

Siri Mowinckel

”They don’t mean it badly – It’s just their way of communicating”

A qualitative study of how LIFO can help a team and its members to reach their
highest potential.

Institutt for voksnes læring og rådgivningsvitenskap
Fakultet for samfunnsvitenskap og teknologiledelse
NTNU, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet
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Abstract

Teamwork is an essential part of everyday life for many people in today's society. The team members who take part in various teams are essential for the team's effectiveness. In this thesis I will look at the benefits a company can experience in teamwork through the use of the LIFO® method. To investigate this I have chosen to use a qualitative approach, by interviewing three people from a large transportation company, on how they experienced that LIFO® has contributed to better teamwork.

The analysis of my data resulted in five main categories where *communication* was a superior category, and was an important part in the remaining categories, which are *better understanding, LIFO® and effectiveness, the potential LIFO® brings to the table, and the relationship between colleagues*. Based on the subjects that are mentioned in the analysis I have discussed the main points against the theory I have used. The main theory comes from Atkins (1999), Johnson & Johnson (2000) and Kvalsund & Meyer (2005).

The general experience of the interviewees was that the use of the LIFO® method led to better understanding and awareness of their own and others' use of communication, which led to a number of other positive experiences in relation to teamwork. The interviewees highlighted both some of the same positive experiences, but also personal experiences that they felt were especially important.

Sammendrag

Teamarbeid er en viktig del av hverdagen for mange i dagens samfunn. Medlemmer som tar del i ulike team har mye og si for effektiviteten i teamet. I dette studiet vil jeg ta for meg hvilke fordeler en bedrift kan oppleve i teamarbeid ved bruk av LIFO® metoden. For å undersøke dette har jeg valgt å bruke en kvalitativ tilnærming ved å intervju tre personer fra et stor transport selskap om hvordan de har opplevd at LIFO® har bidratt til bedre teamarbeid.

Analysen av dataene mine førte til fem hovedkategorier der *kommunikasjon* var en overordnet kategori, som hadde en viktig rolle i de resterende kategoriene, som er *bedre forståelse, LIFO® og effektivitet, potensialet LIFO® medfører, og forholdet mellom kollegaer*. Basert på de emnene som blir tatt opp i analysen har jeg drøftet hovedpunktene opp mot teorien jeg har brukt. Hovedvekt av teorien kommer fra Atkins (1999), Johnson & Johnson (2000) og Kvalsund & Meyer (2005).

Den generelle opplevelsen til informantene mine var at bruken av LIFO® førte til bedre forståelse og bevissthet av egen, og andres bruk av kommunikasjon, som igjen medførte en rekke andre positive opplevelser i forhold til teamarbeid. Informantene fremhevet både noen av de samme positive opplevelsene, men også personlige opplevelser som de synes var spesielt viktige.

Preface

Working with this thesis has absorbed me for the last sixth month. I have experienced this composition as exciting and rewarding because I have been surrounded by wonderful people who have contributed to my learning process, the development of both myself and the thesis, and the fact that I have been able to do this thesis.

I want to give special thanks to everyone who has contributed in different ways; I could not have done this without them. I would first like to thank my three informants for sharing their stories, knowledge and experiences with me and for letting me use their information as the basis for this research. I am very grateful that I was given the opportunity to take part in their knowledge, reflection and development. I would also like to thank my supervisor Jonathan Reams for good and valuable support, educational input and valuable reflections during both the theses and my own process. Also, my classmates and other teachers at my institute for positive hallway conversations, problem solving, and useful information, which have been more important for me than I think they know. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have had faith in me throughout the process, and for giving me support and encouragement, and a special thanks to my mother, for taking her time to proof-read my thesis and contributed with linguistic recommendations.

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1 Introduction

A truly dedicated and cooperative group is probably one of the most productive tools that we have (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Teamwork is something that has always interested me. During my years as a student I have always preferred to work in groups instead of individually. Before I started my masters, I had the feeling that I was a good team member. I had the understanding that a good team member was someone who always agreed to what everyone else said, did not speak up if there were disagreements, and just smile, and played along so that everyone else got their way. After I took a LIFO® survey and really experienced and worked thoroughly through the process aspect of teamwork, I realized how wrong I was considering what is best for a group. This experience got me more interested in teamwork, and LIFO®.

The LIFO® method is short for Life Orientation Training, and what I found interesting about this assessment survey was that it helped me identify both things I did not know about myself as well as things I did know. Even though it was things I knew from before it was very helpful to read about what could be my strong sides and my weak sides, just like hearing someone else tell you something you already know, it often affects you differently when it comes from someone else.

“Communication is the basis for all human interaction and for all group functioning. The very existence of a group depends on communication, on exchanging information and transmitting meaning” (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 142). How an organizational system works, depends essentially on how the system allows for communication, and in the ability the people in the system has to communicate with each other. An organization is people, based on interaction, put in a system to take care of common interests and common goals. Therefore it is logical that the personal dimension basically has to take precedence in any system. The LIFO® method is used a lot in team building, team coping and management. It is suitable for use in communication processes where the focus is to understand the complex dynamic processes in teams. Expression and behavior in these teams provides the basis for the dynamics of the entire organization. The LIFO® method provides a basis for identifying intentions, behavior and action consequences, and to understand individual, team and organization skills. Further it includes different types of behavior and actions in different roles and situations, both

favorable and not favorable situations. With this tool you are especially able to discover yourself and your own communication style or working style to meet with others in different roles and situations (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

One aspect that caught my attention with the LIFO® model is that it is based on our strengths rather than our weaknesses. The point of it is how we can get the most from our strengths and from the strengths of the key people in our lives, and not focus on our weaknesses. “By knowing our *game plan* and the game plans of key persons in our lives, we can improve our strengths and theirs as well” (Atkins, 1999, p. 9). I have personally experienced LIFO® to be a great way to enhance your communication skills and interaction with other people in teams. LIFO® as a tool can identify potential conflicts between different orientations, but also provide help to manage and control the orientations into a more constructive track, so that the different orientations represents a strength and create win-win rather than win-loose – situations (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). As shown by Atkins (1999) and Johnson and Johnson (2005) you can use LIFO® in different situations, but in this research I am going to focus on teams, teamwork and team members.

As background, my personal LIFO® training was based on group processes through a whole course, and I spent a lot of time with people going through the same training. I was curious to see if that process had obvious effects on us, and that my interviewees would not have the same feeling and experience with LIFO®, because of the amount of time spent on it. Not that I know how much time the company do spend on LIFO®, but I am guessing that it is not as much time as we spent on it.

My hypotheses is that this LIFO® method can help both people and organizations to become more effective in their work and get the best out of what is possible. Organizations often require help in relation to things like teamwork, and I believe that LIFO® could be one way to provide such help for some organizations. According to Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) it is the people that are the answers to a successful and effective organization through teamwork and communication. Based on this introduction my research question is;

What benefits can the on-going use of LIFO® in an organization produce for teamwork?

1.1 Thesis structure

In the beginning of this thesis I will present the theory that forms the basis for the theoretical framework and perspectives of my research, such as LIFO®, communication, groups, teams and conflict. In the third chapter I will describe the method I have used in the process of collecting my data and the analysis methods that have guided me. After that I am going to briefly present the values of the company before I present my categories and the most important findings I have made through the analysis process. In the fifth chapter I will discuss my findings against the theoretical perspectives presented in the second chapter, where communication will be a factor in all of my discussions. This will be followed by a concluding discussion, which provides a comprehensive look at my research findings, and some suggestions for possible implications for future research, and finally I have written an epilogue where I briefly reflect on some aspects of the work process in light of my own learning process.

There are a lot of different terms that are correct to use for this thesis, for example task, assignment and paper. However, I have chosen to use thesis and research throughout this thesis, because I think thesis covers the whole aspect of this study, and research is better when I am talking about the method of collecting data. Another term that is frequently used in this thesis is LIFO® method, but sometimes I have used the term LIFO® tool when I am using it to describe how you can use LIFO®.

2 Theory

Postholm (2010) says that there is a constant interaction between the theory being studied and the data collected. In the interaction process between theory and data, the invisible everyday life becomes visible. Theory provides direction for research as well as being an important tool in the research work (Postholm, 2010). Before my interviews, I based my literature on what I wanted to talk about with my interviewees. I read about effective teamwork, LIFO®, and those two combined. I focused on the basics, since I did not know which turn my interviews would take. After the interviews were done, I kept a very narrow theory search to avoid getting a lot of irrelevant theory. So I mainly used search words as “LIFO®” “effective groups and teams”, “communication” and “conflict” which were my overall findings after I had read the collected data.

In this theory chapter I will begin with presenting theory that is related to LIFO®, its background, how LIFO® differ from other methods, theorists who have contributed to creating LIFO®, the strength-weakness paradox and the fact that one has different orientations in LIFO®. I will further elaborate on theories about groups and teams that were relevant to my theme and how they are different. Then I will describe the communication theory I have used that is focused on communication amongst group and team members, and at the end of this chapter I will present theory about the potential of conflict when working in a team or a group.

2.1 LIFO®

An organization is people, based on interaction, put in a system to take care of common interests and common goals. Organizations have their origin, basis and governance in and through the employees’ actions. Therefore it is logical that the personal dimension basically has to take precedence in any system. Based on that, this dimension is central to understanding the dynamics in organizational systems. Information about the situation and role performance are other key concepts that are important in the way people interact. To understand the dynamics of behavior and action strategies in the system, you have to focus on the following three factors: person, role and situation (Kvalsund & Meyer (2005).

2.1.1 Background

The LIFO® method is based on the work of Allan Katcher and Stuart Atkins, and specifically Atkins states that the method is based on several theoretical traditions from Freud, Rogers, Maslow, Lewin, Fromm etc. (Atkins, 1999; Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Katcher and Atkins' research was initially driven by the difficulties managers had with "conducting performance appraisals. They were intrigued by the focus on strengths and weaknesses, as a dichotomy and the underlying fear of most managers that if they work to rid themselves of their weaknesses they might lose their strengths" (Katcher & Metzler, 2006, p. 3). The discoveries of LIFO® started in the United States in 1968.

Since that time, industry, hospitals, schools, government, churches and universities have put LIFO® Training into practice to help people be more productive and more satisfied. Teachers, students, supervisors, psychologists, doctors, nurses, police officers, firefighters, executives, parents, children, husbands and wives have had Life Orientations Training. As a result of the theory and training, they acquired new strategies to help them succeed at home and at work. (Atkins, 1999, p. 10-11)

2.1.2 The uniqueness of LIFO®

There are several unique aspects of the LIFO® methodology that distinguish it from other models of behavioral measurement and classification. First, there are no ideal norms, meaning no good or bad, no right or wrong, and no better or worse. Secondly, it does not probe psychological issues (Katcher & Metzler, 2006).

