companies in the case study. Company P’s existing communication system is very similar and
would just need some adjustments to achieve the effect of sharing knowledge during multiple projects. Although, this does not come as a surprise considering that Hansen et. al. (1999) also mentioned a similar system being used at other consultant companies. It is useful for a consultant company to use a codification strategy because as consultants they are constantly dealing with recurring issues. Nevertheless, Hansen et. al. (1999) also stated that there was no uniform approach to managing knowledge when it came to the consultants and companies pick their strategy based on the needs of their customers. That is why both Company P and Company S have multiple methods of knowledge sharing. When they improve the way that they share knowledge internally, there will be a better quality of knowledge to share externally with the customers.

Wiig et al. (1999) created two tables titled the “overview of knowledge inventory methods” and “knowledge inventory methods and techniques”. These two tables were used to identify the knowledge of each employee, in each department, and use that information to effectively use those employees. The results from this process can be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses within an organization. A bottleneck and SWOT analysis can also be developed along with a knowledge description frame for each employee (Wiig et al., 1997). This has a direct correlation with the statements from the CEO of Company P, where the responsibility of overcoming knowledge sharing and motivating employees to share knowledge was put on the leaders of the organization. There are even examples of this strategy in Company P’s Connect system. Connect is an internal Facebook-like website for the employees of Company P where each employee, regardless of what kind of business unit they belong to, has a profile with information about areas of expertise and ongoing tasks and projects they are involved in. The company used a strategy similar to the one of Wiig et al. (1999) when making this design. Has you can see, the company went out of their way to display the strengths and weaknesses of each individual employee. They can now use this information to make better assessments when assigning projects to individuals. Employees can also use this knowledge to figure out which co-worker would be the best option for approaching about a certain topic.

This feature on the Connect system can benefit Company S as well. A challenge that the CEO of Company S mentioned was that employees were unaware of the knowledge that their co-workers have obtained throughout the years. Some of the individuals at the company don’t have access to
the scope of knowledge at the company. They did not know what their co-workers are working on or what knowledge the company possesses. Because of this Company S had to use a strategy similar to the one of Wiig et al. (1999) in another way. The company held interviews with every employee in the organization to learn their strengths and weaknesses. They also discussed the current and future goals of the employees. This results in better job placement and stronger teamwork within the company. After this, they began to use the knowledge sharing platform called ARUBA, which was a more systematic way of sharing knowledge between the employees similar to Company P’s way of sharing knowledge.

Even though both companies use multiple methods for sharing knowledge, it is difficult to find literature on knowledge sharing techniques that doesn’t involve a codification strategy. A lot of literature (e.g. Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Hung et. al., 2011; Cabrera et.al., 2006) speaks on how to motivate the use of certain techniques, e.g. rewards, or how the employees feel using those techniques. They don’t talk about the different techniques, per se, that are being used in various companies.

6.2 Challenges in Knowledge Sharing
Hanh and Subramani (2000) said that two major challenges during the knowledge sharing process are the size and diversity of the employees and knowledge being shared. While, Mesli (1994) claimed a major challenge is the use of different terminology. The CEO of Company P stated that he doesn’t see the size of the company and knowledge itself as a challenge. Similarly, the CEO of Company S stated that size is not a challenge for his company and is more of an asset. All the information that we gathered from both companies about size being a challenge to knowledge sharing doesn’t support Hanh and Subramani’s claims. The CEOs also claimed that diversity is not looked at as a challenge during knowledge sharing. Both companies take pride in the amount of diversity that their companies possess and look forward to having even more diversity in the future. The CEO of Company P and CEO of Company S didn’t differ in their view on whether the difference in terminology is a challenge during the knowledge sharing process. They both claim that terminology is not a challenge and is more of a learning opportunity. Although the CEOs did say that this is a learning opportunity for the employees, both consultants look at this as more time
consuming than a learning experience. They stated that the use of different terminology is a daily challenge for them.

