

PURPOSEFUL ACTION TAKER - HOW MANAGERS ENABLE STRATEGIC AGENCY IN PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract <p>As studies have shown a large portion of change initiatives to be failing (Higgs & Rowland 2005), both scholars and practitioners have turned their attention to strategy implementation. Strategy as Practice (SAP) is a relatively new research approach, bringing concepts from social sciences into the field of strategy and leadership. The SAP approach views strategy as something the members of the organization “do”, rather than something an organization “has”. The SAP approach focuses on strategy practitioners, the goal-oriented action (praxis) that they perform and the strategic practices that enable the praxis. Strategic agency is a closely associated concept, essentially meaning that a practitioner has strategic agency, when he or she engages in and influences praxis.</p> <p>The goal of this study is to understand, how strategy is implemented through the actions of managers at different organizational levels and functional roles. Specifically, the focus is on understanding, through the lens of Strategy as Practice, the role of strategic agency as a key element of strategy implementation and how managers enable strategic agency in others. The focal company is SKF, a global provider of products and services to rotating equipment that aims at implementing “Purposeful Action Taking” as a part of their strategy.</p> <p>The qualitative research was conducted by a practitioner working at SKF. Data gathered through 11 theme interviews of managers at different organizational levels and roles was then analyzed through qualitative content analysis and categorized into larger themes.</p> <p>The study shows, how managers interpret strategic agency or “Purposeful Action Taking” in practice. It also outlines a variety of strategic practices that managers use to enable strategic agency in others, organized under the broader groups of managing, leading and coaching.</p> <p>The results are more descriptive than normative in nature, although they also provide practitioners with ideas on how to enhance strategy implementation through the strategic practices that enable strategic agency. A potential area for future research would be the relative effectiveness of different enabling strategic practices in different conditions.</p>	
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<p>Tutkimusten osoittaessa suuren osan muutosaloitteista epäonnistuvan (Higgs & Rowland 2005), niin tutkijat kuin yritysjohtajatkin ovat alkaneet kiinnittää huomiota strategian toteuttamiseen. Strategy as Practice (SAP) on uudehko tutkimusnäkökulma, joka tuo sosiologian käsitteitä strategian ja johtamisen alalle. SAP-näkökulmassa strategia nähdään organisaation jäsenten "tekemisenä", ennemmin kuin jonakin, jota organisaatiolla "on". SAP-näkökulman huomio on toimijoissa (practitioner), tavoitteellisessa toiminnassa (praxis), johon toimijat osallistuvat sekä strategisissa käytänteissä (practice), joilla edistetään tavoitteellista toimintaa. Strateginen toimijuus on SAP-suuntaukseen läheisesti liittyvä käsite. Toimijalla voidaan sanoa olevan strategista toimijuutta, kun hän aktiivisesti vaikuttaa tavoitteelliseen toimintaan.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on ymmärtää, miten johtajat eri organisaatiotasolla ja rooleissa toteuttavat strategiaa. Erityisesti huomio on strategisen toimijuuden tarkastelussa SAP-linssin läpi ja sen ymmärtämisessä, kuinka johtajat edistävät strategista toimijuutta muissa toimijoissa. Tarkastelun kohteena oleva yritys on SKF, globaali pyöriviin laitteisiin liittyvien tuotteiden ja palveluiden toimittaja, jonka yksi strateginen tavoite on edistää "Tarkoituksenmukaista toimeen ryhtymistä" (Purposeful Action Taking).</p> <p>Laadullisen tutkimuksen toteuttaja työskentelee itse kohdeyrityksessä. Aineisto kasattiin 11 SKF:n johtajalle toteutetussa teemahaastattelussa ja analysoitiin laadullisella sisältöanalyysillä, jossa tieto luokiteltiin laajempien teemojen alle.</p> <p>Tutkimus kuvaa johtajien tulkintoja strategisesta toimijuudesta tai "Tarkoituksenmukaisesta toimeen ryhtymisestä" käytännössä. Tuloksena on myös joukko erilaisia strategisia käytänteitä, joita johtajat soveltavat edistääkseen strategista toimijuutta. Käytännöt on ryhmitelty kolmeen laajempaan kokonaisuuteen.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset ovat luonteeltaan enemmän deskriptiivisiä kuin normatiivisia, joskin käytännön harjoittaja varmasti saa ajatuksia siitä, kuinka parantaa strategian toteutusta strategista toimijuutta edistävillä käytänteillä. Yhtenä mahdollisena jatkotutkimuskohteena tunnustetaan eri strategisten käytänteiden suhteellinen vaikuttavuus erilaisissa toimintaympäristöissä.</p>	
Asiasanat Strategy as Practice, strategy implementation, strategic agency, micro strategy	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Although it is said that carefully planned is halfway done, in the world of business strategy there are countless carefully planned strategies that just never lead into the intended results. When asking for a reason, the clichéd response is “poor execution”.

Higgs and Rowland (2005, 122), contend that up to 70% of change initiatives fail. Hrebiniak (2006, 12) argues that while there is an abundance of management literature on strategy formulation and planning to be taught to MBA students, that is not the case of strategy implementation. It could be argued, Hrebniak continues, that execution cannot be taught, and that implementation involves “doing” and on-the-job experience.

Recently, however, at least the practitioners’ focus has turned increasingly into making strategy work in practice. On a popular “social cataloging” website Goodreads.com, a search for books with “strategy implementation” in the title brings 1011 results. Another search for “strategy execution” gives 264 hits. (Goodreads.com, 2021) For a large part, the books on strategy implementation consist of business practitioners sharing their own experiences and consultants’ conceptualizations of them.

What, then, has recent research contributed to strategy implementation? More importantly, how could that be applied in practice?

In the field of strategic management, Strategy as Practice is a relatively new research approach, with a potential to solve some of the practical and theoretical challenges in strategy implementation. The focus of the Strategy as Practice approach is, instead of considering strategy as something an organization “has”, on strategy as something that the members of the organization do (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007), that is, “the detailed processes and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of organizational life and which lead to strategic outcomes” (Johnson et al. 2003, 3). Compared to the mainstream strategy research, Strategy as Practice offers a more comprehensive view on strategy, with in-depth analysis of what actually happens in the planning, implementation and other activities related to strategy (Golsorkhi et al., 2010, 1).

Strategy as Practice is largely a “social” research approach and can be linked to the broader “practice turn” in contemporary social sciences. “Practice” has emerged as a key concept for understanding how agency and structure, and individual action and institutions are linked in social systems, cultures and organizations. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 1.)

As the Strategy as Practice studies expand the view from separated formulation and top-down implementation of strategy to a more integrated creation and implementation, it becomes apparent that there is a larger number of potential strategists within an organization. Here, the individual experience of strategic agency – how a person’s identity impacts how he or she acts – becomes an important question for strategy implementation. (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007)

The goal of this study is to understand, how strategy is implemented in a large corporation, through the actions of managers at different organizational levels and functional roles. Specifically, the focus is on understanding, through the lens of Strategy as Practice, the role of strategic agency as a key element of strategy implementation and how managers enable strategic agency in others.

While earlier research has looked at the enabling conditions of strategic agency (e.g. Mantere 2008), this study attempts to answer the questions from the point of an individual manager: “What can I do, in order to enable strategic agency in others?”

Several studies (e.g. Salih & Doll 2013) have extended the role of strategists from top management to other groups, such as middle management, operational employees and even external consultants – but often focusing on a single group alone. Here, an attempt is made to study managers across the organizational hierarchy, from Group CEO to first-line managers. It could be hypothesized that the interpretation of strategic agency, as well as the actions to enable it, differ from management level to another. Thus, this study has a potential to reveal larger and more diverse number of interpretations and practices.

Perhaps the most distinctive element of this study is the role of strategic agency. Like in earlier studies (see e.g. Mantere 2008), agency of the actors is considered as necessary for strategic action to take place and thus a precondition to implementation of any strategic initiative. In addition, the focal company of this study has set it as one of their strategic goals to increase the occurrence of agency within the organization. Thus, strategic agency will be explored both as a strategic initiative that a company aims to implement and as an enabler of the implementation.

This makes the application of the Strategy as Practice theories somewhat different from earlier research, in that “having agency” is viewed as both “praxis” (goal-oriented activity) and “practice” (means for enabling such activity). These terms are defined and linked together in more detail further below.

The focal company of the study is SKF, a global engineering and manufacturing firm, that has recognized a need for a cultural transformation to respond to the changing needs in its environment. At the core of the transformation is the idea of “Purposeful Action Taking” (PAT) or being a “Purposeful Action Taker”, which essentially means feeling empowered and accountable for taking

purposeful action and calculated risks, in order to reach the strategic goals of the company. As SKF's concept of PAT is very close to the definition of strategic agency, the goal of this study is pursued by studying PAT at SKF.

For the managers in SKF, the intent of this study is to make their own practices explicit and thus more repeatable, as well as learn from the others. In addition, the study should reveal potential gaps in strategic practices – is there something lacking or not done sufficiently that would accelerate the strategic change? It also aims to help in shaping the “conditions” to be more supportive of strategic change in the future.

Ultimately, the intended outcome from the focal company's point of view is to accelerate the current strategic change within SKF and help the company become more agile in implementing future strategies – thus building and maintaining its competitive advantage.

A contribution to the scholarly discourse is expected to be in providing a larger variety of interpretations to what could be considered as strategic practices. This is partly due to the aforementioned scope of involving all managerial levels of the organization. Also, the focus on strategy implementation takes the research closer to the daily organizational life, away from events that are labeled as “strategic”. Moreover, where some studies (e.g. Jarzabkowski 2003; Mantere 2008) take a deeper focus on specific strategic events, in this study the informants' behavior is viewed over time and across distinct episodes.

This way, the study aims to “stretch” the realm of behaviors to be studied as strategic practices. At the same time, it also expands the views on the various ways that strategic agency is interpreted by the practitioners, as they reflect on their perspectives of having agency in both themselves and in others.

In the following chapter, a framework for exercising strategic agency will be established through the terminology of the Strategy as Practice research approach. The importance of the Strategy as Practice approach in the faster-changing world will be discussed. The different elements of the activity-based network are described, with actors as a central element from this study's point of view. Next, the existing research on the enablers of strategic agency is reviewed.

After that, the methodology used in the empirical part of the thesis will be explained in more detail, along with a brief assessment of the methods used.

Then, the data gathered in the interviews will be analyzed, utilizing the framework established in Chapter 2.

At the end of the study, conclusions will be made, the contribution and validity of the study evaluated, and implications for practitioners as well as for further research made.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the field of strategy research, authors have for decades divided strategic approaches into content and process. Whittington (1996), for example, contrasts between the perspectives of strategic direction (where to go) and how to get there.

In another categorization, strategy research is further divided into context, content and process. Here, context refers to both external and internal macro-environment, while content deals with the choice of different strategies and their probability for success. Strategy process is concerned with how strategies are formed and implemented. (Whittington et al. 2020)

The Strategy as Practice research approach has developed through various attempts to renew strategic management during the final decades of the 20th century. Contributions to the research were drawn from many fields of science, such as sociology, philosophy and anthropology. The publication of the special issue on “Micro Strategy and Strategies” (Johnson et al.) in 2003 is considered to have defined the research agenda for Strategy as Practice for the first time. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 2-3)

The intellectual roots of the Strategy as Practice (also referred to as SAP) approach originate partly from the strategy process research (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 3). The process research has, for instance, been credited for taking strategic thought from macro level inside the organizations, adding the element of human action and recognizing small-sample studies as a legitimate research method (Johnson et al. 2003).