This methodology merely categorizes the behaviors of individuals that are readily apparent to any and all persons with whom the individual relates, into the four dimensions. Then it provides a lexicon with which to discuss differences and similarities of perspective and behavior amongst individuals and in groups. (Katcher & Metzler, 2006, p. 3)

The LIFO® method provides a basis for identifying intentions, behavior and action consequences, and to understand individual, team and organization skills. Further it includes different types of behavior and actions in different roles and situations. With this tool one is especially able to discover one self and one's own communication style or working style to

meet with others in different roles and situations. The LIFO® method is used a lot in team building, team coping and management. It is suitable for use in guidance on communication processes where the focus is to understand the complex dynamic processes in the working groups and teams. Expression and behavior in these smaller units provides the basis for the dynamics of the entire organization (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

The LIFO® method organizes and describes our attitudes and behaviors as individuals within four dimensions and covers all types of human behavior. “By identifying common themes of values, attitudes and beliefs that underlie these dimensions, people are helped to understand the source of personal strengths that can be leveraged for success” (Katcher & Metzler, 2006, p. 3).

2.1.3 Influential theorists

The book about LIFO®, *The Name of Your Game*, discusses how past and contemporary masters have influenced human behavior. Among these is psychologist Carl Rogers whose client-centered counseling theories are used in the book. “This means putting aside thoughts of right or wrong, good or bad, and considering only what will facilitate us – knowing that facilitation is fostered in the absence of critical analysis and in the presence of self-acceptance” (Atkins, 1999, p. 10). Rogers’s reflections on the essence of the therapeutic, changing and learning processes, had a significant impact. Katcher (1991) refers to Roger (1995) who claims that it seems crucial to personal change and development that one understands and accept another person, communicates that through one’s empathetic reflections and trusting the other person to work with that acceptance in a positive way.

This book also follows principles of psychologist Abraham Maslow, and his focus on how to encourage people to find their strengths and according to him ensuring that they use their full potential. There is no ideal model of what a person should be and no norms or standards to live up to. There is only the wish for people to liberate what is individually within themselves, and their potential (Atkins, 1999).

According to Tibbles (2000b), Drucker (2007) was the first management thinker to emphasize the human in human resources. He also recognized the relationship between the workgroup and the individual.

The human being works in groups and he forms groups to work. And a group, no matter how formed or why, soon focuses on a task. Group relationships influence the task; the task in turn influences personal relationships within the group. At the same time the human being remains an individual. Groups and individuals must therefore be brought into harmony in the organization of work. (Drucker, 2007 in Tibbles, 2000b, p. 3)

Finally, Fromm's (1947) concept is described as the strength-weakness paradox in the LIFO® method. This means that when each orientation is used appropriately this results in positive and productive behaviors but, paradoxically when used to excess or inappropriately, the same results in negative or unproductive behaviors (Fromm, 1947; Tibbles, 2000a).

2.1.4 Strength and weakness

The LIFO® model is based on our strengths rather than our weaknesses. How we can get the most from our strengths and from the strengths of the key people in our lives, and not focus on our weaknesses. "By knowing our game plan and the game plans of key people in our lives, we can improve our strengths and theirs as well" (Atkins, 1999, p. 9) Also by knowing which game plan we least prefer, we will understand why we are vulnerable to making major mistakes or overlooking important opportunities in our lives (Atkins, 1999).

Using one's strengths is dependent on the relevance, something the LIFO® method manages to capture as an important part of every communication and every interaction. The strength-weakness paradox means that your strengths can be a weakness if you either use it too much or when it is not needed, and is therefore an important development area for coping. This is something you can work on to raise awareness and practice it, and with this, the individual will become better in communicating in different situations and roles in groups and organizations. The strength-weakness paradox is shown best when we get an understanding of the different styles we have when we communicate, or as the LIFO® method describes it, different ways we orient ourselves in life to meet and satisfy our needs (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). There are four basic life orientations, which are give, take, keep and share. We humans have all these forms of action and communication relations to each other. Some balance all

four orientations, and can easily move between different ways of being, and some may have tendencies to use only one style (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

To discover our strengths, also allows us to recognize the potential of exaggeration. The development potential is then in understanding our strength and making a conscious choice between productive and unproductive use. Another development potential lies in learning more about what your and others orientation means, which shades and qualities that constitute the orientation, not to mention how to improve and understand the basis for orientation and to become a better practitioner of the skills that lies in the orientation (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

According to Katcher (1991), Fromm's statement; "Our weaknesses are seldom more than the excessive use of one's strengths" (Fromm, 1947 in Katcher, 1991, p. 3) is so meaningful to participants in LIFO® seminars that it is the one thing above all that is remembered about the experience.

2.1.5 Different orientations

The LIFO® method is a communication system that can identify, adapt, develop and manage teams, groups and organizations as a system. The tool can identify potential conflicts between different orientations, but also provide help to manage and control the orientations into a more constructive track, so that the different orientations represents a strength and create win-win rather than win-loose – situations (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

The LIFO® method shows each team member's behavior preferences with respect to orientation. The method also illustrates that everyone has something of all four orientations. Some are equally strong in more than one orientation, which is referred to as "blends". Others have a clearly preferred style, but with a different orientation as "backup". The "backup" orientation is not as frequently used, but it still may affect the preferred style and modify it. The LIFO® method as a communication system may seem complicated, requiring a highly qualified analytical interpretation of requirements, an expert interpretation (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

The four orientations are *supporting giving*, *controlling taking*, *conserving holding* and *adaptive dealing*.

Supporting giving: Good performance comes from hard work and the search of excellence and is characterized as thoughtful, trusting, idealistic, loyal, and tries to do the very best setting high standards for self and others.

Controlling taking: Good performance comes from seizing opportunity, being competent, and is results-oriented and a go-getter. Characterized as self-confident, persuasive, competitive, and tends to act quickly and makes things happen.

Conserving holding: Good performance comes from making the most of what you have and using your head. Characterized as methodical, logical, precise, tenacious, tries to analyze every angle before acting and always looks for the fail-safe way to do a job.

Adapting Dealing: Good performance comes from pleasing others and filling their needs. Characterized as flexible, enthusiastic, tactful, inspiring, charming, empathetic and tries to get along with everybody (Atkins, 1999).

According to Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) the repeated use of this method in different contexts, generates good experience. In particular we have received feedback that the tool is designed to allow us to detect different aspects of personal communication. You learn to understand why you are experiencing communication with others as both easy and difficult. The potential conflicts that we have discussed between the different orientations or styles, is expressed. It is a fact that some forms of communication work better together than others (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Discovering your own communication profile provides a deeper self-understanding and helps to refine, confirm, and even change your perception. The strength of the tool is that you are able to fill the gap yourself, in relation to lots of aspects of your life and different contexts (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

It can be tempting to put together groups or select employees where communication flows easily and effortlessly. Then however, you increase the risk of excess of *one* profile and a biased focus, and the disadvantages, which this entails, and there will be no progress. Recognition and awareness of how your own strengths and weaknesses works is the best starting point for putting together a group (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

2.2 Groups

A truly dedicated and cooperative group is probably one of the most productive tools that we have. To develop and maintain a truly engaged and productive group is far from easy and these groups seem to be rare. This may be related to lack of knowledge or confusion about the basic elements needed to develop such groups, or it may be about a lack of skills in implementing the conditions that facilitate the development of groups. The basic elements in the development of groups is positive interdependence, creative interaction face to face, accountability for individual and group, use of appropriate social skills and group processes (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

Johnson & Johnson (2000) defines an effective group as more than a sum of its parts. "It is a group whose members commit themselves to the common purposes of maximizing their own and each other's success" (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 23). They believe that their success depends on the efforts of all group members. An effective group has a number of defining characteristics. They include positive interdependence that unites members together to achieve clear, operational goals, two-way communication, distributed leadership, power based on expertise, and a decision-making procedure appropriate to the situation. The group challenges each other's information and reasoning and resolves conflicts constructively. In addition, members promote each other's success, appropriately engage in small group skills, and process how effectively they are working together (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

The opposite of an effective group is a pseudo group where its members have been assigned to work together but have no interest in doing so. They believe that they will be ranked from the highest performer to the lowest performer. On the surface members talk to each other, but under the surface they are competing. They see each other as rivals who must be defeated, interfere with each other's performance, hide information from each other, attempt to mislead each other, and destruct each other. The result is that the sum of the whole is less than the potential of the individual members (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

Development *of* and *in* groups is important for potential resources to be expressed and developed for the benefit of the individual and the community. How groups evolve is different. It is by seeing, recognizing, integrating and transcending what is between the members, that the group as a whole can create "something more" than the sum of individual

contributions. Group development is essentially a group's ability to exploit this "something more" that we are aiming for. If this "something more" should become a reality, the group must also be able to deal with stagnation, paralysis and disintegration tendencies along the road. Development is possible by living through something that you would prefer to avoid. To live through this brings greater expertise to integrate and transcend the inevitable, and thus create something valuable in and for the community. To make this possible, the attention and awareness of the values must be emphasized. This is no different than in personal development, only more complex (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

2.2.1 Teams

A team evolves from a group, and that is why the two concepts small group and team are often used interchangeably in the group dynamics literature, even within the same research study. However, not all groups are teams. "A team is not just a number of people working together. Committees, task forces, departments, and councils are groups, but they are not necessarily teams. Groups do not become teams simply because that is what someone calls them" (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 539).

A team is a set of interpersonal interactions structured to achieve established goals. More specifically, a team consists of two or more individuals who are aware of their positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals and interact while they do so. They are aware of who is and who is not a member of the team, have specific roles or functions to perform and have a defined time span of their membership. Here the division of effort is meshed into a single coordinated result and where the whole is more than and different from the sum of its individual parts (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

Team productivity is not only related to and not only dependent on the technical competence and abilities of the team member.