Ajmal et al., (2010) stated that “an effective KM system can be the most important KM enabler, but any system can be a barrier if it is not managed properly”. This statement was supported by both of the CEOs that were interviewed. In both Company P and Company S, the knowledge sharing systems are loosely structured due to the complex challenges of knowledge sharing. The companies having a loosely structured system can make it harder to organize and control data. This can result in the system being difficult to use and the employees being unmotivated to share knowledge. The challenge of building a perfect knowledge sharing system is always risky then comparing the investment with actual benefits from the system. For example, its success regarding an increase in the amount of knowledge being shared and the amount of knowledge sharing activities it takes to overcome knowledge sharing challenges. Both companies consider knowledge sharing to have complex challenges. Hanh and Subramani (2000) said that two major challenges during the knowledge sharing process are size and diversity. On the other hand, Mesli (1994) claimed a major challenge is the use of different terminology while sharing knowledge.

Hanh and Subramani (2000) stated that, in a codification strategy, having a larger size of knowledge is a positive thing in terms of amount of accessible information for the employees. It will increase the overall amount of knowledge that is available and increase the chances of an employee finding the information that they desire. This is mainly positive when you have a tightly structured knowledge sharing system, meaning that all the data put into your system is organized, controlled, and easily accessible. If you have a loosely structured knowledge sharing system, having a larger amount of information in a system can be a major time hindrance and can lead to the employees getting lost in all the information that is available. Although Company P has a loosely structured knowledge sharing system overall, their codification system, Connect, is highly structured and organized. The CEO of Company P stated that having a tightly structured system overall is a challenge due to the size of the company and knowledge they possess, although, he doesn’t see the size of the company and knowledge itself as a challenge.
However, if we are discussing person-to-person knowledge sharing, which is an informal exchange of information between two individuals, then having a larger amount of knowledge to share can be a negative thing (Hanh and Subramani, 2000). The CEO of Company S stated the size is not a challenge for his company and is more of an asset. Because Company S is so much smaller in size than Company P, they don’t see having their size of knowledge as a hindrance. Most of their knowledge sharing methods consists of person-to-person knowledge sharing. They have many methods of knowledge sharing that promote face-to-face interactions throughout the company. All of the information that we gathered from both companies about size being a challenge to knowledge sharing doesn’t support Hanh and Subramani’s claims.

Hanh and Subramani (2000) says that when you are speaking about the diversity of knowledge to be shared, then the challenge is similar to the challenge of size. On the other hand, when speaking about diversity of employees in terms of background, ethnicity, gender, competence etc., then the situation is different. Both Company P and Company S said that they see diversity in their employees as an asset to the company. Hanh and Subramani (2000) stated that diversity of employees in a loosely structured knowledge sharing system can be problematic and adds to the complexity of the organization. In situations, such as this one, it’ll be easy to see the differences in culture, management styles, and knowledge management systems. That makes the task of sharing knowledge even more complex within acquisitions (Kukko, 2013). When an employee is highly specialized in a field, they may not be willing to share their years of expertise after an acquisition. This is the type of behavior that both Company P and Company S stated will not be tolerated in their organizations. They said that mentality is not a part of their culture and they try not to hire employees with that mindset by having an intense hiring process making sure that the person of interest is sharing the same values as the company where unsolicited knowledge sharing is an important part. They also take the time to meet with the employees and discuss the employee’s personal goals and their goals while working with the company. Both companies take pride in the amount of diversity that their companies possess and look forward to having even more diversity in the future.

The last challenge is the use of different terminology which is mentioned by Mesli, (1994). Terminology is the technical or professional language used within an occupation. The CEO of
Company P and CEO of Company S didn’t differ in their view on whether the difference in terminology is a challenge during the knowledge sharing process. The CEO of Company P said that he saw terminology has more of an inspiration than a challenge. The company encourages diversity and looks at this as a learning opportunity for its employees. Company P has more experience in handling employees of different backgrounds which are more used to different terminology than Company S. Nevertheless, the CEO of Company S stated that he saw terminology as asset and not a challenge to knowledge sharing as well.