However, the SAP scholars also recognize the contribution of the research on strategy content, with e.g. resource-based view and institutional theory as recurring topics in discussion (Johnson et al. 2003).

As already mentioned above, Strategy as Practice is especially concerned with “doing” by the members of an organization, rather than the strategy that an organization “has”. Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) contend that strategy research has typically focused on the macro-level of firms and markets and call for focusing the research on the actions and interactions of the strategy practitioner.

Strategy as Practice is more based on sociological than economic theories (Vaara & Whittington 2012) and can be linked to the broader “practice turn” in contemporary social sciences. “Practice” has emerged as a key concept for understanding how agency and structure, and individual action and institutions are linked in social systems, cultures and organizations. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 1)

In social sciences, practices are described as largely unconscious but shared and recognizable ways of doing things. The practices, however, exist only “virtually”, until they are implemented by someone. Thus, the study of practices should always be closely linked to the circumstances where they are put into action and the actors enacting them. (Jarzabkowski et al. 2016) These are described and discussed in more depth below.

2.1 Why Strategy as Practice?

Before delving deeper into the core concepts of Strategy as Practice, it is worthwhile to take a look at some of the benefits of the research approach to science and practice.

The micro-based view of Strategy as Practice can be seen as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. As the markets have become more open and the abundance of information grown rapidly, resources have become more tradable and strategic imitation by new entrants and existing competitors has gotten far easier. In such fluid and transparent markets, the sustainable advantage must be sought from the micro assets that are difficult to distinguish and awkward to trade. (Johnson et al. 2003.)

Although the resource-based view emphasizes this importance of unique and hard-to-copy resources as a source of competitive advantage, the traditional research approach has led to general, macro-level characterizations of these resources. The micro approach of Strategy as Practice enables a distinction of the unique resources, whether at the center or peripheries of the organization. Moreover, it puts more focus on “verbs”, i.e. how the resources are utilized to generate value. (Johnson et al. 2003.)

Typically, the external factors, such as competition, economic conditions and industry forces, receive attention in the strategy process. Besides that, strategists should also look closer into participative management style, strategic alignment and internal communication, as these internal factors increase the likelihood of successful strategy implementation. (Salih & Doll 2013.)

Also, the shift to a more “hypercompetitive” economic environment, where speed, surprise and innovation are key elements of competitive advantage, sets new requirements for strategic activity. Fast and innovative responses to competition require that more strategic decisions are taken at the “periphery”, by line managers close to customer and skills (that add value to the customer) and further from corporate center. The consequence is that strategy-making moves from the measured cycle of well-defined episodes into a

much more continuous process, involving more people, more often than before. (Johnson et al. 2003)

From a methodological point of view, “practice” is a special concept in that it allows the researcher to engage in a direct dialogue with managers and other organizational members, opening for examination the issues that are relevant to them in either planning for, executing or coping with strategies. Consequently, Strategy as Practice has the potential to advance theoretical understanding in ways that are immediately useful for the practitioners. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 1)

As Johnson et al. (2003) note, the day-to-day micro-activities within an organization, although often invisible to traditional strategy research, can have significant consequences to the strategic outcomes. Strategy as Practice approach, with its attention to the micro, thus appears to have potential in better revealing these subtle activities.

In summary, the advantages that the Strategy as Practice approach brings to the strategy research – and, consequently, practice – include better attention to the creation of competitive advantage, more effective strategy implementation and speed and agility in the strategy process. The approach also brings researchers closer to practice, allowing both better input to the research as well as more readily applicable results for the practitioners.

2.2 Activity-based View of Strategy

Jarzabkowski (2003; 2007) employs an activity theory framework to analyze the role of strategic practices in performing the work of strategy. The framework consists of five elements, as shown in Figure 1.

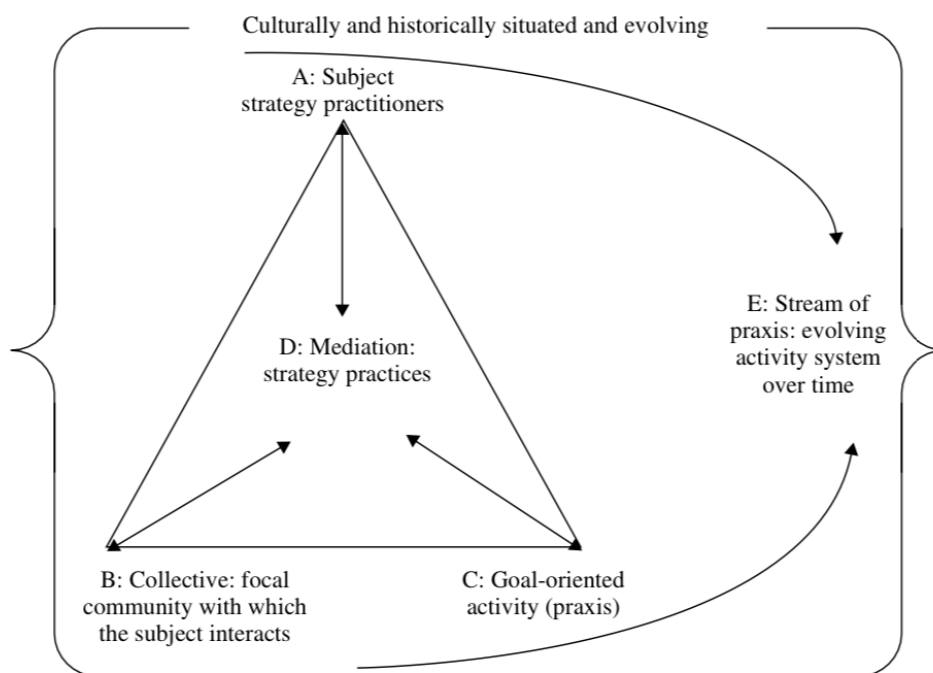


FIGURE 1 An activity framework for studying Strategy as Practice questions (Jarzabkowski in Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 130)

The focal point of analysis in the framework is the individual (A), called “practitioner”, whose actions contribute to the “doing” of strategy. This can be any actor or group of actors, who are considered relevant to the research in question. The “doing” of strategy always happens in relation to the community of other actors (B), with whom the actor in question pursues activity or “praxis” (C) that is aimed at reaching the organization’s strategic goals and creating or utilizing competitive advantage. The activity happens in a flow over time (E), at the same time constructing the interactions between the actors and their community. Strategic practices (D) are what tie together the actors, the community and how they together pursue strategic activity. As an example, the strategic practices may include planning and budgeting processes, spreadsheet and Power-Point presentations and strategy language. Such practices reflect the cultural and historical situation, in which they take place. (Jarzabkowski in Golsorkhi et al., 2010, 129-130)

Of the elements described in the activity framework above, especially practitioners, praxis and practices are widely used in the field of Strategy as Practice (Vaara & Whittington 2012). The three aspects outlined above are discussed based on the existing literature in more detail below.

2.2.1 Strategy Practitioners

Strategy process research brought with it the view that rather than one strategist, an organization has multiple agents engaged on social interaction (Mantere 2008). Indeed, the Strategy as Practice studies further reveal that as the perspec-

tive on strategy is expanded from the top-down deliberate view, there is a larger number of potential strategists within the organization. Rather than demographics like age, tenure, education and functional background, it becomes more important to look into the individual experiences of strategic agency, where who a person is connects to how that person acts. (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007.)

The concept of strategy practitioners has been widely expanded to comprise lower-level employees (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007), strategic planners (Vaara & Whittington 2012) as well as influential external actors, such as consultants, analysts and regulators (Jarzabkowski & Whittington 2008). However, with this study's focus on managers, this section will look into different levels of management as strategy practitioners. The concepts of strategic agency and role expectations are also discussed further below as key elements of strategic action and change.

Traditionally, strategy research assumes a top-down strategy formulation process, and the literature is still largely focused on the top managers and their decision-making. Although the practice perspective identifies a much larger group of actors as potential strategists, there is a lot to learn about top management as participants in strategy-making as well, not only as formulators of strategy. (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007)

A part of the top management's role is to ensure that their message of the strategic direction is properly conveyed throughout the organization. According to Salih and Doll (2013), as the message travels through the different levels of organization, it often suffers misinterpretation and loss of meaning. Thus, it seems apparent that somehow the top management needs to address every individual in the organization also directly.

There is extensive research available on the participation of middle management in different aspects of strategy. But what is meant by "middle management"? Mantere (2008) applies a broad definition of middle management, including upper and operational management as well as managers who may not have any direct subordinates but are nevertheless responsible for a topic area, on which organizational strategy has an impact.

Balogun and Johnson (2004) state that as organizations become more complex and geographically distributed, and as the more turbulent environment requires greater flexibility, the middle managers' role as change agents is going to increase. They describe the organizations as moving from integrated hierarchical structures to more "modular forms", where responsibility, power and resources are decentralized to semi-independent units.

Another distinction similar to top management and "the others" is that of "The Centre" and "The Periphery". The periphery is described to include lower and middle-level managers and entrepreneurs, whereas the centre is assimilated with corporate and divisional management and the boards. The centre is more concerned with developing existing technologies and markets and often directs investments and resources towards them. In the case of the more externally focused strategies created in the periphery, the strategy is first imple-

mented through experimentation, piloting with customers and skunkworks and then, through conflict and macrochange, becomes a “mainstream” strategy, replicated throughout the organization. The strategy-making performed in the centre and periphery are called, respectively, deductive and inductive. (Regnér 2003.)

The inductive and explorative strategy actions are more applicable to a strategy context of ambiguity and complexity, while the deductive and exploiting actions work better in an opposite situation. It is unlikely for the centre to be able to create radically new strategies. However, they could be receptive to everyday activities in the periphery, especially the ones that clash with the historical and existing business and strategy, as they may be an indication of a more fundamental shift. (Regnér 2003.)

2.2.2 Strategy Praxis and Strategic Practices

Praxis can be defined as “the stream of activity in which strategy is accomplished over time” (Jarzabkowski in Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 135). Praxis could be studied at the institutional level, such as merger and acquisition behavior in an industry, or at the individual level, looking into the people engaging in decision-making concerning a merger or acquisition. Further, in research papers the praxis has been divided into three levels of micro, meso and macro. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010.)

According to Whittington (2006), praxis consists of all the activities involved in deliberate formulation and implementation of strategy that strategy’s practitioners do. He includes in this definition a variety of episodes, ranging from board meetings and management retreats to team briefings, projects and simple talk. Strategy practices, on the other hand, are shared routines of behavior that practitioners draw on in their praxis. The practices are multilevel, that is, there are practices specific to an organization, a whole sector or the entire society. (Whittington 2006)

In activity theory praxis is considered as goal-directed and collective activity. The stream of individual activities can be guided towards the same direction by an object, which represents a broader goal orientation than the more specific objective. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 135) A strategic long-term goal of an organization might thus be an “object” while for an individual task related to the strategic goal, an “objective” may be determined.