To be productive, teams (like all groups) must ensure that members perceive strong positive interdependence, interact in ways that promote each others' success and well being, be individually accountable, employ their small team skills, and process how effectively the team has been working. (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 552)

2.3 Communication

How an organizational system works, depends essentially on how the system allows for communication, and in the ability of the people in the system to communicate with each other (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). The LIFO® method is often referred to as a method that reveals a communication game, reflecting different communication styles. Stuart Atkins (1999) symbolizes the communication game by the title of his book on the LIFO® method: "The name of your game." Game does not mean that communication is "just a game", which cannot be taken seriously, or that is not real. Game rather symbolizes that a communication style is a preference that is learned, and most often played out at a low level of consciousness. Communication styles represent patterns (social structures) that are related to social behavior (social system), which can raise awareness, influence and modify (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

Communication is the basis for all human interaction and for all group functioning. Every group must take in and use information. The very existence of a group depends on communication, on exchanging information and transmitting meaning. All cooperative action is contingent upon effective communication, and our daily lives are filled with one communication experience after another. Through communication group members reach some understanding of one another, build trust, coordinate their actions, plans strategies for a goal accomplishment, agree upon a division of labor, conduct all group activity- even exchange insults. It is a prerequisite for every aspect of group functioning. (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 142)

To improve communication between team members, one must observe their communication styles in order to find possible causes of potential problems. If members are missing some of the basic skills this can be taught with a training program. If the members have the skills, but do not realize that they do not use them, an analysis of the group's communication styles can be of great help. After doing these surveys of members' self-awareness and skills, one can analyze the effect of group norms to determine if they suppress effective communication and promote inefficient communication. Group norms can then be adjusted so that the communication effectiveness among members can increase (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

The work on communication styles and how to get to know your own strengths and lesser

strengths is demanding. This knowledge also contributes to clarify for people why their message does or does not reach through in different situations. The ambition is first and foremost for people to both experience and become familiar with their own communication style. A continuation of a guidance perspective, where one is able to identify different patterns of communication and foster team processes towards integrating more strengths, takes time and requires much experience (Atkins, 1999; Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

To feel included, belonging in the community collaboration as a valuable employee, creates not only prosperity, but also a sense of belonging that provides motivation and scope for more productive group members. The importance of this type of common group loyalty as a strong contributor to the work environment's encouragement of personal qualities cannot be underestimated. This illustrates how important it is to be aware and conscious of your own way to communication, and the need to develop the ability to switch between different perspectives (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

“Because communication is interpersonal, whatever interferes with the relationships among group members interferes with their communication. Changes in the relationship in a group can result in basic improvements in communication” (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p. 175). As noted before, perhaps the most powerful influence on the relationships among members and on communication within a group is the members' orientation towards participation in the group and in setting and working towards the goal. Cooperation helps a group's effectiveness. Whereas competition, either in goal achievement or member orientation, is highly destructive for the groups communication and relationships (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

According to Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) when these communication phenomena are known, it becomes easier to move out of the comfort zone and to explore and appreciate the more exciting opportunities and possibilities that develop from differences and disagreements (Atkins, 1999; Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

2.3.1 Four parts of speech

Speaking is the primary and most influential medium of action in the human universe. “Our claim is that the four parts of speech- *framing*, *advocacy*, *illustrating*, and *inquiring*, represent the very atoms of human action” (Torbert, 2004, p. 27). People who speak of moving from

talk to action are apparently not aware of the fact that talk is the essence of action. We are deeply influenced by how we speak to one another. Instead of focusing on the overall process of conversation, we focus all our immediate attention only on the content of the spoken words. If you recognize that your speech is dominated by one or two of these types of speech, it is recommended to try learning more of the other types (Torbert, 2004).

“*Framing* refers to explicitly stating what the purpose is for the present occasion, what the dilemma is that everyone is at the meeting to resolve, what assumptions you think are shared or not shared” (Torbert, 2004, p. 28). Put your perspective as well as your understanding of the others’ perspectives out onto the table for examination. “*Advocating* refers to explicitly asserting an option, perception, feeling, or strategy for action in relatively abstract terms” (Torbert, 2004, p. 28). Either extremely strong advocating or never advocating at all can be equally ineffective. The most difficult type of advocating is related to how we feel and especially immediate feelings about what is occurring now. Advocating alone may be taken as criticism without illustration. “*Illustrating* involves telling a bit of a concrete story that puts meat on the bones of the advocacy and thereby orients and motivates others more clearly” (Torbert, 2004, p. 29). *Inquiring* involves questioning others, in order to learn something from them. In principle it is the simplest thing in the world, but actually it is one of the most difficult things in the world to do effectively. The reasons for this is that we often inquire rhetorically, or we suggest by our tone that we do not really want a *true* answer (Torbert, 2004).

There is never one absolute implication or interpretation of an action and because of this the number of implied meanings are by nature infinite. Therefore it is so important to be explicit about all the types of speech and to combine them carefully to ensure a common understanding. The four parts of speech are all based on the central value of mutuality. We will not succeed in framing, advocating, illustrating and inquiring regularly and effectively until we strongly and sincerely want to be aware of ourselves. Not only must we really wish to know the truth about how others are experiencing the situation, but we need to act in a way that also convinces the other person that we wish to be questioned and even proven wrong (Torbert, 2004).

2.4 Conflict

Recognition of difference does not in itself create a basis for tension and conflict. A conflict requires an emotional commitment as a result of feeling that your own needs or interests are endangered. We all have experienced conflict, and have developed patterns we use to manage them. Patterns can be destructive if they remain unconscious and unreflective reactions. Conflicts can either lead to development or stagnation. To become familiar with your own patterns is the starting point for change. To become familiar with your own patterns, needs an attention against itself and feedback from others (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

“In a *conflict positive group* conflicts are encouraged and managed constructively to maximize their potential in enhancing the quality of decision making and problem solving and group life in general. Group members create, encourage, and support the possibility of conflict” (Johnson & Johnson, 2000, p.378).

The potential for conflict exists because of differences, and the resulting perceived threat to the individual and the potential for conflict is proportional to the threat. However, difference alone does not necessarily lead to conflict. Before the group has developed a unique identity and authority held by members as a whole, the differences in needs and interests could create insecurity. Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) believe that to the extent the group manages to include members with their differences, these differences are perceived as important and necessary to solve the task. There is after all a difference between feeling threatened by diversity on the one hand, and to be able to appreciate it on the other hand (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

When a working group is established, the members must know what the purpose is and the structure of the group. Since a group is comprised of various individuals that bring different interests, perceptions and opinions into the group, there is a definite possibility for disagreements and conflicts between members. Cooperation is developed through handling the disputes and the inevitable conflicts, and not through avoiding them. Disagreements and conflicts are a natural consequence of the individual group member's needs and interests. Cooperation enables development between group members. It is the development of this "between" that allows the group to work more efficiently than the sum of the members' skills would suggest. This "between" is explored through dialogue (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

Each small group constellation and each member must have room to explore themselves and their own conflicts in meeting with others in the group. We believe that much of the basis for security and the feeling of being cared for will be established through guidance and preparation. The goal is a high individual capability to tolerate and deal with confusion and frustration, take care of different needs by seeing what happens at the individual level among various participants (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

3 Method

3.1 A qualitative research method

In research it is always the research question that decides what method is the most suitable to be able to find what you are studying (Karlsdóttir & Moen, 2011). In my studies about LIFO® I wanted to find out how this tool could help team members in their teamwork. For this research I had to choose between different methods to collect my data. I chose a qualitative method because this would provide me with a deeper look into each interviewees experience with using LIFO®.

There are several approaches to the qualitative method, and different researchers have different opinions on what is most effective. Karlsdóttir & Moen (2011) use five different approaches based on, phenomenological studies, case studies, ethnographic studies, narrative studies and grounded theory study. Regardless which approach is chosen qualitative studies are known for the way you study a small area and look at it thoroughly. Another characteristic with qualitative methods is the way the researcher gets a close relationship to the research field. A third characteristic is that the meaning of the research is to get the interviewees perspectives on the subject. The fourth characteristic about qualitative method is the interpretative part. This is about seeing what is behind and deeper than what the interviewee is telling (Karlsdóttir & Moen, 2011). All of these four characteristics matched what I wanted to find out. I studied a small area, the meaning of LIFO® based on effective teamwork in an organization. I really got to know a lot about this particular field. My three interviewees gave me an overall perspective on this subject. Finally, through analysis, I found something that lay beneath what was said in the interview. I wanted a deeper understanding of my interviewees' experience of how LIFO® could affect teamwork and therefore I chose to use a phenomenological approach (Moen & Karlsdottir, 2011; Postholm, 2010).

Qualitative research involves exploring the human processes in a real setting. In qualitative research the researcher must be open to what the interviewees do and say, and further highlight their perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Postholm, 2010). In qualitative studies the researcher strives to understand the complexity of the field that he or she is studying (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Both the uniqueness of each research site and its context is important to capture in order to understand. I, as the researcher had to take an interpretive role throughout the research process (Postholm, 2010), which I did by carefully choosing the right

questions, and rehearsing the interview, so that I was well prepared for this information and data collection.

This approach to research is naturally colored by the researcher's theoretical standpoint. Theory at various levels provides direction for research, while the researcher's own experiences influence the research focus (Postholm, 2010). I definitely had a very positive experience with LIFO®, and it was important that I was aware of it. However when I saw how positive the interviewees were about it as well, it was not that important that I did not express my opinion about it, and we had a good and open conversation where they also told me what they felt was negative about using LIFO®.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Range of interviewees

The best choice of interviewees requires that the researcher has both theoretical grounds and cultural competence to assess the interviewees that are wanted. Since my cultural competence with knowledge of the practice field was a bit incomplete, I used a good theoretical basis to compensate for it (Fuglseth & Skogen, 2006). I got my data from interviewing three Human Resource leaders, who have used LIFO® in the company they are working for. The company I chose for my interview has been using LIFO® for 9 years, which I interpret as meaning that they find it helpful and effective for their employees. I got in touch with this company through a consulting firm for LIFO® and their webpage. The company is a big transportation company in the business community, however this research may just as well apply to other companies and organizations in the business community.

3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews are divided into structured interview, semi-structured and unstructured interview (Postholm, 2010). Different types of interviews, from structured to unstructured, are important research tools that researchers can use to gain an understanding of the practice field as a whole (Postholm, 2010). I used semi-structured interviews, with an open interview guide because then I had the opportunity to ask questions based on what the interviewee talked about (Karlsdóttir & Moen, 2011; Postholm, 2010). This way my interviewees could talk a little more freely about what they felt was important to say about LIFO® and teamwork. For

my research semi structured interview was the best suited since I wanted *their* opinion on a subject, and with semi-structured interview I gave them an opportunity to steer the interview in a different direction.

The research's aims and purposes determine the strategies that can be used to obtain sufficient information to achieve understanding. The purpose of the questions and the knowledge that I was seeking determined how I formed my questions and further what interview category they could be placed in. My semi-structured interview provided me with detailed information on the research field, but together with other interview methods it provided information and understanding within the research field (Postholm, 2010). In my interview I used *basic listening skills* (Ivey, Ivey, & D'Andrea, 2012) in interviewing and listening, to get a good flow in the conversation, and to get a deeper understanding. As the researcher I signaled to the participant that what they said was important, and by being able to respond to my questions, they got the opportunity to better reflect upon themselves and their practice (Postholm, 2010).

In phenomenological studies, the researcher can only relate to the interviewees opinions, perceptions and beliefs. I had no opportunity to check whether what was said corresponds with what actually happened in the local context where the phenomenon was experienced. It was the interviewees' subjective experience that was in focus, and those perceptions could not be regarded as untrue or incorrect, even if other people had other experiences in connection with the same phenomenon. Interview as a data collection strategy is an adequate way to collect data in order to capture people's subjective experiences of a phenomenon (Postholm, 2010). The relationship between the interviewee and the researcher is therefore very important. My relationship with them was comfortable enough that I believe they were honest with me, and here as well, anonymity is important, because they knew what they said could not be traced back to them. To build an environment where they felt comfortable, and get the feeling of a conversation instead of an interview, I talked to my interviewees for about 15 minutes about their work in the company and how they had used LIFO®, before I started the interview.