The CEOs of both companies didn’t believe that a difference in the terminology used was a challenge for knowledge sharing and only saw it as a benefit for the consultants to learn new terminology and gain more experience. The consultants that were interviewed stated otherwise. Employee 1 stated that the use of terminology is frequently a challenge for him during knowledge sharing. He counteracts this challenge by constantly asking follow-up questions and for the definition of terms. Although the CEO did say that this is a learning opportunity for the employees, employees 1 looks at this as more time consuming than a learning experience. Employee 2 agrees with employee 1 as well, in this situation. He claimed that the use of different terminology is time consuming and makes it more difficult for him to perform his job. He stated, “if you don’t know the terms you can’t really engage in knowledge sharing activities”. Knowledge sharing can even often be considered impossible due to differences in the language used at work in terms of words, abbreviations, etc. used in written documents and oral communication (Mesli, 1994).

6.3 Rewards in Knowledge Sharing
There have been studies by researchers, such as (e.g. Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Hung et. al., 2011; Cabrera et.al., 2006), which states that employees are encouraged to share knowledge by extrinsic motivational factors. These thoughts are supported by the opinions of employee 1 and employee 2. Although several authors have said that the motivation to share knowledge, in general, is primarily extrinsic, we also need to look at the motivational factors of using an intra-organizational social media platform. There are small things that the company can do to encourage and discourage knowledge sharing without realizing it. Things such as keeping doors open and enabling hallway discussions. Workers responded to words of praise as motivation, while simply receiving orders to share knowledge had the opposite effect on the workers. Results have shown that most
employees are motivated by intrinsic motivational factors, such as being goal-oriented and helping co-workers (Vuori and Okkonen, 2012). Both CEOs agree that the motivation to share knowledge is mainly intrinsic and supported by the culture of the companies.

Hung et. al. (2011) studied the effect of intrinsic motivation and the extrinsic motivation in knowledge sharing behavior of individuals in group meetings. They claimed extrinsic motivation factors such as economic reward, reputation, and reciprocity showed to have a significant effect on the quantity and quality of knowledge contribution. When interviewed, it appeared that the two consultants had the same mindset. Both consultants stated that their motivation to share knowledge is mostly extrinsic. Employee 1 stated that “the company is making money on my knowledge anyway. Why shouldn’t I also be able to earn money for my knowledge”. This mindset correlated to the statements made by (Davenport and Prusak, 1998). They said that since people’s time, energy, and knowledge is limited, they will start to consider if the value of their knowledge is being rewarded.

Hung et al. (2011) mentioned that economic rewards, reputation, and reciprocity had a positive impact on the motivation for knowledge sharing activities, where reputation was the most important. However, this does not imply that it’s the only way to encourage knowledge sharing between employees, reputation seems to be agreed upon to have a major role in knowledge sharing activities. The consultants in Company P stated that the attention from superiors and other people in the company would probably increase encouragement to share knowledge and is supported by the CEO of Company S and Hung et. al (2011). Furthermore, Cabrera et.al. (2006) stated that even a well-constructed knowledge sharing system will not by itself overcome the challenges of knowledge sharing or encourage the consultants to share knowledge, which was supported by the findings from the interviews where the employees were satisfied with their communication system which could be used as a knowledge sharing system. This also refers back to the earlier quote that was mentioned by Ajmal et al., (2010). Who stated that “an effective KM system can be the most important KM enabler, but any system can be a barrier if it is not managed properly”.

It was found that both consultants from Company P engaged in mostly informal knowledge sharing with the purpose to complete a task which is included in the consultant’s job. Here, there is a
hedonic motivation driving the individuals to engage in knowledge sharing which Lam and Lamberment-Ford (2010) confirmed. The hedonic motivation can either be originated in fear or love, if the consultant finds motivations from not wanting to lose his/her job or in contrary that the consultant loves their job and wants to evolve in a specific field of knowledge.