Praxis as collective activity means that it is accomplished through many actors, who contribute to the activity over time. Each of them may interpret the object somewhat differently and the interests of different actors may even contradict with each other to some extent. The object is not stable but is instead constantly modified by interactions and contests between the actors. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 136-137)

Strategic practices discussed in literature include a wide range of different kinds of practices (Vaara, 2012, 291). In general, they are mediators between actors within their community and the strategic activities (praxis). Mediation theory suggests that, although the actors have different perspectives and inter-

ests, they are able to integrate their actions to pursue shared activity. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 133)

The strategic practices include, for example, strategic planning as well as analytical, socio-material and discursive practices. The Strategy as Practice research has revealed that, contrary to the claimed “fall” of strategic planning (Mintzberg, 1994), strategic planning can, in fact, enable a more complex and flexible praxis. Analytical tools, such as the Five Forces, may be powerful in stimulating and communicating new insights. The socio-material practices refer to, for example, practices like turn-taking, scheduling, issue bracketing and voting used to facilitate strategy workshops and meetings. Also, the use of Power-Point presentations in strategy meetings has been studied as a socio-material strategic practice. The role of various discursive practices has also been considered important in constructing and legitimating strategy. (Vaara & Whittington 2012)

The three types of strategic practices that Jarzabkowski (2003) focuses on are direction setting, resource allocation and monitoring and control. These practices can support continuity through alignment of actors, collective structures and activity. However, the practices can also surface contradictions between the organization’s past and future activity, thus acting as a catalyst for change.

The generative mechanisms of top management resistance are also ways to mediate, in the sense that they align activities within the organization. According to Friesl and Kwon (2017, 103-106), these mechanisms include:

- 1) *Reframing the initiative.* The resistance from higher management may lead to an initiative to be reshaped so that it gains better acceptance, e.g. instead of proposing a reorganization, an initiative could be reframed as one of improving profitability. The middle managers may also use less radical language, such as talk about “councils” rather than upright “reorganization (although the initiative may nevertheless lead to actions preparing for the reorganization).
- 2) *Restructuring the initiative.* Top management resistance may also lead to a new group of actors starting to drive the initiative, possibly at a different organizational level. For example, rather than remaining on the “corporate” level, restructuring may shift the focus of the initiative to a more operational level, and perhaps be re-created ad hoc, rather than through top management nomination. This highlights the differential role of various actors in strategy work.
- 3) *Recoupling of the initiatives.* While top management resistance may cause an initiative to “go underground” for some time, it ultimately needs to be recoupled to the company’s strategic goals and under formal decision-making.

The doing of strategy is both influenced by and influences the collective structures and culture of the organization. While considering what the strategy prac-

titioners do, it is important to understand the community that is influenced by their actions. Thus, the strategic practices need to be connected to the peers, subordinates, managers and other stakeholders, that they are “directed at”, as well as to the intended effects of such practices. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 132) Salih and Doll (2013) note that because strategies are normally linked to reaching a competitive advantage in the future, it is likely that their execution requires changes in organizational processes, systems, structures and culture.

The distinction and the interplay between strategy practice and praxis in the Strategy as Practice literature is not completely clear-cut. Vaara and Whittington (2012), for example, refer to practices as tools, norms and procedures of strategy work and to praxis as activity involved in strategy-making. This way, they limit the term praxis only to strategy-making, in contrast to the wider definition above that labels all goal-oriented action as praxis.

2.3 Strategic Agency and Change

The concept of agency is important in understanding, who really are the strategic actors or strategists, as it is a key factor in determining, how a person sees that he or she can contribute to the strategic action. Mantere (2008, 298) describes strategic agency as:

an individual’s capacity to have a perceived effect upon the individual’s own work on an issue the individual regards as beneficial to the interests of his or her organization.

Thus, if a person is motivated by advancing the success of the organization, his or her actions may be seen to have strategic agency (Mantere 2008).

Linking strategic agency to institutional change is a good way to illustrate, what having strategic agency means in practice. Analysis of a well-known field study of the privatization of British Rail describes the relationship between institutionalized practice and the activities of strategists as individual actors. It demonstrates, how managers as strategic actors engage with and contribute to processes of institutional change through experimentation. Throughout the process, the managers’ agency changes. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 273-288.)

In the early stages of the privatization, the managers conform to the existing “institutional template”, meaning the routines, norms, guidelines and expectations for behavior present in the public institution of British Rail. As the privatization proceeds and the requirements of the changing environment become more apparent, the managers start to gradually change the industrial template – first questioning the old routines and eventually abandoning them in favor of the new template. Only once the managers in question begin to explicitly identify the old institutional template, their agency begins to turn into strategic. The managers’ strategic agency is further strengthened, as they be-

come aware that they have the capacity to make choices that influence the outcomes of the change. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 273-288.)

In this privatization case there is an extreme example of exercising strategic agency. By making external agreements they deemed necessary for the future success of the business unit in focus, the Engineering and Finance Directors were considered having disobeyed the “Red Book” of regulations for operating within British Rail. Consequently, they were sent on a “gardening leave”, but later returned and were congratulated for their “entrepreneurial spirit” by the new owners. (Golsorkhi et al. 2010 273-288.)

Mantere (2008) examines how role expectations impact the strategic agency of middle managers. A key finding of his study is the reciprocal nature of role expectations. For strategic agency to take place, both role expectations from the superiors, as well as the enabling conditions put in place by the superiors are required.

In sociology, ‘role’ is defined as the behavior that is expected of someone with a certain position in an organization (Bankston 2000, 503). The concept of ‘role’ is typically described in objectivist and functional terms, as if members of the organization were organs in a body, performing a certain function. Such accounts assume homogeneity in the behavior of actors falling under the same role expectations, thus ignoring their capability to act differently. From the practice point of view, it is necessary to acknowledge both the influence of functional roles, as well actors having agency – that is, adapting their actions to the prevailing context. (Mantere 2008.)

Mantere (2008, 301-308) categorizes conditions, where strategic agency for middle managers is enabled:

- Implementation
 - o 1: Narration
 - o 2: Contextualization
 - o 3: Resource allocation
 - o 4: Respect
- Facilitating adaptability
 - o 5: Trust.
- Synthesizing information
 - o 6: Responsiveness. Being receptive to feedback, top management asks for it, but are they able to take it?
- Championing alternatives
 - o 7: Inclusion. Involving in planning
 - o 8: Refereeing (ideas)

Middle managers are uniquely positioned to assess the fit of organizational processes and capabilities, as well as external market trends, to a given strategic initiative. Strategies on the top level are often overly generalized and a lot is lost in translation, which is why middle managers are needed to enrich the content of the strategic message, as well as to align it with a given situation. Managing

change is a complex process, where the strategy and behavior of the individuals affect each other along the way, and the actual consequences of a change are difficult to predict in advance. (Salih & Doll 2013)

2.4 The Framework applied in this thesis

The research task of this thesis is to understand how strategy is implemented through the managers' actions and how the managers can enable strategic agency in others, hence facilitating strategy implementation more widely in the organization. Thus, in the scope of this thesis, the activity framework is applied with an emphasis especially on implementing strategy. While it has been argued that strategy formation and implementation cannot be completely separated, it is apparent from the research outlined above that focus on either formation or implementation is often emphasized.

In alignment with the research task at hand, the elements of the activity framework are looked at especially through the lens of implementation. A simplified framework of the thesis is outlined in Figure 2.

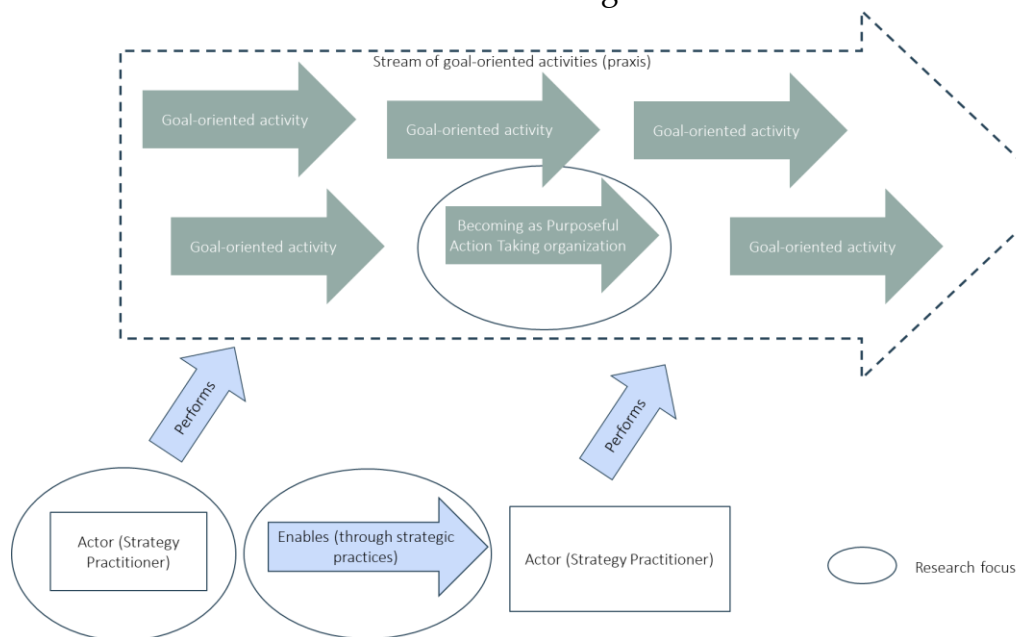


FIGURE 2 Framework for strategy implementation (adapted and modified from Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 130)

The wider definition of praxis as the collective activities aimed at reaching a strategic goal, as outlined by Jarzabkowski (in Golsorkhi et al. 2010) is applied here. In relation to implementation, the activity that results in strategies being realized is thus considered praxis, or strategic activity.

Practices are also looked into with regard to implementation, meaning that they are the methods applied to enable praxis. Strategic agency has a dualistic role in strategy implementation. On one hand, reaching the overall strate-

gic goals of an organization requires that strategic agency takes place during the implementation. Thus, the means of enabling strategic agency could be considered strategic practices.

On the other hand, for an organization to become such that it is more likely for the strategic agency to take place can be a strategic goal in itself. The focal organization's aim at having more people as "Purposeful Action Takers", which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, is one such strategic goal. Consequently, actions in which the strategic agency is realized are in this thesis studied as praxis.

It is, therefore, of interest in this thesis to study the practitioners' behavior from two perspectives: As actors performing the praxis and also as mediators enabling others to perform the praxis.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research approach of the study is qualitative. Qualitative research is appropriate when, for example, the focus is on studying natural situations that would be impossible to set up as an experiment, or it would not be possible to control all important variables. Moreover, qualitative research suits into research problems, where the interest is on detailed structure of events and meanings of individual actors. (Metsämuuronen 2011, citing Syrjälä et al. 1994).

These characterizations apply well to this study, where the aim is rather to explore new variables than organize a controlled test to measure the distribution between existing variables. Also, the focus is indeed on understanding the individual manager's interpretation of strategic agency and how having agency can be facilitated.