3.2.3 Developing the interview guide

To find the right questions to ask, I used theory about LIFO® and communication within groups to find relevant questions that would help me get answers I could work with. I also did

a pilot interview on an acquaintance, so I could get some ideas to my questions for the real interviews with the transportation company. When I did that, I got the feedback I needed so that I could improve my interview guide and questions (Thagaard, 2009). I also gave my interview guide to my interviewees so that they could look at it beforehand and maybe get an idea of what we were going to talk about and to see all the questions. That would also help them know approximately how much time we should spend on each question.

I recorded all of my interviews. This way I didn't have to be occupied with writing down all the answers, and risk missing important information because I was taking notes. This also allowed me to be more "in contact" with the interviewee and I could focus on formulating follow-up questions. Also since I transcribed the interviews, later I could go back and look at the interviews at any time while I was writing my thesis. Another advantage with transcribing the interview is that when you can listen to it several times you might discover things you did not see the first time (Postholm, 2010).

3.3 Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis is a dynamic process and is repeated. It means that when all my material was collected the analysis was not close to finished. Data analysis comes more into focus after the material has been collected, however it is ongoing throughout the data collection process. Therefore I did not have a clear starting point for analysis, and the same applies to the end. It also means that I could not set aside a specific time period when analysis should be conducted within the course of research. Nevertheless, there is a difference between analysis that take place during the research work and the analysis of the collected material. One can distinguish between descriptive and theoretical analyzes. Descriptive analyzes include the analysis processes that structure the data. Such analysis makes the data transparent, understandable and report friendly. Theoretical analysis implies that the researcher uses noun theory to analyze the data. This could be a description of a limited activity or a dialogue related to a particular action sequence (Postholm, 2010).

3.3.1 Subjectivity

The analysis will be colored by the experiences and the subjective, individual theories the researcher brings into the analysis process. This means that my own perspectives on the

subject characterize my analysis. However, the intention of qualitative analysis is that the researcher will meet the data with an open mind, and therefore I put aside my perspectives (Postholm, 2010). I went into this research expecting that my interviewees would say that they were satisfied with LIFO®. That's why I included a question about challenges with LIFO®. So that they would have an opportunity to talk about that, however, all of them seemed so comfortable with the setting that they spoke their mind about negative sides with LIFO® even before I had asked the question.

To put aside subjective and individual theories is in practice impossible. However, this approach helped me to become aware of my own prejudices, views and assumptions regarding the phenomenon that is being researched so that I could meet it with as open a mind as possible (Postholm, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When I analyzed my data after the interviews I tried looking at it with different eyes, to try to get a different perspective than I came in with and therefore I read through it several times from different angles.

When it comes to my analysis I have used and been inspired by three methods of analyzing mentioned below, the constant comparative, the descriptive analysis and the theoretical analysis. I have used a mix of these to look at my data because all of them had different and relevant points for my thesis. After I had transcribed the data I used the constant comparative and descriptive analysis, where I coded each phrase and section and color-coded it. Out of this I got different categories. From this I started theoretically analyzing these categories against theory on the subject.

3.3.2 “The constant comparative method of analysis”

Grounded theory represents a methodical approach, while in this approach an analysis method has been developed, which is called "the constant comparative method of analysis". Analytical work in grounded theory is divided into three coding phases. These are "*open coding*, *axial coding* and *selective coding*" (Postholm, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Open coding is the part of the analysis where the researcher sets the name and categorizes phenomenon through intense and thorough reviews of the data. In this coding process, I divided the data into sections and gave these sections a name and a color (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strategies used in this process are to ask questions and make comparisons between

different sections of the data (Postholm, 2010). To get the data manageable and reduce the number of sections I had to work with, I had to group several sections together, and categorize different sections that seem to cover the same phenomena. I ended up with these five categories: *better understanding, LIFO® and effectiveness, the potential LIFO® brings to the table, the relationship between colleagues,* and *communication* as a superior category. The relationships between different phenomena were the focus of the next step in my analysis process, axial coding (Postholm, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In the *axial coding* process categories are related to their subcategories so that explanations of the phenomenon becomes more accurate and complete. This part of the process required that I had some categories, and already during the open coding process, I began to form an opinion of how the categories related to each other (Postholm, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In my analysis I ended up with finding that *communication* was the main category that linked them all together. I also ended up with this same category in the next step of the process, because in my analysis these two phases of the analysis overlapped. This analysis method is not meant to be a step-by-step procedure (Postholm, 2010)

In *selective coding* the researcher is trying to find the core category and systematically relate it to the other categories. The core category, in my case *communication*, represents the main topic of research. This central category connected all the other categories so that they formed a whole, and made everything fit together. In this last phase of analysis I tried to develop concepts to help understand the studied phenomenon. Finally, I wrote a comprehensive text that represented the field of research based on the core category and main categories, and brought the different categories together (Postholm, 2010; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.3.3 Descriptive Analysis

In a phenomenological analysis, the researcher is trying to determine the meaning, structure and essence of the experienced phenomenon. Postholm (2010) refers to Moustakas (1994) who modified the approach of the constant comparative analysis method, which he called the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, often used in phenomenological studies. Both these ways of analyzing the data are about categorizing and reducing the data to groups that makes them manageable. The purpose of phenomenological studies is to find the essence or the central underlying meanings of an experience. My research was about their experience of LIFO® in

teamwork, and every thought is just theirs and completely different from the other interviewees, even though LIFO® is the same tool for all of them. That way one can also say that a description of the experience of a phenomenon gets a general character. This description came forward through my data reduction, which involved collecting data in chunks, and then analyzing the various statements and themes, and that way search for the underlying meaning. In this work I had to try to put aside my individual, subjective theories in order to capture the essence of the data without being colored by too many of my own perspectives, while I tried to process the data in the "pure" form. Using both the constant comparative analysis method (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998) and Moustakas (1994) method of analysis of phenomenological data, I tried to treat the data in the most inductive way. However, with both approaches, my pre-understanding was always a part of the analysis, so there was some interaction between induction and deduction (Postholm, 2010).

3.3.4 Theoretical Analysis

Analysis begins as soon as the researcher enters the field of research and continues throughout the research process. The theories I studied, together with my experiences, worked as goggles when I collected and analyzed data. The quotation nautical circle forms the core of a process that creates understanding and opinion (Gudmundsdottir, 1997). All data that I converted to written material can be viewed as a text. The understanding of a text is created in the process, where the meaning of the different parts is influenced by the overall understanding of the text, as it is perceived. When I looked closer at the various components it influenced my opinion of the whole, and this in turn exerts influence on my understanding of the various parts. This creates the spiral in the interaction between text as a whole and the different data sections or categories (Postholm, 2010).

3.3.5 Analysis presentation

Organizing my categories was difficult because there was a lot of material that could belong to two or three different categories. As mentioned earlier, I found that one of my categories was a superior category that was an important part in all of my categories, and was influential on different levels. In the rest of my categories it was challenging to put them in order because it was more like “the chicken or the egg”-paradox, because I felt that that there was a correlation between all of them, and all had a certain influence on each other, so it was hard to decide what came first and what came last. I ended up with an order that I felt was natural.

The same goes for my discussion chapter, where I had the same dilemma, but also there I stuck to my gut feeling.

3.4 Ethical Considerations and issues

Adequate research and ethical principles should go hand in hand in the research process. This research process begins in the preparatory phase before the actual data collection, and continues even after the data collection period is over, until the research report is available as a finished text. This meant that I had to take ethical considerations into account when I was asking for interviewees, during my interviews and after the conversations with my interviewees (Postholm, 2010). Postholm (2010) mentions that according to Erickson (1986), there are two ethical considerations that must be taken into account. The interviewees need as much information as possible about the purpose of research. This means that the researcher must have a clear understanding of the research focus and how the material should be collected. The interviewees should also have knowledge about the burdens and the extra workload the project will mean to them (Postholm, 2010).

I made sure that my interviewees knew what they were saying yes to when participating in my research by sending them my thesis proposal and information about the interview in advance. Their agreement to participate in my research project is called "informed consent". Postholm (2010) refers to Hammerley and Atkinson (1996) who extended this term to "free, informed consent". My "free, informed consent" stated that they had the opportunity to withdraw at any time, and that both they and the company would be kept anonymous. I sent this to them a few weeks before my interviews, and I also brought it with me to the interviews so both they and I could sign it. Before the interview I also made sure that NSD (Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste) had approved my thesis proposal, stating that all of the interviewees would be kept anonymous. After the interview I changed the name of the interviewees, and the name of the company if that was mentioned during the interview. The recordings from the interviews will be destroyed after my thesis is turned in when they have served their scientific purpose, so that my informants' identities will be kept anonymous. Since I used a semi-structured interview I also informed them that the research could change based on new knowledge and the insight I gained from the interviews (Postholm, 2010).

When the final thesis is printed, the researcher must be sure that he or she has not put words into the mouth of the interviewee, and that the interviewees are properly quoted, called “member checking” (Postholm, 2010). After I am done with the thesis I will share my findings with my research interviewees to get feedback before the text is published, to make sure that they feel my presentation of what they said during the interviews is correct.

Ethical principles cannot be seen as absolute rules to be followed, but they can be a support for different choices that the researcher must take during the research process. They should permeate the researcher's observations and actions, but researchers are still going to have to resolve ethical dilemmas in relation to the situation he or she is in. The ethical guidelines are in that way context-dependent. The researcher must be sensitive in their relationship to the setting and interviewees in this context (Postholm, 2010).

3.5 Validity and reliability

3.5.1 Reliability

In qualitative research the traditional requirements of reliability and validity are problematic, since a meeting with the researcher and the interviewee is always a unique timed situation. The common criterion of reliability is that the results can be reproduced and repeated, but this is not in accordance with the logic of qualitative interviewing (Steinar Kvale, Brinkmann, Anderssen, & Rygge, 2009). It would be impossible for me to repeat the interviews in the same way because the interviewee would not repeat what was said the first time. Partly because the interviewee could not have remembered exactly what was said, and partly because of the increased insight the interviewee got in the first interview. However, on a more general level it might be replicable. In phenomenology this requirement is irrelevant because each study sheds light on unique cases, as a defined time and place bound phenomenon (Postholm, 2010; Østerud, 1998).

Instead of using the term reliability, phenomenological researchers have tended to replace the concept of *reliability* with a more appropriate term - *dependability*. The underlying question is whether the survey is conducted consistently and in the same way over time and across researchers and methods. Postholm (2010) refers to Silverman (1993) who use the word *authenticity* in qualitative research. My goal was to get an authentic understanding from my interviewees experience with LIFO®. Even though one cannot talk about reliability in

qualitative studies, this study still shows how LIFO® *can* work, when you use it properly. In that way this can be relevant for other companies as well.

3.5.2 Validity

Validity is whether the method examines what it is intending to investigate. Validity criterion is whether the interpretation of the statement is reasonably documented and logically consistent. When I interpreted a statement in the context of theory, the validity of my interpretation depended on whether the theory was valid for the study area and if my interpretations followed a logical theory (S. Kvale, 1987; Postholm, 2010).