The CEOs of both Company P and Company S didn’t believe that monetary rewards for knowledge sharing was a solution to motivate the employees to engage in it. However, the consultants thought it was a good idea to boost the encouragement for knowledge sharing. This clear difference in opinions may be explained by the effect from the difference in positions in the companies and hence the difference in their interests. The consultants believe the CEOs are typical businessmen and at the end of the day it is about the revenue and the profit of the company. Thereby, increasing expenditure by introducing monetary rewards for knowledge sharing does not seems to be attractive to them especially when there is no direct income linked to it. In consultant companies the knowledge sharing is extra important since it is on which the company thrives. However, in the case of the acquisition, the benefits of knowledge sharing across both companies are limited. According to the CEOs of both companies, the goal with the acquisition of the subsidiary was to be able combine the expertise from both companies to offer something different and suitable for the new trends.

Unlike the CEO of Company P, the CEO of Company S agrees that monetary reward could have a positive impact on the motivation of knowledge sharing activities. This is in terms of the amount of knowledge sharing activities that are being undertaken to overcome knowledge sharing challenges and to increase the amount of knowledge that is being shared. However, both CEOs agrees that it is not the only motivational factor and also isn’t a big motivational factor. Both companies don’t offer any rewards for knowledge sharing. The consultants had a different point of view where monetary rewards are very important. They believed monetary rewards would motivate and increase the knowledge sharing activities between the employees. The CEO of the Company S thinks that the most important motivational factors are acknowledgement and recognition. The CEO of Company P thinks that it the management's responsibility to make sure that employees engage in knowledge sharing. He also argues that motivation to share knowledge is not a question of rewards and bonuses, it is more a question of culture. The culture of Company
P is to work for the common goals of the company rather than for oneself. The CEO considers the knowledge sharing to be a part of moving the company towards the common goal. In order to maintain this culture, Company P put a lot of effort in their hiring process so that managers make sure that the consultants are on the same page.

Both the CEO of Company P and Company S said that the motivation of their employees to use an intra-organizational social media platform is intrinsic. They claim that the culture of the company motivates their employees to use the knowledge sharing system. The CEO of Company P stated, “When employees are not good at sharing knowledge then you should look at management, or leadership, within the company. Their manager may not be encouraging the employees to interact more and share knowledge with their co-workers. The motivation of knowledge sharing comes more from leadership than monetary bonuses”. According to the CEO of Company S, “monetary rewards don’t work well with motivation, but other incentives, such as acknowledgement or speeches, are better ways of motivating the employees to share knowledge”.

This isn’t just the mindset of the CEOs, (Vuori and Okkonen, 2012) conducted research that agrees with their statements as well. This study showed that extrinsic motivation did motivate employees to use the knowledge sharing system, however it is a false motivation. The study stated that the employees were motivated only during the duration of the extrinsic reward. It didn’t change the mindset of the employee and their motivation was only temporary. (Vuori and Okkonen, 2012) found during their research that most of the employees surveyed were driven by intrinsic motivation. Most of the employees’ motivation was nurtured by the culture of the organization and the desire to help the company and co-workers succeed.

Although this mindset is a positive one, it is not the mindset of the consultants that we interviewed. Both employee 1 and employee 2 stated that they are motivated primarily by extrinsic rewards. Employee 1 believes if the company is making money from him sharing knowledge, then he should as well. Employee 2 said that the best way to motivate is feedback and appreciation from colleagues and managers, however, he is driven by the idea of career development and economic rewards. To conclude, economic rewards can have a positive impact on the knowledge sharing activities between the consultants and it is also supported by previous research e.g. Al-Alawi et al.
(2007). However, Vuori and Okkonen, (2012) have proven that extrinsic rewards are only temporary and it doesn’t change the mindset of the employees to share knowledge after they stop receiving rewards. Employees are mostly motivated to share knowledge long-term by intrinsic factors that are supported by the culture of the company.
7. Discussion