All the research has been conducted by the author of this thesis, who also works for the focal company. The advantages and challenges of this approach are discussed in more detail in the final section of this chapter, where the study method is assessed.

3.1 Data gathering method and informants

The empirical data utilized in this study was gathered through qualitative theme interviews. There is one focal company in the study, SKF, whose managers from different levels and functions have been interviewed.

The informants have been selected so that they would represent all managerial levels at SKF, from the CEO to the first-line managers and everything in between. Considering the focus of this study on strategy implementation, having responses throughout the hierarchy should be beneficial. For example, Balogun et al., (2003, 199) state that when moving in the strategy research from "What?" to "How?", "when?" and "Where?", interaction between the top level interventions and the responses from the lower levels becomes important.

It has also been recognized that lower-level employees may have a significant influence on strategy and also external actors, such as consultants and customers may indirectly shape a firm's strategy (Jarzabkowski et al. 2007). While the "operational level" employees certainly play a key role in the doing of strategy, there is probably a distinct difference in their approach, compared to that of the management.

Although it undoubtedly varies between managerial roles, most managers have some level of expectation for their role to "do strategy". Whereas managers at all levels are expected to achieve results through others – i.e. influencing subordinates, peers and others in the organization in some way, the operational employees are expected to achieve results through their own actions. Thus, a central question becomes, how managers influence the actions of others, in a way that leads to the implementation of the firm (deliberate or emergent) strategy.

This leads to an assumption that managers, based on their role, are more focused on strategic practices, while operational employees are expected to focus more on the praxis, that is, the flow of actions leading to desirable outcomes. That is not to say that the operational employees would not influence others through strategic practices as well. In fact, this might be well worth further research, but is nevertheless outside the scope of this study, which focuses specifically on managers' actions.

Moreover, as it is not as explicit a part of the role expectation of non-managers, their engagement in strategic practices may be less intentional and pronounced, and thus may require a different empirical approach.

In the analysis of the results, the informants are categorized into three levels, based on their position in the organizational hierarchy.

- 1) *Group Management Team (GMT)* at SKF is an explicitly defined team of senior executives, all reporting to the CEO. Three out of ten GMT members are interviewed in this study, including the CEO. As the goal of this research is not to address the actions of the CEO in particular, he is treated as part of the GMT, just as the other members. This also helps in retaining the anonymity of the responses.
- 2) *Middle Management* in this study consists of all managerial levels between the GMT and unit level, with a total of four managers interviewed.
- 3) *Unit-level managers* are those in the country- or factory-level operational units (either Sales Unit or Manufacturing Unit), including both Unit Managers and other managers in their organizations. In total, four are interviewed in this study.

Contrasting these definitions with what Johnson et al. (2003, 4) consider as "Periphery" and "Centre", it could be said that the unit-level managers represent the periphery, while the GMT and middle management represent the centre.

In addition to the organizational level, another dimension that the interviewees are also categorized on is their functional role. Those responsible for an operation such as selling or delivering – and their superiors throughout the chain of command up to the CEO – are considered as being in a “line role”. The informants responsible for a function supporting the operations (e.g. Human Resources, Controlling) are defined as being in a “support role”. Eight informants are categorized into line roles, while three are in support roles.

Although SKF is a global company with people in well over a hundred countries, the interviewees are based in two countries, Finland and Sweden. All the Group Management and middle management informants are working in Sweden, which is also the location of the corporate headquarters and thus fittingly represents the “centre”. The unit-level managers, on the other hand, are all from Finland.

While there are practical considerations behind this choice of countries, it may also be viewed as beneficial for the validity of the results. With the relatively small sample size, variables such as cultural and market differences have a less significant role in the responses, helping to focus on the variables within the scope of this study, such as differences between managerial levels. All informants are also somewhat connected to each other in their daily work, either by reporting lines or through overlapping or adjacent responsibilities that require a certain level of co-operation between them. Thus, it is likely that the informants will refer to the same or similar practical examples in their responses, albeit each from a slightly different perspective.

The demographic factors were not explicitly recorded, but it can be said that the informants vary by age, tenure at SKF, gender and also nationality, not being exclusively of Finnish and Swedish origin. Many informants have worked the majority of their career at SKF, but some also have had a significant portion of their career outside of SKF and become part of the organization through recruitment or a business acquisition.

The selection of interviewees started by listing potential informants in each of the six categories (three by organizational level and two by functional role) and approaching them to check their availability and interest. The persons were approached one by one from each category, until a desired number of interviews was booked.

The interviewees were not explicitly asked to prepare for the interviews but were nevertheless given a brief description of the research goals and main themes to be discussed in the calendar invitation to the interview session. A copy of one of the invitations (all had the same essential content) is in Appendix 1.

The data-gathering method of this study could be characterized as semi-structured interviews, which can be seen to provide information on a deeper level than structured interviews, albeit with a more defined realm of questions than an open interview (Metsämuuronen 2011). The interviews were carried out using a list of interview questions as a support to the interviewer. The questions were under three themes:

- 1) Meaning of “Purposeful Action Taking” – how the informants interpret the strategic element to be implemented?
- 2) Self as a Purposeful Action Taker
- 3) Enabling and encouraging others as Purposeful Action Takers

The first theme attempted to elaborate the informants’ interpretation of the strategic goal, or “object” of becoming an organization of Purposeful Action Takers. The second theme focused on the praxis, i.e. the informants’ own activities contributing to the strategic goal, while the third theme was aimed at revealing the strategic practices the informants employed in enabling the goal-oriented activity in others.

Under each theme there were several questions, which the interviewees did not see before or during the interview. Instead, it was the interviewees responsibility to start with more general questions and then assess, whether the responses already covered the more detailed ones, or if additional questions were necessary. The purpose was not to have a clearly defined response to each question from each informant, but rather to stimulate the conversation and gather relevant material around each of the main themes. Additionally, the interviewees were asked to begin with telling about their career at SKF so far and about their current area of responsibility to add context and “warm up” the interviewees with easier questions. The entire list of questions is presented in Appendix 2.

In total, 11 individuals from SKF were interviewed and the interviews recorded, resulting in total of 10 hours and 53 minutes of material. The duration of the interviews ranged from 35 to 82 minutes. Everyone was given the same estimation of 30-60 minutes for the duration, and a meeting time of one hour was booked in the calendars. Interestingly, it turned out that generally the interviews with the more senior levels of management took clearly longer than those closer to the operational level.

Approximately half of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in both Sweden and Finland, while the other half was done utilizing online meeting platforms. The language in the interviews was either English or Finnish, the latter being used when it was the mother tongue of the interviewee.

The recordings were further transcribed by a transcription agency into total of 126 pages. The sound quality of one of the recordings was insufficient to be completely transcribed, so the material from this interview was used only to the extent that the researcher was himself able to clearly comprehend and transcribe from the recording.

3.2 Analysis method and process

The empirically gathered data is analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which typically contains phases of iterative organization and reorganization of data into meaningful categories (Metsämuuronen 2011, citing Syrjälä et al. 1994).

In the beginning the analysis phase the transcriptions were read through, relevant responses highlighted and referenced into a supporting table, where they were categorized under each interview question and also the organizational levels and functional roles. This table was used to assist in identifying themes that surfaced repeatedly in the interviews and in attempting to detect differences in responses between informant categories.

After that, the surfacing themes were listed and logically organized, forming the structure for the results chapter of this thesis. The original transcriptions and the first summary table were further reviewed to complement each category with more data. Each theme was then discussed in the results, including selected illustrative quotations from the interviews. After the first version of the results chapter, the some of the themes were further reorganized, combined or renamed in order to reach a more coherent and balanced overview of the results.

3.3 Assessment of the method

In assessing the research approach and methods described here it is useful to reflect on the strengths and challenges of the Strategy as Practice approach in general. Johnson et. al. (2003, 5) claim that the activity-based view of the Strategy as Practice approach goes deeper into the details of what is actually being done and by whom in the organizations. The focus of this thesis being specifically to study the actions of managers, the general choice of approach is probably a good fit.

A challenge, on the other hand, is that the activity-based view is less directly connected to the desired outcomes, i.e. performance of the organization (Johnson et. al. 2003, 15). Indeed, also this study lacks an analysis between the activities that surface in the interviews and their actual influence on the organizational performance. While it could be hypothesized that the practices brought up by many experienced managers are also effective, or else they would have steered away from them over time, it has not been the intention of this thesis to test such a hypothesis. Thus, the results are expected to be rather descriptive than normative in nature.

The fact that researcher in this study is both an actor inside the organization, as well as an observer trying to look at it through a scientific framework, opens a possibility for insights that would be difficult to reveal without this dual role. In comparison, for example, strategy process research has typically been based on retrospective reports of senior executives, rather than living in the organization to understand the actual tools and practical activity used in the processes to make the processes happen (Johnson et al. 2003, 11-12).

Balogun et al. (2003, 210) discuss practitioner-driven projects, where the informants gather data of their own practices. The approach in this study is different in the sense that the researcher does not observe his own practices but tries to unveil those of his colleagues through interviews. The approach never-

theless could be expected to help satisfy many of the criteria that Balogun et al. (2003, 200-201) set for selecting methods for strategizing research:

- The researcher's experience in the company helps in understanding the company's "big picture", while at the same time gives insights into the details of the daily organizational life, thus facilitating the provision of both deep and broad evidence.
- The personal connections and internal network that the researcher possesses assists in eliciting full and willing commitment for the participants, as they are willing to help out a colleague.
- The familiarity with the focal organization also speeds up the early phases of understanding the organizational context and identifying research informants, thus making effective use of the researcher time.
- Also, being part of the organizational realities helps anchor the questions being asked to organizational realities and also design the study in a way that it has a better likelihood of contributing to the organization's needs.

During the research process it became evident that at least the second point, gaining commitment of the participants, held true. It was the researcher's available time that limited the number of participants, whereas the willingness to help through participating in the interviews was high across different parts of the organization. The participants are described in the following section.

It is obvious, however, that the practitioner working within the organization might, even unconsciously, have several biases that influence the research and results. For example, as an employee of the organization the researcher might have an agenda from his personal or work role point of view that directs the kinds of answers that he is looking for. It may also be that the events the researcher is more familiar with get more attention than the others, possibly causing certain findings to be emphasized more than would be objective.

4 RESULTS

The focal company of the study is SKF, a global manufacturer of bearings, seals and lubrication systems. The company also provides solutions and services related to its products. SKF Group has over a hundred manufacturing sites across the world and a network of more than 17,000 distributors. In 2020, it employed 40,963 people and had a turnover of SEK 74,853 million. In its vision and mission statements, SKF states a world of reliable rotation and being the undisputed leader in bearing business as overall goals. The company's core values are empowerment, openness, high ethics and teamwork. (AB SKF 2021)

For SKF, strategic agency is closely linked to the term "Purposeful Action Taking", which is a key element of SKF's strategy launched in 2015. According to SKF:

Now we know what to do and how to do it. Now we need to ensure that it happens, that the plans get off the paper and get realized. All the strategies and plans will be worth nothing without the right culture and leadership to make it happen. It is time to act as entrepreneurs, to take purposeful action and calculated business risks to get it done within the boundaries of our code of conduct. Every leader and every employee must engage their volition in making the success happen. Everyone within SKF needs to feel that they are empowered to create customer value. (AB SKF, 2016.)