In phenomenological research the question is not what level of compliance is between text and reality. Instead the question is whether a group of experienced scientists will accept the results as credible or not. High validity or credibility depends on whether the reader can follow what the researcher has done throughout the entire research process. That way the reader can see which guidelines the researcher has used in every phase. I tried to develop a reflexive and critical awareness of my role in relation to the research field and my interviewees to get a good phenomenological analysis (Postholm, 2010; Østerud, 1998).

In the interview analysis the validity is a matter of how well the classification represents the categories in the human experience. My choice of interviewees was therefore of great importance. Gradual development of my interview guide was important for achieving good quality. Validity is how well you measure what you want to examine, and this is a key to achieving meaningful results (Hojjer, 1990; Postholm, 2010).

4 Analysis

In this analysis chapter I will present what I found during data collection in my studies, which were done on the basis of the analysis process described in the methodology chapter. My goal is for others to gain an insight and hopefully an understanding of what I have found, which will be the basis for the discussion chapter.

The purpose of this study started with an expectation of finding out how the use of LIFO® could affect an organization and their teamwork. During my interviews, I soon realized that a large part of it was dependent on communication, and what effective communication could result in. My categories are; *better understanding, LIFO® and effectiveness, the potential LIFO® brings to the table, the relationship between colleagues, and communication* as a superior category. The categories will be presented with quotations from my interviewees during my conversations with them. I will also follow this up with my opinion and my interpretation of the quotation and the belonging category, and a description of the category.

The interviews were done during the first quarter of 2012, where I met my interviewees at their office, which I thought was best for them to make the situation as comfortable as possible. Two of my interviewees preferred to do the interview in Norwegian, so I have translated their quotes as well as possible. Hence I might have used other words than the direct translation to capture the meaning of the quote, thinking that it is better to capture the meaning rather than the direct translation of the word.

4.1 The company and my interviewees

I am going to call the company Transport to keep it anonymous. This is a big world wide transportation company in the business community, which is why I thought this company would be interesting to use in my project. The company's corporate values are seen as the reason for their success. These are empowerment, learning and innovation, teaming and collaboration, customer centered and stewardship. It also has a long tradition of being concerned with good working conditions, the natural environment, and social responsibility. Developing employees takes a high priority in the organization. An in-house educational institute was established several years ago and provides a full range of courses and development programs for employees worldwide. Where amongst others, LIFO® is one of

their development tools, which they have been using for 9 years and therefor assumingly well implemented.

To keep my interviewees anonymous I have changed their names to pseudonyms. Caroline is head of their Human Resources Global Office, Jenny is head of their Human Resource Europe Office and Alexandra is head of the academy section of the company. They all have a lot of experiences with using LIFO®.

4.2 Communication as a foundation

After reading the transcriptions and starting to look deeper into them, I noticed that everything my interviewees highlighted was based on good communication, whether they said it directly, or indirectly. It seems to me that all of my three interviewees think communication is a very important part of their teamwork and also the factors that contribute to teamwork. This however comes as no surprise since communication is the foundation of how LIFO® works.

When I asked Alexandra what she perceived as effective teamwork she answered that there had to be room for honesty, there should not be much confusion because of the close dialogue with one another, an agreement on what should be achieved, and also have some ground rules for how to interact with each other both when things are going well, but perhaps most importantly that we have rules for how to interact with each other when things are not going well. She concluded with this;

It seems that here at work the teams that works very well is a team where you trust each other and assume that others in the group, wants what is best for you, then you have much greater tolerance for differences and that misunderstandings can happen. But if you do not have this, and assume that everyone else will only maximize self-interest, than we have a pretty bad team. It is all VERY dependent on communication. - Alexandra

Talking to Caroline about whether her view of teamwork and communication had changed after they started using LIFO®, she emphasized better understanding regarding communication;

I would not say that I have changed my vision, but it has made things become clearer and clearer. And I have a better understanding of things. Because it gives you a very good understanding of how different everyone is. And even if you work in a team where everyone is very result oriented, they can be result oriented in very different ways. (...) So absolutely, it has given me an eye-opener regarding communication and stuff. – Caroline

Even though she says, “I would not say I have changed my vision” she still claims that something has changed for the better, which is in line with what the other interviewees are claiming.

Jenny was talking about how important it is to remember that the profile you end up with is not a label of who you are as a person, but a view of your preferred communication style, and further what you can do with your communication style when you learn about your profile.

As a personal reflection I think it is important to take it at a higher level. Because the point of LIFO® is how to be more effective. (...) What can you actually do to be more effective in your communication with others. – Jenny

It seems that all that is positive with LIFO®, and that is highlighted by my interviewees exists because the communication between colleagues has improved since they started using LIFO®. All of the categories; *better understanding, LIFO® and effectiveness, the potential LIFO® brings to the table, and the relationship* - all are dependent on *communication*. Based on how much, and what my interviewees talked about concerning communication I also made a subcategory; *the lack of communication*. This category indicates even more how vital communication is for what my interviewees highlight in the rest of the categories.

4.2.1 Lack of communication

When I asked what hinders effective teamwork it was also clear that all of them had points that had to do with communication. Alexandra talked about the connection between poor communication, conflicts and the relationship between the team members.

I think most of what prevents it is poor communication and that you do not resolve the existing problem and just let it be, and then it grows larger, and then you do not remember why there

is a conflict going on, and no matter what happens, we only have a bad and negative view, and everyone is just stupid, except one self of course. – Alexandra

She continued by explaining that what they usually see, when they go in to teams that do not work together, is that the communication has completely broken down. And that takes a lot of time to rebuild.

Jenny emphasized the problem of not talking to each other about goals and the meaning of being in a group or a team.

I mean first and foremost I think what hinders effective teamwork is if people in a team don't understand what their targets are, if they don't understand the purpose of why they are a team and what their trying to achieve. – Jenny

Further Jenny said that lack of communication, lack of understanding, and lack of respect for each other's roles, is contributing to what she feels hinders effective teamwork.

Caroline was the one who seemed most engaged about how important structure was in the process of being effective or not. *"Yes, it could often be misunderstandings, or that you simply have not discussed or agreed on who should do what."* – Caroline

She continued saying that new problem areas around new challenges might appear, which they then might not have a procedure for. So then it is important that the framework and structure is in place, and that it is effective.

4.3 Better understanding

All of my interviewees highlighted that they had gained better understanding both of others and of themselves after using LIFO® or taking the LIFO® survey. The need for better understanding, of both oneself and others, was something that came up on multiple occasions.

Caroline said that it was easier to know what she might expect from the persons she was working with.

But you become very aware of it when taking a LIFO® survey, and getting these profiles. So I think it really helps understanding. And I understand why things are as they are and you know what it takes to trigger the individual. So I see that it has an impact, and gaining better insight. – Caroline

Alexandra talked about disagreements and that it happens from time to time no matter what. Everyone has their own way of presenting matters, which might not be perceived the way it is intended. LIFO® comes in handy to avoid this kind of unnecessary disagreement where you really just are perceived the wrong way. *"Yes what LIFO® has done which I think is nice is that you get a much greater understanding of others' perspectives and where they are coming from, and what others need to hear."* –Alexandra

I asked Jenny whether she felt the implementation of the LIFO® training had affected the company. She immediately became very positive and said that the understanding for others, and that others are not good or bad, they just have a different approach to things, which has helped her.

I think in a very positive way. It is easier for people to open up and explain why they are the way they are, and why they do what they do. And also for people to understand that there are reasons for why people are as they are. – Jenny

Jenny also said that effective teamwork to her is using the diversity for what it is worth; *"So good teamwork for me is diversity, and at the same time working towards achieving the same goal."* - Jenny. The link between this quote and this category may seem a bit weak, but the reason is the relevance of it for my discussion, and I will get back to this in the discussion chapter. To be able to use diversity positively it is dependent on better understanding of one another.

It seemed to me that better understanding was something they had all experienced first hand, and this was an important factor in the effect of LIFO® contributing to better teamwork.

4.4 LIFO® and Effectiveness

My three interviewees had different perspectives of how LIFO® could contribute to get things done effectively. Caroline talked about her relationship with her Human Resource colleagues that she often worked closely with and said;

You understand more of the reactions and how one should approach the person, you realize why they react as they do, so that way I think it promotes effectiveness because you do not have to take detours and you do not have to make unnecessary mistakes because you know that "okay here you have a SG profile, or a CT profile" so you can adjust a bit accordingly. - Caroline

When I asked Jenny if she had had any personal experiences where LIFO® contributed to effective teamwork, she explained how she had used LIFO® a lot in her previous teamwork, using it both to acknowledging strength and weaknesses in the group, and also much like Caroline pointed out, that it becomes easier to talk to colleagues when you can put a name on the problem.

Yes, I mean obviously. (...) And in a way, acknowledging the strength within the team, but also seeing where we were lacking. (...) But that's good to know and then you can actively work on that, and then you see that actually interaction does improve. – Jenny

Jenny made another interesting comment about effectiveness based on an exercise she had witnessed, where everyone was meant to role play their opposite style, or the least preferred, and how it then just turned into a big mess. This showed that your own style is the best for you, and that using other styles has to be anchored in your preferred styles. *"It is really good for people to realize and to see that you are probably most effective with the way you prefer."* – Jenny

Alexandra had another angle where she felt LIFO® contributed to effectiveness. She said that they at the most only spent *one* day with the teams practicing LIFO®, and therefor she felt that this was a good tool because it is easy to understand without spending a lot of time on it.

We use MAXIMUM one day on it and that's it, including their results and that's how it is working in a commercial enterprise, you never get the time. And you have people who are so

operational, and if you do not manage to keep their attention they instantly start looking at their cell phone. So, you never go in depth. – Alexandra

Jenny also pointed out the limited amount of time that was necessary to spend on LIFO® to get everyone to understand, and that because of the terminology and the role play that can demonstrate the different styles, employees did not have to spend a lot of time with it before they understood the main points.

All of these different perspectives of how LIFO® can be effective show that it also is effective on different levels. Both when it comes to communication, the fact that you can learn something about your team fast enough to be able to do something about it, and that it does not take a lot of time to get to know the method to understand what it is all about.

4.5 The potential LIFO® brings to the table

Jenny talked about how the implementation of LIFO® could have a positive affect on a sensitive subject, and how she felt that understanding exists in the company;

And at the same time keeping it a little light and fun, because this can be very heavy concepts, but if you put it in a little lighter wrapping it can be easier for people to work with it. So yes, in that way I think it has had a big effect. It creates certain cultures, more openness. - Jenny

Alexandra explained how you learn to focus on yourself and your challenges instead of everyone else's, which is much more difficult to change. She explains that if she discusses something with a colleague who is very thorough and does things properly she adjust to that person and his or her style preferences.

I think you become more effective in your own work, and also less concerned about what everyone else has to change, but more how you can adapt to get things done. And what you want to achieve. And that is good. – Alexandra

She later explained that she felt LIFO® puts the power to change in your own hands, by giving you the insight of your own profile. If you want to be better at details you just have to use a little more effort to get that done, and that you have the power to do what you want with your own styles. Talking about this she also said that they are trying to avoid stigmatizing.