7.1 Challenges in Knowledge Sharing

Based on all the information provided to us throughout our research process, we have identified six challenges related to knowledge sharing after an acquisition. Three of the challenges were from the literature review and the other three are challenges that occur within our case study. The first three challenges are size, diversity, and the use of terminology. These challenges were identified through our literature review process by the authors Hanh and Subramani (2000) and Mesli (1994). We then tested the plausibility of the challenges during our interviews. The purpose of this was to see if these were plausible challenges in the case study. It was discovered that the two CEOs didn’t see any of those three as challenges. The consultants stated that they did see the use of terminology as a challenge, however the size and diversity of the companies and the knowledge were not challenging. The challenges that were uncovered during the interviews were not dividing the company, communication, and motivation.

The challenge, which was size, that was mentioned by Hanh and Subramani (2000) had positive reviews then tested on our case study. The CEO of Company P welcomed the increase in size, even though, the company possesses a loosely structured knowledge sharing system. As we have stated before having a high number of knowledge and employees with a loosely structured knowledge sharing system can be problematic. However, the CEO does not see this as a problem and is looking forward to further increasing both the size of their knowledge and the company. He views the situation as more of an inspiration than a knowledge sharing challenge. The CEO of company S agrees, with the CEO of Company P, that size is not a challenge for his organization. Although, we must take into consideration the current size of Company S. Company S is a much smaller organization and, even if they also have a loosely structured knowledge sharing system, their knowledge and staff members are easier to control. This plays a major part in the ways that they share knowledge throughout the company. Most of their knowledge sharing includes face-to-face interactions between employees. Due to these facts, we have concluded that, in our case study, size is not considered a challenge during the knowledge sharing process. The companies do not see it as a threat and openly accepts it as an advantage.
We have discovered that the same is true for the second challenge of diversity. Although both companies possess a loosely structured knowledge sharing system, they encourage having diversity in the workplace. Hanh and Subramani (2000) has stated that diversity is a challenge during knowledge sharing, however, we are stating that it is not seen as a challenge for the companies in our case study. The CEOs see it as an advantage. They said that when they add diversity to the company, they are doing it to build the company up and not just increase the number of workers.

The last challenge that we focused on was the use of terminology. Similarly, to the other challenges, both CEOs had a positive outlook in terms of terminology. The CEO of Company P stated that he does not see terminology as a challenge but rather as inspiration. He looks at it as inspiration to bring his employees together and build a better company overall. The CEO of Company P views the different use of terminology as a learning and bonding opportunity for his employees. He believes they have an open and sharing culture which motivates them to share with each other and overcome the obstacle of having different terminology. The CEO of Company S shared the same views on terminology. He stated, “a key point of the acquisition is to invite more knowledge and diversity within the company”. This includes the use of terminology.

On the other hand, the two employees interviewed had a completely different mindset about the use of terminology. Both employees stated that they are constantly struggling with understanding different terminology while sharing knowledge. Employee 1 claimed that using different terminology is a learning experience and that he is continuously asking his co-workers to elaborate of their definitions of unfamiliar terms. He also said, “many companies have their own dictionary where many abbreviations are explained”. That is extremely helpful for him. Employee 2 confirmed that using new terminology is a learning opportunity, however, it takes up a big portion of his time that he could be using for other things. He claims it is not time effective trying to learn so many new terms while sharing knowledge. Based on this information, we have concluded that while terminology is not seen as a challenge for the CEOs it is seen as a knowledge sharing challenge to the consultants.
Although the CEOs stated that none of these challenges applied to their companies, they were able to identify some challenges that occurred during the acquisition. The CEO of Company P said, "one of the hardest challenges faced during an acquisition is to not divide the company". The CEO of Company S mentioned some of the challenges with knowledge sharing as lack of communication and awareness of the knowledge available. The consultants claimed that a challenge they faced was the motivation to share knowledge. These are the things that the employees of Company P and Company S believe are the true challenges of knowledge sharing after their acquisition.