Gathering empirical data on strategic agency is thus based on studying Purposeful Action Taking at SKF.

Hence, the research questions are:

1. What does "Purposeful Action Taker" mean to managers? - *Praxis / Desired action*
 - a. How the managers describe the significance and nature of the "gap" between the current (starting) situation to desired state?
 - b. What is required for the change to happen?
2. How do managers see themselves as Purposeful Action Takers? - *being an object of strategic practices*
 - a. How much "room to operate" there is for oneself?

- b. What factors in the company structure, policies, routines, cultures etc. support the change to becoming a PAT?
 - c. What factors in the company structure, policies, routines, cultures etc. slow down the change to becoming PAT?
3. What do the managers do to enable and encourage Purposeful Action Taking by others? – *being a subject for strategic practices*
4. How do the responses to the above questions differ on different organizational levels and functional roles?

The results of the empirical study are discussed in this chapter from two perspectives. The first section responds mainly to the first research question, describing how managers themselves interpret the “Purposeful Action Taking” as a strategic initiative. In that sense, the informants describe the strategic goal of “Purposeful Action Taking”, or the strategic activity (praxis) required for its realization.

The second section focuses on how managers enable “Purposeful Action Taking” in others, that is, what practices they draw on to help realize the intended strategy.

4.1 Purposeful Action Taking as a strategy to be implemented (praxis)

“Purposeful action” is a term used by Heike Bruch and Sumantra Ghoshal (2002) in describing a minority of managers who constantly succeed in combining high levels of energy and focus in their actions. Members of SKF’s top management explain that they had attended Ghoshal’s training years ago and since then applied the concept in the different roles that they worked in. Once they were appointed to SKF’s Group Management, Purposeful Action Taking as a cultural change has been part of SKF’s articulated strategy.

A member of SKF’s Group Management Team, referring to Bruch and Ghoshal’s findings, explains that if 10% of the managers of large corporations in their studies were found to be Purposeful Action Takers, being able to increase that percentage to some extent would have provided a significant competitive advantage. However, he continues, now that the barriers for entry to many businesses have come down through, for example, technological development, it is no longer enough to outperform other large companies. Instead, large companies need to be even more purposeful than the small companies.

As it is summarized in SKF’s training material for cultural change training, being a Purposeful Action Taker (PAT) means:

- Outside-in

- Applies an outside-in approach, always starting with the customer
- Actively engages across internal borders to reach common goals
- Challenges the status quo to achieve world class
- Is able to connect all actions to clear impacts and goals
- Empowerment
 - Constantly asks “If not me, then who? If not now, then when?”
 - Motivates self and others to act based on personal conviction
 - Creates an atmosphere of trust and fosters a sense of pride
 - Creates energy and engagement
- Accountability
 - Communicates openly, actively seeks and acts on feedback
 - Has a real “can do” attitude
 - Follows up and acts consequentially
 - Learns from both successes and mistakes
 - Persists until the goal is reached
 - Takes calculated risks within the Code of Conduct

At the end of the day, what is written in the company’s strategy or in an academic’s paper matters less to the implementation of strategy than how the people interpret the strategy. The following sections outline the themes that were brought up in the interviewees’ descriptions of a Purposeful Action Taker.

4.1.1 Energetic and Brave Entrepreneur

One of the most common terms that the informants use about Purposeful Action Taking is “entrepreneurship”. As an interviewee puts it:

...treat it as your own company, and that's enough. Treat everyone else in the company, be responsible for things and for things that happen just as if it was your own company. (Middle manager, support role)

A senior leader explains at length how, in a large enterprise, people sometimes become very protective of the result of their own area of responsibility and resources that “belong” to them, leading to sub-optimization from the whole company’s point of view. He states:

...especially in a big organization, always ask yourself, what is the right thing to do for the company?... ...You can be in bigger legal unit but, ultimately, everything we do is about doing the right thing for SKF first and then... ...whatever your organization you're in second. This is where it all starts. (Group Management Team member)

The managers in a country unit discuss entrepreneurship in more practical terms, but also their statements reflect the kind of thinking that a business owner would likely have. One of them describes his team members’ behavior concerning a change of an important service provider:

I know our team have taken charge and comparing other offers, and what is really needed in our organization and figuring out independently without getting a kind of clear mandate to do it. (Unit-level manager, line role)

Another unit-level manager describes a Purposeful Action Taker as:

...when there is a need to intervene and take action, they don't let it pass through. (Manager, unit-level, line responsibility)

What the interviewees do here seems to be an act of sensemaking, as described by Rouleau (2005, 1413-1415) as something where managers interpret information concerning a strategic change to create a meaning for themselves. The way managers at different levels create the meaning is also similar to Rouleau's finding that at the top management have a higher level of abstraction in their thinking, while at lower levels managers draw more from their tacit knowledge and the sensemaking examples are closer to everyday business (Rouleau 2005, 1413-1415).

In many responses Purposeful Action Taking is associated with high energy levels that are required to accomplish something that isn't readily in a person's job description. A member of Group Management uses an analogy a group of friends renovating an old locomotive in their free time. When people have a passion for something, they will make it happen without assigned roles, budgets or specific instructions.

Indeed, this view is well aligned with a common perception of entrepreneurs as individuals passionate for their business, primarily motivated by internal drive, rather than external directive or incentives.

Being entrepreneurial in a large and mature corporation may prove challenging. Entrepreneurial people thus may often opt to rather found their own firms specifically to get away from the control, procedures and bureaucracy (Lampel et al. 2014, 315).

There appears to be an agreement between the interviewees that also at SKF, there are so many processes and instructions that it is difficult to comply with all of them at all times. For example, a manager explains her perception of what the CEO wants to achieve with Purposeful Action Taking:

...he wants to get the benefits of what you find in, in entrepreneurial company... ..often, you can do things without having guidelines and without approvals, things like that... ..In a large company with 40, 50 thousand people you need to drive things in a different way. But, if you can get a portion of that, what you find in a entrepreneurial company... I'm driving it the way that I believe is right and the best for the company... ..I don't see any hindrance, I just go for it... ..they achieve a lot more than if you have the border, they don't see the borders, they don't feel the borders because no-one is crating them for them.

...in a large company there are a lot of borderlines... ..to get part of that entrepreneurship and energy and drive and accountability... and I'm going to fight for this like if it was my own company... ..That's what [CEO] really wants to achieve and what he believes in... ..he also realizes that it's not without borders... ..we need to be within the limits. But he often says, you have the freedom to try and do things as long as you're within the limits of code of conduct. So, I think it is, it's about the, the

speed. To get more speed into development, to get the high energy level and the entrepreneurship in the company. (Manager, middle, line role)

SKF's concept of Purposeful Action Taking mentions "taking calculated risks within the [SKF] Code of Conduct". How, then, does one determine what is calculated risk and what is not? A senior executive shares his attempt of simplifying it:

Code of conduct is our law. For as long as you are doing something that is in SKF's interest, best for SKF... that does not break the Code of Conduct... ... you are most likely on the right side. And I say, don't ever brake the Code of Conduct. (Group Management Team member)

One informant describes the current part of the business that he is in as requiring adaptation and risk taking, due to the relatively large scope and high complexity of the business.

...sometimes we don't do this by the book. Follow all the different processes in detail that, I mean, it's people. They see a business opportunity, they take a risk. Until now it is calculated risk, so it is okay... (Middle manager, line role)

Taking risks and diverting from the internal rules and processes seems to be often related to new situations, requiring an experimental approach. Most informants, in one form or another, bring up "trying new things" or "testing ideas in practice" as a key component of Purposeful Action Taking. One informant perceives a desired change happening, albeit with need for more courage in the organization:

I think we have more daring in the organization... ...Being a little bit more risk taking, prepared to try and test it out... ...But, I still feel that we have a long [...] journey to go to have more people daring and trying. (Middle manager, line role)

Another interviewee adds learning as a condition that makes experimenting (and sometimes failing) acceptable:

"My belief is that better to test something... ...It's better to make decision that just sit and wait... ...Sometimes we succeed, sometimes we fail. And that's ok, as long as we learn from it..." (Middle manager, line role)

It could be drawn from these responses - and many others in the interviews - that the approach to following orders and rules and seeking approvals with a company are changing. An employee is no longer expected to "do as the they are told" or "do what is in their job description" but do "everything that is best for the company". Rather than setting a clear instruction on what to do, the management sets the boundaries for what not to do and encourages acting according to the individuals' best judgement within those boundaries.

4.1.2 Disciplined and Persistent Achiever

Being entrepreneurial in a large corporation does not mean that people just follow their passion, starting as many new experiments as possible. As already Drucker (2006, 2-4) has pointed out, in knowledge work, which is an increasingly higher portion of all human work performed in modern society, doing the *right things* matters more than doing *things right*. An important question, thus, is where to focus the entrepreneurial energy and courage.

An executive reflects on his own focus as a Purposeful Action Taker:

...it's really, very much [about] what makes a real difference, what does not get done if I don't step in and do it. But it's a difficult concept because, at the same time, you've got to know where you can step in or not... ..It does not mean that you can run around and just do what you think is fun. (Group Management Team member)

A unit-level manager raises the concern that being a Purposeful Action Taker often means generating more work for oneself, and how that can end up people drowning themselves in new things to work on. A senior executive essentially says the same:

...purposeful also means that you're quite focused, so you actually deliver - and [I am sometimes] maybe starting up too many things, so you become distracted. (Group Management Team member)

The imperative to “deliver”, that is, to bring initiatives to completion, is the other side of the equation and appears to set a logical limitation to how many new initiatives can be started in a given time frame.

In SKF's description of a Purposeful Action Taker, “persisting until a goal is reached” is mentioned as a behavior under “Accountability”. This is also mentioned by most informants in one manner or another. Some embed it directly in their own description of a Purposeful Action Taker:

...also that we are quite determined about striving for the set goals “at any cost” [taking laws and SKF Code of Conduct into consideration]in short, work in various ways to reach the goals that have been set for us. (Unit-level manager, support role)

...whenever there is a development project, it's the action-takers who bring it to the completion. With those, who don't have it [Purposeful Action Taker] in them, their projects just get delayed and delayed. (Unit-level manager, line role)

...if you do not feel that you are accountable for the result you might be able to be happy with yourself just because you talked about it. Just because you put your efforts into it. Just because, you know, you have spent time on it. (Middle manager, support role)

Either explicitly or implicitly, many interviewed managers contrast between a person, who is eager to start several new things and another, who is more careful in selecting what to initiate, but also remains focused and brings these initiatives to conclusion.