Because when you work with leadership development, there are a lot of people that believe that you can only be a leader if you score high on “controlling taking”, and get things done quickly. So we are trying to show people that everyone can do everything, and that you can control your own behavior, and that it is only up to you to change what you want to change. I will get back to this last section in my conclusion.

I asked Caroline how implementation of LIFO® had affected the company, where she responded that it created solidarity amongst the employees.

I think it creates more solidarity, and I think it is something they have in common in line with our values. (...) And I see it on the courses we run, that it creates more solidarity, and it is fun and positive, and they find it interesting. So I think it has a positive impact. - Caroline

When I followed up this question by asking if she saw any use in including LIFO® in an even bigger group of employees if that was possible, she was very positive and interested, especially foremost for everyone to get the opportunity to get to know more about their own profile and preferences.

Based on these three perspectives LIFO® is beneficial in multiple ways. From easing up a difficult discussion, being able to see the potential in adapting yourself to others, and creating a good environment in the company.

4.6 The relationship between colleagues

Alexandra talked about how LIFO® has helped her to get a better understanding of others, and that she knows more about what they prefer. *"I adapt more, and I think I'm much more forgiving of other people because I think" they don't mean it badly, it's just their way of communicating "so I use it not to judge others." – Alexandra.*

Jenny and I talked about whether the relationship with colleagues had reached a new level after using LIFO®. She explained how it helps to know where your colleagues are coming from when you are having a discussion. *"Yes definitely, also for my own, knowing what my preferred styles is and sharing it with others and that makes the discussion easier and it really improves your relationship." - Jenny*

I asked Caroline if she felt her relationship with her colleagues had changed after they started using LIFO®. She started explaining that she could not say that it had changed that much, however she felt that something had changed, and that she knew more about them, which helps understanding.

It goes back to understanding. That you see them maybe in a different way so you will be more focused on it, or more aware of it. (...) And that you may know better where you have them. And that of course makes it a little safer in the environment. But I do not know if I can say that it has become better or worse, it certainly has not become worse! It has not. So it's more like status quo, but you know them, and may know a little more about them. – Caroline

Even though she says that it has not changed, part of what she is saying shows that something has at least changed, but maybe not so much for her as the others, who claims that LIFO® has improved both understanding and the relationship between colleagues.

4.7 Summary

According to my interviewees trusting your team members and knowing that everyone in the group wants what is best for each and everyone, is dependent on open and honest communication between the team members of the group. Better communication will also give you a better understanding of how different everyone is, and through communication you can be more effective by adjusting your communication style to theirs. It is harder to talk to group members about difficult subjects, without having honest and open communication with them, which might grow into a bigger problem if you do not get the opportunity to talk about it. Lack of communication can also enhance the risk of misunderstandings related to different roles and goals in the group.

Through good communication you might also gain better understanding of your colleagues, so you know where you have them, what triggers them, and what they want to hear. It is also easier for people to open up, and explain that they just have a different approach to things, and why they behave like they do. This again creates effectiveness because you do not need to take detours when you know how to approach your different colleagues. Knowing that you are most effective when you use your preferred style and acknowledging the groups and your

own strengths and weaknesses, can help you understand what is needed in the team to be effective, and that it is easier to change something about yourself than others. It was also explained that LIFO® was effective because it is easy to comprehend, and does not require the employees to do a lot of reading.

The implementation of LIFO® made it easier to discuss difficult themes because you had something to put your finger on and it counteracts the problem of getting irritated by other's behavior because you know that its just your different ways of communicating. LIFO® improves your relationship with colleagues when you are able to have easier discussions with them and have something in common to talk about, which again makes the environment a little safer and creates more solidarity between the employees.

5 Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss my research question - *What benefits can the on-going use of LIFO® in an organization produce for teamwork* against the current main theme and results based on the analysis from the previous chapter. The grounds for this discussion are theoretical perspectives presented in chapter 2, interviewees' statements and my own reflections.

I choose to begin by discussing why *communication is essential* because this is a key factor that is important for the remaining factors. I will bring these perspectives forward in the discussions and use them to highlight the connection to the other topics to be discussed. Further I will discuss their *improved awareness*, and *time-effective* and *development* as a subheading. Afterwards I will discuss how LIFO® made *difference* matter in a positive way. Finally I will discuss the process of creating a *solid relationship*, with two subheadings, *structure* and *belonging*. In all of these discussions communication will play an important role.

Before I start I want to specify something; according to Johnson & Johnson (2000) you have to be a group before you can be a team. In many cases the concepts small group and team are used interchangeably in the group dynamics literature, even within the same research study. But not all groups are teams. Teams are just one type of small group. A team is not just a number of people working together. Committees, task forces, departments, and councils are groups, but they are not necessarily teams. Groups do not become teams simply because that is what someone calls them (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). However, I will use the definition *team* in this chapter. Based on my interviews my interviewees was mostly talking about teams, and even though they sometimes used the word group, I think this was unintentional. At the beginning of all my interviews I asked them what they defined as effective teamwork, where they used a lot of the same concepts as Johnson & Johnson (2000) use in their definition of a team, so on that premises I will stick to using *team*.

5.1 Communication is essential

Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) say that how an organizational system works, depends essentially on how the system allows for communication, and in the ability the people in the system has

to communicate with each other. An organization is people, based on interaction, put in a system to take care of common interests and common goals. Therefore it is logical that the personal dimension basically has to take precedence in any system (Kvalsund & Meyer (2005).

The importance of communication immediately stood out when I started reading my transcriptions, sometimes directly, and sometimes indirectly. By directly I mean what Johnson & Johnson (2005) say about how communication is the basis for all human interaction and all group functioning. The groups existence depends on communication, on exchanging information and transmitting meaning (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Like Alexandra said at the end of an answer where she had talked about what she thought was effective teamwork “*It is all VERY dependent on communication*”. Alexandra was really aware of the fact of how big an impact communication can have on a team, and that a lot can change whether it is positive or negative. Communication is definitely not something you can ignore if it is not effective because that can end up in negative outcomes for the team. If the basic communication is not present, there is less chance that the group will be effective. Information is easier to both give and receive when you know more about both your own communication style, and the person you were talking to. Knowing this it will be easier to know how to communicate so that both parts will understand it in the same way. Alexandra continued by explaining that what they usually see, when they go in to teams that do not work together, is that the communication has completely broken down. Like Torbert (2004) says, we will not succeed in framing, advocating, illustrating and inquiring regularly and effectively until we strongly and sincerely want to be aware of ourselves in action in the present.

The importance of communication was sometimes more indirect. By indirectly I mean the way communication is an important part of gaining better understanding of your colleagues through effective communication. This is supported by Johnson & Johnson (2000) who says that cooperative action is dependent on effective communication. Every day we experience communication in different ways, and through communication group members reach some understanding of one another, build relationships, plan strategies for goal accomplishments, and even exchange insults. What Johnson & Johnson (2005) are saying here is dependent on “good” communication between the team members, and without it, it will affect the relationship between them in a negative way. In my analysis chapter I referred to quotes that talked about many of these issues that Johnson & Johnson assert, and all of my interviewees

talked about several of these issues during the interview, which I will get deeper into in the rest of this chapter.

5.2 Improved awareness

A truly dedicated and cooperative group is probably one of the most productive tools that we have. The lack of these kinds of groups may be related to absence of knowledge or confusion about the basic elements needed to develop such groups. The basic elements in the development of groups is positive interdependence, creative interaction face to face, accountability for individual and group, use of appropriate social skills and group processes (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). One way of becoming aware of your communication style is Johnson & Johnson's (2000) theory about group members' awareness of their own skills. Members might have the basic listening skills but are not aware that they are not using them, and an analysis of the communication behavior in the group can then be a great help. As Caroline said; *"But you become very aware of it when taking a LIFO® survey, and getting these profiles. So I think it really helps understanding"*. In light of this and the data from my interview I would say LIFO® is the type of tool that can analyze the communication behavior for each member in the group. When you get an analysis of your communication behavior it is easier to become aware of what styles you are using, and what styles you are not using, and therefore gain better understanding, of both yourself and others. This brings me to Fromm's (1947) strength-weakness paradox that influenced the LIFO® method, and the irony that the use of each orientation used appropriately, results in positive or productive behaviors, but paradoxically when used to excess or inappropriately, it results in negative or unproductive behaviors (Fromm, 1947; Tibbles, 2000a). This is also about becoming aware of what skills you are using, and to do it effectively you have to know that using them too enthusiastically can produce as much harm as not using them at all.

Jenny also talked about how she felt LIFO® had affected her with regards to changes; *"As a personal reflection I think it is important to take it at a higher level (...) What can you actually do to be more effective in your communication with others"*. As I see it here it is important to get to know each other's LIFO® styles so that you can be able to adapt to the rest of the group. If the group only consists of "controlling taking" it might be alright for all of them to have a more advocating communication style, as Torbert (2004) said, where they just give each other messages and tasks without anyone asking questions or demanding

illustration, or if you are giving information to a person with high “controlling taking”, the most effective way of communicating to him or her might be to use a lot of advocating. As for a group of “adaptive dealing” inquiring and illustrating might be a very important issue to take into account, and a more advocating speech might even sound unpleasant to them. Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) illustrate how important it is to be aware and conscious in your own way to orient yourself, and the need to develop your own ability to switch between different perspectives (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Caroline had a suitable comment about switching between different perspectives;

You understand more of the reactions and how one should approach the person, you realize why they react as they do, so that way I think it promotes effectiveness because you do not have to take detours and you do not have to make unnecessary mistakes because you know (...) so you can adjust a bit after that. - Caroline.

By adjusting your way of communicating you avoid misunderstandings and then it is more effective. By identifying common themes of values, attitudes and beliefs that underpin these dimensions, individuals are helped to understand the source of personal strengths that can be leveraged for success (Katcher & Metzler, 2006).

5.2.1 Time-effective

Alexandra brought up something interesting when I asked her about whether she felt LIFO® contributed to effectiveness. She said that they at the most only spent *one* day with the teams practicing LIFO®, including everyone reading their own style-reports, and therefore she felt that this was a good tool because it is easy to understand without spending a lot of time on it. *"We use MAXIMUM one day on it and that's it, including their results and, that's how it is working in a commercial enterprise, you never get the time (...) So, you never go in depth"*. She further explained that the time they spend on it is enough for the participants to get some of those “a-ha-moments” that make you realize how something works. Jenny also pointed out the limited amount of time that was necessary to spend on LIFO® to get everyone to understand and become aware of their own and other team members’ styles. She explained that because of the easy terminology and the role-plays that can demonstrate the different styles, employees did not have to spend a lot of time with it before they understood the main points of LIFO® and that all of them can contribute with different styles. This actually

surprised me, because when we went through LIFO® in class we spent so much time processing both our own and the rest of the team members' LIFO® profile. I thought that since we spent this much time on it, others would have to do the same to get the same effect, even though I know that a lot of companies have a limited amount of time to spend on this types of processes.