7.2 Rewards in Knowledge Sharing
Using economic reward systems for encouraging knowledge sharing and to overcome the challenges in knowledge sharing from acquisitions is a short-term solution and does not suit acquisitions where there is a long-term plan. To satisfy both the management and the employees, the system for encouraging employees to overcome the challenges of knowledge sharing should not involve any monetary rewards. Instead, the companies should focus on the construction of a system that facilitates for acknowledgement of the employees and supports the culture of knowledge sharing within the organizations. Company P and Company S are achieving that by investing in the culture of the companies. Moreover, acquiring a company with similar culture helps to overcome many of the challenges that can arise during an acquisition.

There have been studies by researchers, such as (e.g. Al-Alawi et al., 2007; Hung et. al., 2011; Cabrera et.al., 2006), which states that employees are encouraged to share knowledge by extrinsic motivational factors. Many employees feel that your knowledge is valuable and they should be compensated for sharing it with others. Although this claim has been proven to be to some extent true, the motivation that it provides is only temporary and short-term. Vuori and Okkonen, (2012) used the work of past researcher along with surveys of employees from two different organizations. She realized that extrinsic motivation had very little impact on the motivation of employees and only lasted as long as the rewards were being provided. Intrinsic motivation was found to be more effective and was nurtured by the culture of the organization. To conclude, extrinsic motivation may work for short-term motivation, however intrinsic motivation has a long-term effect and is encouraged by the culture of the company.
Knowledge sharing has, from the interviews, been proven to be an important topic to the companies which involves many different stakeholders. It appears that all the stakeholders in the companies are interested in a functioning knowledge management system. The employees want to stay competent to keep their job and the management wants the employees to expand their knowledge in order to bring more value to the company. In the interviews, organizational culture, the nature of knowledge, the opportunities to share, and the motivation to share were mentioned in the context of knowledge sharing, all in accordance to Ipe (2003) knowledge sharing model. Knowledge sharing is affected by these factors and the CEO of Company P stated that there aren’t any different factors for knowledge sharing between departments. However, in the case of knowledge sharing between departments, there is a possibility that there are multiple different cultures within the same company. One culture can have a positive attitude toward sharing knowledge while the other doesn’t. Different departmental cultures would yield in a unfair exchange of knowledge and result in a bad knowledge sharing culture even if other departments possesses a good knowledge sharing culture. The CEO of Company P stated that similarities in organizational culture were of great importance when searching for which company to acquire. Moreover, he also thought that culture had the greatest impact on knowledge sharing overthrowing factors such as monetary rewards. The CEO of Company S had the same view and agreed that both companies shared the same values. From their interviews, it was clear that this was accurate. Both companies had similar knowledge sharing systems with forums, conferences and seminars. So, it is quite effortless to integrate the new employees under the new company’s knowledge sharing system. In conclusion, the management rejects the idea of having an economic reward system.

We know from the findings that the CEOs did not support the idea of an economic reward system. Furthermore, we have concluded that economic reward systems are not functional for a long-term knowledge sharing motivation. However, both parties seemed to agree on reputation and acknowledgement of employees to be a great way to motivate the employees for knowledge sharing and hence overcoming the challenges of knowledge sharing after acquisition. The knowledge sharing system which Company P uses serves these identified factors; acknowledgement and reputation. All employees can see and comment on each other post's and
all posts are visible for all employees. To summarize, the conclusion is to not invest in an economic reward system and instead focusing on constructing a system or a culture which facilitates the motivation to overcome the challenges in knowledge sharing after acquisition.