Some of the informants reflect more deeply on what to focus on:

Then, of course, you can ask yourself how much do you want to stick out your neck in that? You have to pick your battle, you know? ...[when asked to take on a challenge] at first when I understand it, I try to envision, okay, we are here. I will do this for at least three years, what difference should I make?... ..So, when people, when we look at data, back at this, what was the difference...? (Group Management Team member)

Many informants highlight the importance of taking things to completion. It seems to be their perception that the “taking initiative” part of Purposeful Action Taking is more widely understood within the organization, while implementing the initiatives is easily forgotten. The way the informants describe themselves and others as Purposeful Action Takers also gives an impression that most people would tend to lean to the initiation of things, while others are more likely implementers.

4.1.3 Institutionalizer of success

Even choosing the right experiments, taking them to completion and learning from both successes and failures will not do much, unless the outcomes become somehow integrated into the organization’s repeatable processes.

Some managers offer a view on where SKF is currently in this respect:

I'm not sure we have this improvement loop running well enough yet and that we are sharing experiences... ..I think we've done some successes, having people daring a little bit more. But I do not think we're sharing enough, still too much silos and learnings, we have challenges in replicating good successes... (Manager, middle, line role)

I think we should be able to replicate more. We should be able to learn much more from each other than we do right now. (Middle manager, support role)

The need for better replication of successes, sharing knowledge and collaborating across organizational silos comes up in most interviews, at least implicitly through a discussion of what leaders can do to increase these behaviors.

And yet, for the Purposeful Action Takers’ agency to become strategic would require that these successful experiments were recognized and, as Golsorkhi et al. (2010, 273-288) explain, institutionalized so that they become part of the new template. This ability to make one’s entrepreneurial vision not only realized, but also explicit and comprehensible to others, as well as influencing its replication elsewhere in the organization, is perhaps the most important thing that differentiates a Purposeful Action Taker from an entrepreneur.

4.2 Strategic practices enabling Purposeful Action Taking

Whereas the preceding section dealt with the behaviors that SKF leaders associate with Purposeful Action Taking, this section discusses the kinds of practices that the leaders apply in order to enable Purposeful Action Taking in others.

As the leaders' actions covered here are intended to mediate the organization towards a strategic outcome (i.e. becoming more Purposeful Action Takers), they fit the definition of strategic practices described in the framework. With the focus on implementation of strategy, the emphasis is on the management aspects of strategy making, rather than on planning and creation of strategy. In addition to exploring the individual leaders' responses, it is useful to also understand how SKF as a company views the management and leadership activity that is expected to support the implementation of new strategies.

One way that SKF as an organization describes management and leadership is through the framework of "Manage, Lead and Coach", which is taught to SKF managers on an internal course of the same name. The course has existed for years and still runs for multiple times a year, so it could be considered as a rather stable perception of how management and leadership is viewed at SKF. The course content consists of three areas of influence that the leaders need to act in, namely managing, leading and coaching (see Figure 3).

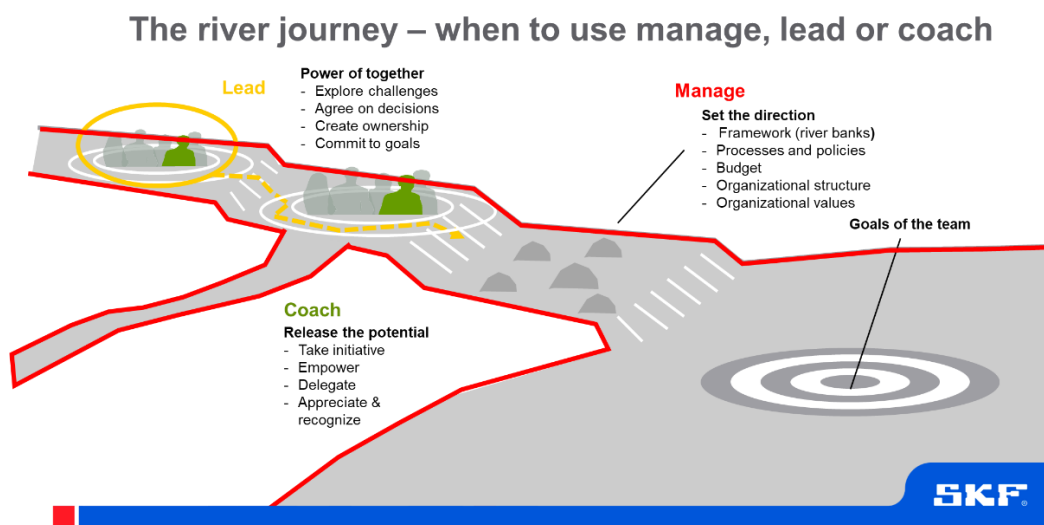


Figure 3. The framework of Manage, Lead and Coach in SKF's course material.

The interviewees' responses seem to fit within the broad categories of manage, lead and coach and it appears that they are all present in enabling Purposeful Action Taking in others. It may also be argued that, having worked at SKF for a long time, many informants have internalized the concept of manage, lead and coach in the way they think of their managerial work. Thus, albeit acknowledging the inevitable overlaps, the division between manage, lead and coach is

used as a broad structure for this section. Each element of the framework is briefly described in the beginning of the respective section.

4.2.1 Manage

The “manage” aspect of leadership deals with the somewhat more tangible matters, such as processes, policies, budgets and organizational structure. When managing, the leader is in charge, tells others what to do and takes the final responsibility.

4.2.1.1 Showing direction and setting boundaries

Even a Purposeful Action Taker needs to be pointed at a direction. As most strategy textbooks (see e.g. Johnson et al. 2014, 108-109) would point out, a central part of strategy work is defining and communicating the organization’s purpose. Sure enough, SKF communicates its mission, vision, values, objectives and strategic focus areas to the company personnel and – for a good part – also to external stakeholders (see e.g. AB SKF, 2020)

In daily practice, managers nevertheless need to go beyond the overall purpose statement. One interviewee, taking a generic example, says high-level objectives are easy to understand but that in reality, there are often seemingly conflicting goals:

...when we talk about environmental protection and then when we're having bigger cars and then, you know, this is where, I think, people get confused... So, how do we consistently communicate the goals. And then, when goals are competing against each other, how we help colleagues get into the right directions. (Middle manager, support role)

Mantere (2008, 308) mentions top management refereeing between ideas championed by middle managers as a practice to motivate further promoting ideas. Indeed, evaluating the quality of initiatives against the higher-level strategic objectives is probably important on every organizational level.

Need for more boundaries or rules does not come up in the interviews. As one informant says:

...you can't buy what you want, you can't invest in what you want, we have certain kinds of things that are difficult to get around, you can't employ people as you want et cetera. So I think there are checks and balances. I am not too worried; I am more worried about people not trying to do things. (Group Management Team member)

Rather, the need for clarifying the goals and expectations is brought up by many managers:

...as a [direct] Manager, what is of course important is to ensure that everyone in the team knows what being Purposeful Action Taker means in practice and that the goals are set, so that the person knows what is expected of him or her that year. Then, the person is given the freedom to take care of the matter the way he or she sees best, so that the goal is achieved. (Unit-level manager, support role)

Another one reflects on the approach he sees top management take on setting goals for operating units:

We don't receive specific goals, so that for this and that KPI you would have to reach a certain level... ..Just yesterday we had a meeting, where also [Group Management Team member responsible for the business area] was present and there was discussion on whether we should cut costs due to potential demand slowdown. He said quite strongly that he won't give us instructions, that we know our business and it's our job to proactively manage it. (Unit-level manager, line role)

The same manager applies similar behavior to his own team (of individual performers in non-managerial roles):

I avoid telling them what to do... ..I ask what they intend to do... already for a while we've done so that, for example when making a business plan, I don't give them the figures, but the figures come from them and then we look at it together... you [as a manager] have to set some goals, too, but my experience is that when the people do their own business plan, it's very realistic. Some leave a little room for negotiation, but it's understandable. (Unit-level manager, line role)

Based on the excerpts above, there appears to be almost a paradox of people asking for clear direction and goals, whilst finding it motivating to not have too specific goals set by their superiors. It seems apparent that rather than a unilateral, singular event, setting goals and expectations is an ongoing dialogue between different organizational levels. Based on the overall direction and organizational goals, people set tentative goals for their area of responsibility and then expect to receive feedback from their managers whether they are aligned with the organization as a whole (or at least the next level up).

As the responsibility for setting goals moves from the manager to the individual, the manager's role moves from managing towards coaching – the practices of which are discussed further below.

4.2.1.2 Performance management

Goal setting links closely to the matter of performance management. In the scope of the interviews, the discussion on performance management entailed SKF's Performance Management Program (PMP) with annual goals set and reviewed between the manager and individual, as well as Short Time Variable Pay (STVS), an incentive scheme based on financial measures, as well as the PMP.

Some informants bring up the topic spontaneously during the interviews either as a limitation for Purposeful Action Taking or as a tool that can be utilized to enable it. When specifically asked about how SKF's performance management system influences Purposeful Action Taking, there is an abundance of views. The top management informants see challenges in trying to make too specific a performance management and incentive scheme on an individual level:

For me, it's a non-issue. I would say take it away. I have been saying that for years. Take away this, do a profit sharing instead. Because what you can influence is not so much and everyone proposes, "[manager's name], now we should launch this, that

should be part of the variable pay." And I think, that's just too complicated. (Group Management Team member)

...when you look at the financial part of our goals, are they always driving the right behavior? No, they are not. And, you know, sometimes maybe we should all have targets related to SKF. We are all in, ultimately, we are all in the same boat... ...which means, of course, that becomes more of a profit-sharing program than something that you directly, hands-on, can influence yourself. (Group Management Team member)

The senior managers highlight challenges on setting the personal, qualitative goals in a way that they are challenging enough, yet fair and objective. On the other hand, they also consider the specific financial goals to cause sub-optimization, in at least two ways: Focusing on reaching a single profit center's goals versus the benefit of the organization as a whole or maximizing short-term results rather than investing into the future. They thus lean on moving more towards "profit sharing", based on the entire SKF's success.