5.2.2 Development

Development is possible when you live through something you would prefer to avoid. To live through this brings greater expertise to integrate and transcend the inevitable, and to create something valuable for the group. To make this possible, the attention and awareness of the values must be emphasized (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Communication patterns can be destructive if they remain unconscious and unreflective reactions, and conflicts can either lead to development or stagnation. To become familiar with your own patterns is the starting point for change. To become familiar with your own patterns, needs attention from yourself and feedback from others (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Alexandra talked about how LIFO® has helped her to get a better understanding of others, and that she knows more about what they prefer; *“And also less concerned about what everyone else has to change, but more how you can adapt to get things done”*. With all the different role-play exercises they use as practice in LIFO®, you get a great perspective both of your own style and how others perceive you, and also your team members' style and their perception of themselves. You both give and receive feedback about the result from the LIFO® test, so that everyone gets a better insight of what you can change about your way of communicating, so your group can develop instead of stagnating. As earlier mentioned, Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) claim that development can happen when you discuss something you would prefer to avoid. Jenny confirmed this by saying that LIFO® had helped people put their finger on the problem, and therefore might not be so afraid of going into a confrontation with someone. It is important for personal change and development that you understands and accept another person, and that you communicate that through your empathetic reflections and trust the other person to work with that in a positive way (Katcher, 1991)

5.3 Difference

An important part of becoming aware of your own and other team members LIFO® styles is accepting difference. Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) believe that when the group manages to include members for their differences, the differences will be perceived as important and necessary to solve a task. Instead of feeling threatened by differences, you must be able to appreciate it (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). I interpret this “differences” as diversity in a lot of ways, amongst others their LIFO® profiles. Jenny said something similar when she talked about effective teamwork, and I got the impression that she embraced a mix of different LIFO® styles; *“good teamwork for me is diversity, and at the same time working towards achieving the same goal”*. When you do have this diversity in a team it is likely that some of the members have different communication style. Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) explain that you understand something about why you are experiencing communication with others as both easy and difficult. The potential conflicts that we have discussed between the different orientations or styles, is expressed. It is a fact that some forms of communication work better together than others (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). LIFO® then comes in handy, as Alexandra said, because then you learn that the same sentence might be perceived in different ways than it was intended, and if the members are aware of this, and actively think about it when communication, you have come a long way towards effectiveness. As will be explained below, ignoring differences is negative because you might end up with a similar mindset in several of the team members, which might lead to stagnation. It might also create tension between the team members, because not accepting different LIFO® styles are also not accepting an important part of a person that you are supposed to work with.

When putting together a team it can be tempting to select people with similar LIFO® styles or employees where communication flows easily and effortlessly. Then however, you increase the risk of excess of *one* LIFO® style and a biased focus, which could lead to no progress. As mentioned earlier, recognition and awareness of how your own strengths and weaknesses works is the best starting point for putting together an effective group (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Jenny explains that it is important for them to try their best to have all the different styles presented in a team, so that you prevent the risk of stagnation because everyone thinks alike. *“And in a way acknowledging the strength within the team, but also see where we where lacking. (...) But that’s good to know and then you can actively work on that, and then you see that actually interaction does improve”*. Here she explains how the lack of one style

can be compensated for by giving everyone in the team a chance to use what they got of that missing style, or maybe give the person who is highest on that LIFO® profile the challenge to make sure that that style is also represented.

Like Johnson & Johnson (2000) say, it is tempting to make sure that everyone gets along by choosing the ones with the same profiles. However, first of all this does not mean that they will get along, because like Caroline said, you can be result oriented in different ways, which might as well end up in the same discussions. *“Because it gives you a very good understanding of how different everyone is. And even if you work in a team where everyone is very result oriented, they can be result oriented in very different ways”*. Secondly the risk of stagnation is higher because you do not get as many perspectives when there is a possibility that a lot of the group members also have a similar mindset if they have the same profile in LIFO®. Torbert (2004) claims that either extremely strong advocating or never advocating at all can be equally ineffective. This means that both a group full of “controlling taking” styles and a group of “adaptive dealing” styles might be in the risk area of being ineffective, assuming that everyone has the same mindset and only use one or two parts of speech.

5.4 Solid relationship

Tibbles (2000b) refers to Drucker (2007) who acknowledged the relationship between the workgroup and the individual. “Group relationships influence the task; the task in turn influences personal relationships within the group. At the same time the human being remains an individual. Group and individual must therefore be brought into harmony in the organization of work” (Drucker, 2007, in Tibbles, 2000b, p. 3). Johnson & Johnson (2005) claim that the relationship is important because communication is relational. Therefore, whatever interferes with the relationship among group members will also interfere with their communication (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). This goes both ways, but in my thesis the interesting part is how poor communication can negatively influence the relationship. When I asked Alexandra what hinders effective teamwork she mentioned the connection between poor communication and a weak relationship between the team members. *“Poor communication and that you do not resolve the existing problem and just let it be, and then it grows larger, and then you do not remember why there is a conflict going”*. According to her, LIFO® and the awareness of different ways to communicate has made her more tolerant towards her colleagues, and does not judge as quickly. What I think LIFO® also contributes

with is the room for being honest whether it is positive or negative things to talk about, because you become aware of how to talk to people without upsetting them, and you also become closer with your colleagues knowing more about them, which is a very important part in creating a good and solid relationship. Jenny confirmed this when I asked her if she had had any personal experiences where LIFO® contributed to effective teamwork. She explained how she had used LIFO® to acknowledging strength and weaknesses in the group, and also similar to what Caroline pointed out, that it becomes easier to talk to colleagues when you can put a name on the problem.

To be able to deal with what comes your way in teamwork, the relationship among the team members in the group needs to be established, and for that to happen you need a good communication flow, both in prosperity and adversity. Jenny simplified this when I asked her whether the relationship with colleagues had reached a new level after using LIFO®. She explained how it helps to know where your colleagues are coming from when you are having a discussion; *“Yes definitely, also for my self, knowing what my preferred styles is and sharing it with others and it makes the discussion easier and it really improves your relationship”*. It is hard to build a solid and good relationship if you do not “talk the same language”. I got the impression that Jenny felt the same when she said this. However using different LIFO® languages’ does not mean failure. You simply have to understand and accept the differences in your colleagues’ language preferences, and acknowledge that you prefer to communicate in different ways. I would say that Torbert’s (2004) inquiry part of speech here is an essential factor. To maintain or develop a safe relationship it is important to make sure that everyone is on the same page. This means making sure that people agree on decisions and tasks that are being solved, by asking them in an open and non rhetorical way how they feel about it. Torbert (2004) further says that the most difficult type of advocating for most people is related to how we feel. I can imagine that this would especially embrace the “controlling taking” style, and that advocating alone may be taken as criticism without illustration, which I can imagine would especially embrace the “adaptive dealing” style. This shows that we need to respect each other’s preferences and try to adjust or find a middle way, which is best for both the team and the individual.

5.4.1 Structure

Perhaps the most powerful influence on the relationships among members and on communication in a group is the members' orientation toward participation in the group and toward its goal. Cooperation helps a group's effectiveness. Whereas competition, either in goal achievement or member orientation, is highly destructive for the groups communication and relationships (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Alexandra pointed out this when she talked about effective teamwork. She said that if you have members that are only looking for maximizing their own self-interests, you have a pretty bad team. If you have a team where everyone wants to reach their own goal, and they believe that they will be judge individually based on who has reached the goal, you most likely will not get them to cooperate.

When a working group is established, the members must know what the purpose is and the structure of the group. Since a group is comprised of various individuals that bring different interests, perceptions and opinions into the group, there is a definite possibility for disagreements and conflicts between members. Cooperation is developed through handling the disputes and the inevitable conflicts, and not through avoiding them (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). When I asked Alexandra what she perceived as effective teamwork she answered that there had to be room for honesty, not be much confusion because of the close dialogue with one another, an agreement on what should be achieved, and also have some ground rules for how to interact with each other, both when things are going well, but perhaps most importantly that there was rules for how to interact with each other when things were not going well. These rules are for example an important part of the structure, that you have something to lean on when things do not go as planned. Jenny emphasized the problem about not talking to each other about goals and the meaning of being in a group or a team. *"First and foremost I think what hinders effective teamwork is if people in a team don't understand what their targets are, if they don't understand the purpose of why they are a team and what their trying to achieve"*. Caroline was the one who seemed most engaged about how important structure was in the process of being effective or not. *"Yes, it could often be misunderstandings, or that you simply don't have discussed or agreed on who should do what"*. She continued saying that new problem areas around new challenges might appear, which they then might not have a procedure for. So then it is important that the framework and structure is in place, both established and un-established structure, and that it is effective.

5.4.2 Belonging

Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) stated that to feel included and belonging in the community collaboration as a valuable employee, creates not only prosperity, but also a sense of belonging that provides motivation and scope for more productive group members. The importance of this type of common group loyalty as a strong contributor to the work environment's encouragement of personal qualities cannot be underestimated. This illustrates how important it is to be aware and conscious of your own way to communicate, and the need to develop the ability to switch between different perspectives (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). I asked Caroline how implementation of LIFO® had affected the company, where she responded that it created solidarity amongst the employees. When I followed up this question by asking if she saw any use in including LIFO® in an even bigger group of employees if that was possible, she was very positive and interested, especially foremost for everyone to get the opportunity to get to know more about their own profile and preferences. Jenny also saw the use in getting the opportunity for those often working in teams to take LIFO®, to enrich their knowledge about the impact of communication and their own preferred styles. She also talked about how a lot of the employees often talked in what she called "LIFO® terminology", which for someone will enhance the feeling of belonging to a community.

6 Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, how an organizational system works depends essentially on how the system allows for communication, and in the ability the people in the system have to communicate with each other. An organization is people, based on interactions, put in a system to take care of common interests and common goals. Therefore it is logical that the personal dimension basically has to take precedence in any system (Kvalsund & Meyer (2005). During this research, and based on my data, I have discovered that LIFO® has produced better communication on different levels, which is important because of the essential role communication plays in this system. Based on my research, Transport seems to have a lot of satisfied employees and Human Resource leaders that are satisfied with the use of LIFO® in teamwork.

To answer my research question *what benefits can the on-going use of LIFO® in an organization produce for teamwork* I would start with saying that LIFO® has affected their communication, which then again has affected their awareness, their effectiveness, the development of teams, the acceptance for difference, their relationships, the importance of structure, and the comfort in belonging to a system. Based on my previous discussion I am left with the belief that LIFO® is an effective method to use when it comes to teamwork. All of my interviewees have pointed out numerous ways that they felt LIFO® is helpful, both in different areas that they appreciate in the company, and because it is a tool that does not take much time to comprehend. As I said earlier, they stated it indirectly, by giving examples of something that had been better when implementing LIFO®, and based on that I think better communication is extremely important in this case.

What surprised me the most in my findings was how little time they spent on LIFO®, and still found it so helpful. My hypothesis was that they would not have the same experience as I had from my semester of studying LIFO®, because we worked on it for several weeks, and I would have guessed that what they experienced maybe was a small part of what I had experienced, since I predicted that they did not have as much time to work on it as we did in our class. So I thought this was a really interesting discovery, and really showed me that it is an effective tool in the way that it does not require a lot of time.