It has also been taken into consideration that the CEOs may have been providing interview answers that best supports the image of their organizations. It is in their best interest to make their companies seem like they are without the need of a reward system and unaffected by the challenges of an acquisition. However, the CEOs were informed that the names of the companies would not be provided in this thesis. Because of this, it is believed that the upper management had not reason to provide false information.
8. Conclusions

Based on the findings in this research, the main challenges found in knowledge sharing after acquisitions are not dividing the company, communication, motivation, and the use of terminology. The CEOs do not believe that the use of terminology is a challenge, however the consultants state that it is a daily challenge for them. The beliefs of the consultants are also supported by the claims of Mesli (1994). These are the four challenges that effect our case study, after their acquisition. To encourage employees to engage in knowledge sharing in order to overcome these challenges, economic reward systems can be used to achieve this goal according to the interviews of the consultants. It was found that the consultants’ motivation is primarily extrinsic. However, according to the CEOs, such rewards only have a short-term effect on the employee’s willingness to overcome the challenges that arises after the acquisition and motivation to knowledge long-term is primarily intrinsic and a result of the company’s culture. Conclusions like the CEO of Company P and Company S’s about reward systems were stated by Vuori and Okkonen (2012) after they conducted their own research on a related topic. Hence, it is believed that reward systems do not work for long-term encouragement and should not be used in companies who acquire other companies for a long-term relationship.
9. Suggestion for Future Research

Due to the lack of resources and the time constraint, there was not an opportunity to further research this topic on a bigger scale. There was a time limit of roughly 1.5 months to conduct all the research needed to gather the required information and answer the interview questions. With more time to conduct this investigation, more research could have been conducted and more factors added to the research process. Factors such as looking into more than one case study, cross-analyzing between different departments within the companies, and how different cultures can affect the results of the research. Interviewing companies from different countries or companies that participates in globalization can benefit future researchers that decide to build on this topic or explore it more deeply. It is suggested that future researchers investigate the benefits of investing more money into a better communication system for improvement of knowledge sharing. More investigating into these areas will benefits companies in similar situations and furthers the discussion on this topic.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Interview guide for CEOs

Introduction:

• Introduction of us and short description of our thesis. Explain what the interview is going to be used for. Explain our definition of knowledge sharing.
• Ask the person to introduce himself/herself.
• Describe knowledge sharing and ethical consideration

Theme Acquisition:

• How did the acquisition process go?
• Why was the acquisition necessary for you?
• How has your daily work been affected of this?
• Are you still working on the acquisition and in that case how?
• What is the long-term plan for the subsidiary?

Theme Knowledge sharing and Motivation:

• How did you work with knowledge sharing prior to the acquisition? (highly structured or loose system)
• What kind of challenges in knowledge sharing have you identified in your company before the acquisition? (Ask about size and diversity too)
• Did you have any kind of incentives in terms of rewards to increase knowledge sharing within the organization?
• In the process of the acquisition, did you discuss how the knowledge sharing between the two companies would work?
• How will the diversity after the acquisition affect your knowledge sharing system?
• How do you plan to motivate the new employees to use your knowledge sharing system?
• How would a reward system for encouragement of knowledge sharing work in your company? (economic)
• What challenges can the new diversity and culture bring to the company?
• How do you plan to address the challenges that will appear due to the acquisition?
• How would extrinsic motivation factors (economic rewards, reputation, reciprocity) work to increase knowledge sharing your companies?
• What precautions will the company take when addressing different terminology used during the sharing knowledge process?
• How often is the use of professional terminology an issue with knowledge sharing?
• How would you initiate knowledge sharing between departments and between organizations? What are the differences and challenges between the two levels of knowledge sharing?
• How will your knowledge sharing system change after the acquisitions? Will the diversity of the employees from the other company change your knowledge sharing strategy?

Closure:

• Reconnect to interesting points which the interviewee brought up that might have been a little bit outside the topic.
• Is there anything else you would like to mention?
• How did you experience this interview?
• If we were to do it again what is your recommendation to us?
Appendix B

Interview guide for consultants

Knowledge sharing stories

Knowledge sharing ideas

- What types of knowledge sharing have you used? (personal, documents, search engines, etc.)
- Has there ever been a time where language, or terminology, was a knowledge sharing barrier for you?
- What is the best way to motivate you to participate in a knowledge sharing system?
- Is your motivation primarily extrinsic or intrinsic? Why?
- Do you find it difficult to share knowledge at the company?