On the operational level, managers view it more important to have goals that the individual or their immediate team can influence more clearly. As one manager puts it:

...a rather big part comes from the Group level and that doesn't necessarily motivate PAT behavior, because few people feel that their behavior influences SKF's TVA (Total Value Added, a group-level performance indicator of profitability and efficient use of capital) to a large extent. (Unit-level manager, line role)

The middle managers see both sides and try to find middle ground, as this example illustrates:

I support to have some kind of business area set up and you're responsible for a certain kind of market or segment or country, then you should be incentivized based on that. The easiest way is to have profit sharing. But it's also a way of you getting away from the responsibility of that kind of aspect. (Middle manager, support role)

To overcome the impediments of the performance management system for co-operation, one interviewee gives an example, how collaboration across operating units could be encouraged:

If we do something good, we can get the kickback to the people that have been participating into their sales incentive. Even if I cannot get it into my BPC unit [the manager's profit center]. But, we can work with manual things so the people get the recognition [for] doing something extra. (Middle manager, line role)

The managers on the operational level see it desirable to have both financial and non-financial goals. Some managers higher up recognize both benefits and challenges and with the non-financial goals. On one hand, it is good to agree on the focus areas, but on the other, summarizing a person's expected performance in a few sentences is difficult. One informant explains that many in the organization are stuck with an older version of the performance management system, where achieving those few pre-set goals was the only thing considered:

...I think in the PMP part you can never cover a person's full scope in a few targets. So, you will always have the situation, as a manager, that you need to evaluate how the person is performing. (Middle manager, line role)

Another interviewee sees the non-financial goals fitting better to some work roles than the others:

...blue collars, they have their own daily driven, of the activities. And those are very specific. ...you don't need to instill another layer of setting the goals and then review it. Because it's, basically, it's so visible... ...the other category of colleagues which I don't think this goal setting and also review applies is leaders. Because, when it comes to leaders, it's not those goals that actually are going to be able to depict what they deliver. It's the ultimate, holistic, kind of, the end result that they need to drive... ...in this current context, probably it [performance management, goal setting and review] is still applicable to mid-level, you know, managers who want to step into leader roles.... ...But, so long as you're above that level, and also more into leading the business end, I don't think it's enough... (Middle manager, support role)

All in all, it appears that the management higher up sees the performance management system as less essential, whereas closer to the operational level managers see it more as a tool to drive desired behaviors (such as Purposeful Action Taking). One manager shares his opinion:

I don't see that it's a reason for not being a Purposeful Action Taker. It's very important for certain people, but at the same time, it's two separate tracks. Wouldn't you do things if you don't get incentivized? ...again you should think, if this is your own company why wouldn't you do things? (Middle manager, support role)

It might be that for the managers with an overall responsibility themselves, it is easier to view SKF "as if they owned it" and there might be an assumption that others in the organization see it the same way, when they actually do not. If that is the case, a possible way to support Purposeful Action Taking would be to influence people's sense of ownership in the company.

4.2.1.3 Establishing accountability

Accountability is a central part of Purposeful Action Taking as SKF's leaders describe it in the interviews. However, relatively little is said in the interviews about the practices that managers can employ to enable accountability. One person in the top management, however, mentions not having enough consequence as a challenge yet to be tackled.

Taking as an example the safety goal of "zero accidents", for which Factory Managers are expected to be accountable in their factories, he explains:

I still see factories that have accidents, are dirty... ...there still isn't enough consequence. You can still get away with being in charge of a factory that is not state-of-the-art in terms of safety... (Group Management Team member)

The informant highlights the importance of making the expectations clear and making sure the Factory Manager has the resources and investments available to implement what is needed to achieve the safety goals. He explains that, where necessary, a simple EHS (Environmental, Health and Safety) scorecard is

applied with “traffic lights” showing the performance of the factory in either red, yellow or green:

If you are red, it is a priority and I will come back to follow up... if your factory is still dangerous, not tidy, not clean, not well maintained and you haven't changed to at least yellow, you probably cannot continue as a head of this factory... We talk about cultural change, talk about taking charge, but there is still relatively little consequence for not doing that. (Group Management Team member)

The same senior manager goes on to mention that the intention is not to create fear. The answer for “how not to create fear” appears to lie, for a large part, within the other practices that the managers apply in order to enable Purposeful Action Taking, such as creating trust and setting expectations and boundaries.

Perhaps, however, the difficulty of being clear of the expectations and the consequences of not living up to them, whilst not creating fear, is the reason why many managers avoid being explicit about the consequences.

4.2.1.4 Organizational structure

Setting up or changing the organizational structure is hardly a micro-practice. Yet, when the question is “what managers really do” in order to implement strategy, it cannot be bypassed. Already Chandler (1962, 314) famously declared that “structure follows strategy. Although this has been later challenged (e.g. Mintzberg, 1990, 183) and on some level remains a debate to this day, a claim could be made that there is an undeniable connection between the two.

In SKF's case, a certain kind of structure is seen as a precondition for Purposeful Action Taking to happen. An informant describes the structure that SKF had before the implementation of the current strategy (of which Purposeful Action Taking is part):

You cannot have people as a Purposeful Action Takers if you have a very complicated form of taking responsibility... [at the time when I started in this position] it was a matrix organization that was so complicated... At worst, a person could have five people to report to... You can imagine that if you have five people claiming to be your boss, there is no way you could be Purposeful Action Taker in that situation. (Group Management Team member)

Another manager offers a similar account:

I was part of taking down a complicated matrix where we were [top-heavy with a lot of] resources, many controllers, many business development staff on many levels and we kind of narrowed the pyramid again and it was a painful journey with people having to leave and having to step down from positions et cetera. And already from the start of I felt, "Mm, I am not going to be this top-heavy. I will run it as lean as possible." (Group Management Team member)

The informants then explain how the organizational structure was simplified, clearer reporting lines established, and key processes simplified, before it was time to start implementing Purposeful Action Taking.

The current organizational structure with a relatively strong business unit setup into manufacturing units and country sales units is seen as supporting Purposeful Action Taking across the hierarchy:

I believe that having strong country units supports Purposeful Action Taking. It gives a sense of being able to influence and that we decide what we do [in our country]. (Unit-level manager, line role)

I don't think we should change that [strong business unit setup], because it goes down to you should be empowered, and you should be responsible but of course then you should know what you are responsible for. (Middle manager, support role)

In sales we focus on what price can I get out from the customer, and how can I move the customer to buy more or good margin. How do I manage my credit time days? How do I move into digitalization? We will push the factories on their costs... [because of less internal negotiation] at the moment it's more functional than it's been in a long time. (Group Management Team member)

However, when being a Purposeful Action Taker requires reaching outside of one's own business unit, the current structure poses also challenges:

Challenge on the other side is to find the mixture when you have some processes which need to be like more global or more continental, that you need to put them through. (Unit-level manager, line role)

...in the bigger perspective, we have EMEA, Asia and America, in my opinion in stronger silos than ever. We do things differently and we after all have global customers, we are going to a common ERP system and so on... (Unit-level manager, support role)

This borderline between Lubrication and Industrial [two sales units in the same country] is unnecessary... people can work around it but having separate teams and data in separate systems slows things down and perhaps creates inefficiency. (Unit-level manager, line role)

From a manufacturing unit's perspective, connections to the customer may be limited. There might be just a few people talking from the manufacturing unit to the sales units... it comes down to how Purposeful Action Takers they are. (Unit-level manager, line role)

...that comes up as restriction sometimes... you don't have access to any people anywhere. I mean, we have the reporting lines and we have the way we measure result and so on. It's not, it's not that easy if you suddenly want to use a person elsewhere and be flexible. (Middle manager, line role)

At the same time, the managers recognize the agency that Purposeful Action Takers have in overcoming the organizational limitations:

...when things are not working it's extremely important not to accept the kind of blame game [between business units]... ... It's better than you get in contact directly with me or vice versa... Because if you escalate it is always a risk that you sidestep someone.... it doesn't feel good when your boss comes and tell you, it's better that you and I solve it. Because next time it happens we know who to call, we can fix it ourselves without getting the bosses involved. (Middle manager, support role)

Another manager explains, how with less corporate support resources, it is up to the sales unit to be more proactive in initiating new developments from the customer interface:

...when we think about that we get a bit slimmer, and that the segment functions are reduced, so it's also the business unit's responsibility to get the newest developments and topics [brought up from the customers]. And kind of buy-in from the group and from the people who can support you in the business. (Unit-level manager, line role)

A senior leader considers some “silo formation” a worthy sacrifice in promoting Purposeful Action Taking:

...then you have the geographical split up. And we are slowly gliding apart doing our thing. And I think that's quite okay... ...Europe has been so heavy so many years that you don't put attention in other areas fast enough. Now, America can set the agenda much better, China can set an agenda and really drive what's important for them and be verbal about that... Sometimes we invent the wheel again... which is okay if I can get more enthusiasm because of that. Because if people don't feel "I did it" you will push them off the rope it's not going to fly. (Group Management Team member)

Much more could be said about the structure and how it affects Purposeful Action Taking but this, after all, is not a study on organization design per se. Based on the interviews, an important takeaway is that the structure can help or slow down the implementation of Purposeful Action Taking and there is no perfect structure that would not pose any challenges. Managers, then, need to decide, where it is most important for the structure to support Purposeful Action Taking and where limitations are more acceptable.

An interesting notion is that while the top management voluntarily bring up how they have changed the structure, the middle and unit-level managers tend to discuss structure only when it is specifically brought up by the interviewer. Even then, they mainly give their views on how suitable the structure is for the implementation of Purposeful Action Taking, rather than suggest changes to it. Perhaps the managers below the top of the hierarchy feel that they have less power to change the organizational structure, or that it is not part of their role expectation, and thus focus more on other practices.

A case could be made, however, that most managers have the potential for agency in questions of structure. For example, Hope et al. (2011, 110-112) recommend starting from the lowest (organizational) level possible and organizing people into small “value centers” that as a team are fully accountable for the customers and profit of the business assigned to them. Surely, it should be within a Unit Manager’s influence to make such structural changes inside the unit.

4.2.1.5 Allocating resources

Another conventional means of implementing strategy – and one mentioned by Mantere (2008, 302) as an enabler of agency – is allocating resources. The topic comes up from many perspectives:

I have room to operate, but... I also have a full schedule. As a Purposeful Action Taker you are also responsible for setting your own priorities. (Unit-level manager, line role)

These days, there is a competition for resources. On one hand it is difficult to get them. On the other, there is too much of them. So, there is the fear of losing jobs. (Unit-level manager, support role)

An interesting contrast to the above is a view from higher up, explaining a way to make managers think thoroughly their need for new resources before hiring:

I always kept the discipline there that in my part of SKF, you don't employ anyone, new or replacement without my written approval. And during the last years, we've been in a growing business environment and I've basically said yes to every request that reached my desk and I am quick if I see it I decide yes or no... (Group Management Team member)

It would be easy to see why this approach may seem rigid and bureaucratic on lower levels of the organization, albeit the quick decisions are highlighted as a nod towards agility. At the same time, this shows how approving and not approving resources may be one of the few ways how managers at the top can influence strategy implementation in the daily life. Moreover, the same senior executive continues with an aspect of organizational learning that this practice has:

And in good times you may need less of that, but I know if I create that discipline now it's much easier if we hit the real down, it's much easier to make it more difficult. Then you have the process in place. (Group Management Team member)

This practice seems to be a form of top management resistance that may be a catalyst of generative mechanisms for change (Friesl and Kwan 2017, 103-109). In practice, if managers found it somewhat difficult to recruit new resources, they might instead look for new ways to do things with the existing resources. While doing that, they are potentially implementing the intended strategies or generating new ones.

Some informants also mention a contradiction between the recommendation (from higher management) to "do what you see is best in your country", while at the same time different business lines are unwilling to give up control of resources within the country to the country heads.

4.2.1.6 Selecting the right people

If approving resources is a practice more in the hands of the higher management, then the selection of whom to hire is accessible to every manager - at least every now and then.