Based on the theories I have used and what they have claimed, I think it would be safe to say that if you implement LIFO® the way Transport have done, and all the advantages that follow with LIFO®, you would most likely experience a higher quality on the communication among team members, that would lead to success. Kvalsund & Meyer (2005) stated that the feeling of being included and belonging in the community collaboration as a valuable employee, creates not only success, but also a sense of belonging that provides motivation and room for more productive group members. Based on my data I got the feeling that LIFO® absolutely did something positive for the members' relationship and belonging.

6.1 Limitations

One of the limitations about my study is that all my interviewees seemed very positive regarding LIFO®. This has both an upside and a downside in my opinion. The upside is that I got three very enthusiastic interviewees who were more than willing to share their experience with using LIFO® and therefor I felt they were very open and honest during the interview, and not afraid to speak their mind. On the downside, if I had talked to someone that did not have this great experience with LIFO®, I would of course have been given different answers collecting my data, and maybe it would have given me new perspectives that could shed critical light on possible limitations of using LIFO®. However the person who put me in contact with my other interviewees told me that she emphasized finding those who had most experience with LIFO® in different areas, and not those who were most positive about it.

My subjectivity is another limitation I would like to take into account. Even though I felt that I was open to whatever they might answer, and I might find, usually you have some presumptions that might color your questions in the interview guide. If I had asked different questions I might have been given answers that would have changed the whole angle of the thesis and especially the analysis and discussion chapter. As an attempt to compensate for this I checked my questions both with a pilot interviewee and my supervisor, and we all felt that the questions were open and could have been answered in different ways, and asked about both positive and negative sides of LIFO®. However, my implicit enthusiasm for LIFO® could have come through in subtle ways to the interviewees, and as my supervisor said in his feedback on the first drawing I handed in on the conclusion; *“Mainly you need to make it sound more like research and less like cheerleading for LIFO® ;-)”*. So it cannot be denied that I as the researcher am very positive to this method.

The theory I chose to use is also something that I personally have chosen, and somebody else might have chosen a completely different theory. I tried to keep to theory that we used in class when we went through LIFO® ourselves, and used additional theory recommended by my supervisor and other classmates.

My practice as an interviewer and researcher is limited to my bachelor research and some experience from classes. This might have affected the interview and my analysis, so to cope with that, I practiced interviewing in a pilot interview and in addition read about how to do a successful interview. This made me less nervous and hopefully gave a more calming appearance for the interviewees so that they could relax more. I also gave my interview guide to them a few days before, because one of them requested it. I felt this actually helped me to stay focused on the questions, even though it was only one of them who had looked at it beforehand. I realized afterward that this could have lead them to answer differently, but since it was only one of them who had looked at it beforehand, and they all gave similar answers I do not think it had any important influence.

The number of interviewees can also be discussed, even though I felt that in my third interview I had been given similar answers from the other two interviewees, and if I had talked to another of the Human Resource leaders I think I would have been given similar answers as well. I felt they had a similar experience with LIFO®, and talked about the subject not only for themselves, but I felt that they tried to show how the rest of the company felt about it, and that this was something that a lot of the employees at the company agreed on.

The length of this thesis and the time aspect is also something to take into consideration. I feel that I was able to present the main tendencies in this thesis, but I still had to leave some material out, but hopefully I did manage to pull out what was most important and interesting for my research question. The fact that we only have a few months to complete it also limits the depth of the thesis. However, based on my data I think that the results and the positive impression of using the method could be of interests for other companies than simply the one, which my data is based on, and perhaps the method is worth trying in other organizations.

6.2 Implications for future research

When I first started thinking about my thesis I thought about how I could explore whether LIFO® was an effective tool for teamwork or not. Unfortunately I soon realized that neither did I have the time nor the resources to do the kind of research that I had planned. If I had the time and the resources to go deeper into this research there are a lot of things I would have found very interesting to look further into, with different types of research methods.

First of all, I would like to do a more valid and reliable research on everyone who had used LIFO®. One of my interviewees actually joked about this in the end of our interview when we talked about challenges with LIFO®. She wanted me to do an empirical research on using LIFO®, because she felt it would be much easier to get people on board and explain the influence of LIFO® if you could show to empirical data, which is close to what I wanted to do in the first place. This would hopefully allowed me to do a much broader research on all of the employees that had gone through LIFO®, and to observe and to see if it was as effective as my interviewees claimed. This way I would also have gained a deeper perspective downwards and upwards in the system.

It could also be interesting to look at the possible difference in communication with those who had gone through LIFO® and those who had not, like a control group, to see if there where any difference in their approach during teamwork. I think this would also have been proof enough that LIFO® actually has a huge influence if you use it as it is intended. And maybe it would be possible to figure out why someone is affected be the thing you learn taking a LIFO® survey, whereas others do not have the same experience and do not understand what you can gain from using it, and only think it is something unnecessary that take time and energy.

I would also have found it really interesting to look at the leadership skills across different LIFO® styles, even though this is a bit far from my research question. To look at what quality the different LIFO® styles can bring into a leadership position. Because I also believe, what Alexandra pointed out, that a lot of people think that the best leaders are the ones who score high on “controlling taking”, and I would like to examine whether this interpretation has grounds or not.

6.3 Epilogue

When the work of this thesis now is at its final stages, I have genuinely enjoyed working with it, and I am left with the impression that I have learned a lot. The process has been exciting, challenging and rewarding. At times the data and the thesis has seemed like a never-ending story, but as soon as I saw the relation between all of it, I started to see the whole picture.

I have learned a lot about LIFO® and communication between team members, and not least, I have been fortunate to have an insight into how three Human Resource managers in a large company have experienced LIFO® as a tool. I have learned that in this type of work process there are a lot of ups and downs, where it sometimes seems like nothing goes your way, but that eventually it becomes a product you can use and have learned a lot from. Even though there is a lot I would have liked to spent more time on, this is a thesis I am satisfied with, and even if it cannot be generalized, I believe there is something to learn when it comes to LIFO®, and I hope that others will also see my thesis in this way.

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Appendix 1

Letter of information to my interviewees

Hei

Jeg har vært i kontakt med angående å ta kontakt med deg i forbindelse med min masteroppgave, og jeg forsto det slik at hun hadde fått klarsignal fra deg om at det var i orden.

Jeg går master i rådgivning ved NTNU, og skal skrive masteroppgave etter jul. Vi har jobbet en del med LIFO® metoden her på rådgivning studiet, og LIFO® er definitivt noe av det jeg synes har vært mest interessant med denne masteren. Derfor har jeg veldig lyst å jobbe videre med det, og samtidig undersøke nærmere hvordan det fungerer i næringslivet, og ikke bare her i miljøet på rådgivning.

Så vidt jeg har forstått så har bedriften deres brukt LIFO® i noen år nå? Så det jeg håper å gjøre i min master er å intervju noen fra selskapet deres angående opplevelsen av bruk av LIFO®. Jeg er spesielt interessert i hvordan dere synes det har fungert i teamarbeid i etterkant av LIFO®.

Jeg håper også at dette er noe som kunne være interessant for deres teamledere, og for bedriften deres generelt. Jeg sender gjerne mer informasjon om hva jeg planlegger å skrive om hvis du/dere er interessert i det.

Håper jeg hører tilbake fra deg.

Vennlig hilsen Siri Mowinckel

Appendix 2

Frivillig informert samtykke / Free informed consent

Navn:

Informasjon fra dette intervjuet vil bli brukt i masteroppgaven min i rådgivning ved NTNU Dragvoll. Jeg ønsker å få nærmere innsikt i hvordan LIFO® kan ha en positiv effekt på gruppearbeid / teamwork i bedrifter, med vekt på en bedrift.

Opplysningene som informanten gir vil være konfidensielle, og alle notater, lydopptak og annen informasjon om/fra informanten vil bli makulert etter at intervjuet og undersøkelsen er ferdig. Opplysninger som kommer frem under intervjuet vil bli anonymisert i oppgaven og vil ikke kunne knyttes til informanten.

Intervjuet vil bli tatt opp på lydbånd fordi jeg skal kunne hente frem igjen informasjonen når jeg transkriberer intervjuene.

Jeg er veldig takknemlig for at du er villig til å bruke din tid på dette intervjuet, og med det bidra til prosjektet mitt.

Jeg sier meg villig til å delta:

Sted:

Dato:

Underskrift:

Appendix 3

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfågres gate 2
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel: +47 55 58 21 17
Fax: +47 55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org nr. 985 321 884

Jonathan Reams
Institutt for voksnes læring og rådgivningsvitenskap
NTNU
Loholt allé 85, Paviljong B 253
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 13.02.2012

Vår ref:29226 / 3 / KH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 03.01.2012. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:


29226	<i>What Benefits can the on-going Use of LIFO in an Organization Produce for Teamwork?</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Jonathan Reams
Student	Siri Mowinckel

Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/forsk_stud/skjema.html.

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen


Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim


Kjersti Håvardstun

Kontaktperson: Kjersti Håvardstun tlf: 55 58 29 53

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Siri Mowinckel, Brinken 7, 7018 TRONDHEIM

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kytte.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@svt.no

Appendix 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Question:

What benefits can the on-going use of LIFO® in an organization produce for teamwork?

1. What is “effective teamwork” for you?
 - What do you feel hinders effective teamwork?
 - (What promotes effective teamwork?)

2. Has LIFO® changed your view of teamwork and communication?
 - How has it changed?
 - If not, what have you gained from LIFO®?

3. How have you individually experienced LIFO® contributing to effective teamwork?
 - How has knowledge about your preferred “style” / way of working affected your relationship with colleagues.
 - What do you do to make the participants really grasp what LIFO® can do for teamwork? To make them see how useful it can be? What tasks/exercises do you use?

4. How do you think the implementation of LIFO® training has affected the company?

5. What challenges do you see in using LIFO®?

Appendix 5

NORSK INTERVJU GUIDE

Problemstilling:

What benefits can the on-going use of LIFO® in an organization produce for teamwork?

1. Hva er “effektivt team arbeid” for deg?
 - Hva hindrer effektivt team arbeid?
 - (hva fremmer effektivt team arbeid?)

2. Har LIFO® endret synet ditt på team arbeid og kommunikasjon?
 - Hvordan har det endret seg?
 - Hvis ikke, hva har du lært fra LIFO®?

3. Hvordan har du, individuelt, opplevd at LIFO® har bidratt til effektivt team arbeid?
 - Hvordan har forholdet ditt til kollegaer endret seg etter du fikk mer kunnskap om dine prefererte “stiler”?
 - Hva gjør du/dere for at deltakerne virkelig skal skjønne hva LIFO® kan gjøre for team arbeid? For å få dem til å forstå hvor nyttig det kan være? hva slags øvelser bruker dere?

4. Hvordan tror du implementering av LIFO® har påvirket selskapet deres?

5. Hva slags utfordringer ser du med LIFO®?