Whenever we have the luxury of recruiting new people, we should recruit only persons who already possess these traits (of a Purposeful Action Taker) in some way. We should recruit only talents. (Unit-level manager, support role)

Selection is not only important in external recruitments, but also identifying people for key positions internally. One informant discusses the kinds of key positions:

What truly makes the difference is who are the connecting dot [who] will be able to connect many dots... ..One connecting dot is the leader position. So, when we identify leaders for [GMT and roles reporting to them] those are the critical moments that I think a lot. ...and then the other connecting dot position... ..is the in-depth position. So, those are the engineers. Those are the subject matter experts, for instance. (Middle manager, support role)

Moreover, especially in overcoming the inevitable organizational silos, one informant suggests:

Then we need people moving between sales and manufacturing that knows both sides... And the network knowing who to call on and what et cetera. (Group Management Team member)

In order to foster entrepreneurial qualities in the organization, some firms have gone as far as hiring actual start-up entrepreneurs. The challenge, however, may be that they might not have the patience or the capability needed to navigate the realities of a large corporation (Ramachandran et al., 2006, 89).

4.2.2 Lead

“Lead” is concerned with shared responsibility, committing to goals and exploring the challenges together. It is often associated with the leader working with a group of people, although the practices within this category are certainly exercised also in one-on-one interactions.

4.2.2.1 Creating trust

Mantere (2008, 306-307) highlights trust as one enabler of strategic agency in middle management. During the interviews, managers at all levels emphasize the importance of creating a trustful and safe environment. The managers also identify creating trust a key task for them, as can be seen from the following statements:

Creating an atmosphere of energy and trust is a key part of my job. (Manager, unit-level, support role)

Because fear, and those kind of negative feelings, will put the lid on, you know, driver, energy, motivation, all of it... ..if you don't have leaders in your structure which, including myself, who can, who can release that energy, you will not get the Purposeful Action Taking organization. (Group Management Team member)

In the case of trust, the required management behavior is not necessarily so much just doing something, but also not doing certain other things. This seems, for large part, be connected to reducing or not creating fear. Many refer to avoiding blame and punishment in situations, where people have tried some-

thing and then failed. It is apparent from the statements of the interviewees that SKF has already, to some extent, changed in this respect:

I have never heard in the last years that someone got, fired or negative things due to that he/ she was trying to do something. (Middle manager, line role)

I think we have more daring in the organization. So, I think we have succeeded in opening up and making people more daring. Being a little bit more risk taking, prepared to try and test it out. And that we have a bigger tolerance for mistakes (Middle manager, line role)

In order to facilitate an open environment for learning from mistakes, some managers are very explicit about telling that they are not looking for blame or punishment. One informant describes a lessons-learned-session for a major project gone wrong:

...it was clearly said there is no-one to blame for what has happened here. It's an open discussion... (Middle manager, line role)

Moreover, it isn't necessarily just fear that stops people from being Purposeful Action Takers and doing things in a new way. Some interviewees believe that it is shame that people feel, when they are expected to change their ways and start to think that what they have done until then has been wrong. What managers can do to overcome this is, again, creating trust. One middle manager in a support function describes his own learning journey and how he nowadays is more comfortable in addressing difficult issues without creating a conflict. He explains:

I was pushier, I was more aggressive... ..but in a long run and normal situation you don't get the buy in to do things that way. It's better to build up a relationship, it's better to build up trust between you and me and then it's much easier to take the hard discussions as well. (Middle manager, support role)

Being open to admit shame to others or even themselves – let alone to a higher-ranking manager, is not necessarily something that people find easy to do. However, as long as the underlying feeling remains a “secret”, people tend to resist the change for other reasons that are easier to bring up, but not necessarily the actual ones.

Overall, the interviewed managers associate the creation of trust with people being more daring to try out new things and to take risks. This is well in line with Mantere's (2008) finding that trust is a key enabler for “facilitating adaptability”, i.e. managers experimenting and doing autonomous development within their area of responsibility. He states: “Putting oneself out on a limb trying out new practices requires energy and commitment as well as a sense of ontological security that the divergent behavior will not be punished” (Mantere 2008, 307).

Although trust comes up frequently as an important factor in the interviews, there are not that many clear strategic practices that the interviewees mention that could be done to increase trust. Rather, it seems that trust is built

over a longer period and through many subtle acts. However, the destruction of trust happens much more quickly, which puts the managers in a difficult situation. The actions that erode trust cannot simply be overcome by heavy efforts of creating new trust in the short term.

4.2.2.2 Explaining “Why”

Leadership practitioners (see e.g. Willink & Babin 2017) highlight the importance of explaining why something needs to be done – or a change needs to happen. In the interviews, especially the managers in the operational units bring this up as a practice that leaders can use to enable Purposeful Action Taking in others.

I think what is important when you take more charge and when you take responsibility and you want to work with people is to kind of explain why we do things... ..Especially with overall strategies my feeling is that, of course, they are very broad and very big topics but sometimes you need to break it down to subtopics and then bring it to forward to the people... (Manager, unit level, line role)

Thinking about the Purposeful Action Taking concept, it is important to remember to talk about it regularly and ensure that people have really understood, what it means for us in particular. (Unit-level manager, support role)

Rouleau (2005, 1413-1415) refers to this as the act of sensegiving, that is, explaining to the others why a change needs to happen. Preceding sensegiving, however, it is apparent that the managers themselves first have to understand and make sense of the change, which Rouleau refers to as sensemaking. In the interviews, managers at all levels demonstrate having “thought through” the reasons for why SKF should change towards more Purposeful Action Taking.

It is remarkable that in the interviews the middle and top management mention little of the need to explain to people the reasons for a strategic change. Instead, they talk about frequent dialogues with their subordinates (discussed further in the succeeding sections). Might be that, their subordinates themselves being managers, managers higher up at least tacitly assume that through the process of sensemaking they already “know why” and do not need an explanation. This account illustrates the assumption:

...if you would ask [the subordinate] today, say: “did [the manager] force you to this [driving a major change]” I don't think he would say I did. I think he would say, you know, “he challenged me, but it's my plan. And now I can see that this makes sense and I can also see where, you know, why it didn't work in the past...” (Group Management Team member)

Whether through more explicit explanation of the reasons to change, or a more consultative process of supporting the other person in their own sensemaking, the results confirm that helping others understand and make sense of a change is essential to its successful implementation.

4.2.2.3 Setting an example

When a change is so clearly about changing one’s behavior as turning in to a Purposeful Action Taker is, it is not a surprise that showing example comes up

as a practice to promote change. One informant highlights the leader's part as a role model:

I think you have to set examples. People look to you as a leader much more than we realize. Whatever you say or write or do people are watching. So you have to live the role model every moment. (Group Management Team member)

Another one mentions it as a to facilitate working across borders and breaking organizational silos:

I think, as a manager, it's extremely important here that you lead by example. So that you are not saying this is their problem or my responsibility and theirs... ..so, I think that actively promoting SKF, putting the SKF hat on first, I think that is a key for a manager... ..and then also actively show that we are learning, that we are supporting others and that we are not just leaving a problem, even if it's a bit outside, that we are making sure that if this is an issue, I mean, you don't drop it. (Middle manager, line role)

While managers may not always be in a position to set the best example themselves, they also make use of their access to what happens in the other parts of the organization and share examples from the others:

Show good examples... ..Share your own experience or share experience from others... ..in way you're pulling people together. Those who have done it already and those who haven't yet. (Middle manager, line role)

...be a bit of a spider because obviously we see a lot of things and we see a lot of good things... ..I mean trying to connect people with each other, if we have a good development parallel as we have in France, for instance, how do we use it much more in the Czech or in Finland for instance. The best thing we can do is trying to increase the network of each one of us. (Middle manager, support role)

One informant, while recognizing the power of example, thinks pointing out what the others are doing right might be perceived negatively by some people:

The other side of it is that those who have done a good job until now feel that their work is no longer appreciated, that the direction has changed and they're being left behind... ..somehow also the slow-movers need to be kept on... (Manager, operational, line role)

To another manager, knowing good examples from elsewhere in the organization helps him make connections between people:

...you need to see people then you can call them and build that networking facility and sometimes half of my job is just being a switchboard saying, "You should call this guy, work with this." (Group Management Team member)

It may be that this method of putting people in touch with each other to drive change across borders – that Rouleau and Balogun (2011, 956, 960, 962) call “identifying working couples” – is a more effective way of utilizing examples. Rather than simply being shown examples of what someone else has done (with an implied expectation to imitate that behavior), people get to interact with each other and figure out the needed changes for themselves.

4.2.3 Coach

In the coaching approach, the person being coached is responsible for the outcomes and the leader's role is to help the person release their potential, take initiative and succeed. Coaching typically happens between two individuals but can also take place in a group setting.

4.2.3.1 Giving energy

In order to be successful, coaching, being largely about helping another person to perform at their best, requires that the person being coached also has high energy levels. One interviewee touches on this topic more explicitly:

...one of the things I do myself and also I remind all the leaders that I support, is on the energy level. I think, you know, what we need to do for ourselves, very responsively, is how can we keep ourselves physically, and also mentally, healthy. It may sound, kind of, you know, natural. But it's not that easy.

The interviewee goes on to explain how everyone, first and foremost, is responsible for maintaining and recharging their own energy levels, but also how a leader can observe their colleagues and remind them of following the practices to increase both mental and physical energy.

Others also mention "giving energy" as a part of their job, even though the practical methods of doing so do not surface explicitly in the interviews. However, the following practices related to coaching may well be the ones to also help people increase their energy.

4.2.3.2 Attention, interest, caring and feedback

In some of the interviews the importance of giving attention and showing interest were explicitly highlighted as practices of encouraging the wanted behavior. When talking about which initiatives he chooses to advance and how, one senior leader puts it bluntly:

...we only put the attention on the ones that are important, and the others will feel excluded and if there is anything human being hate, it's being excluded. (Group Management Team member)

Another Manager also relates this to fundamental human needs and mentions giving feedback as a form of showing continued interest:

In a way, a human being does need acceptance and that there is interest in what he or she does... and when the feedback is given correctly, it clearly drives development... it isn't a moment of enlightenment but happens gradually. It must be, kind of a process. (Unit-level manager, support role)

Moreover, another informant highlights the importance of attention and feedback in helping people retain high energy levels:

...when people are taking those actions... ...there needs to be more communication of how they're doing... Sometimes the employees might come back and say, I don't know. I thought that I knew, but now don't know. Where should I go? And then en-

ergy levels drop. ...he or she doesn't get the reinforced information that you're working towards the right direction. (Middle manager, support role)

Although showing interest and attention may be a seemingly obvious way to influence behavior, its use in daily management work perhaps isn't as pronounced as it should be. The difficulty of giving enough and the right kind of feedback is commonly discussed in organizations. Research points out that millennials, for example, are very particular about the type of feedback, the manner it is given and its frequency and consistency (Anderson et al. 2016).

The first excerpt also shows, how top management can overcome the difficulty of shaping strategy beyond administrative structures, as problematized in the process school of thought (Jabrzakowski 2005, 16). Even after the top management have delegated the responsibility of an initiative to middle management and allocated resources, they can still influence the behavior of people at all levels in the organization by showing their interest on what they deem important to strategy implementation – and ignore what they don't.

A precondition to this is a kind of organizational culture that allows open communication across the ranks of hierarchy. One informant explains a kind of behavior that was more common in the past:

...if you, for example, ran into [a higher-ranking manager] in the corridor, historically. And he asked me about something about the customer, I would directly, after talking to him, go back to my office and I would write an email to all the managers in between and tell them that I had ran into [the higher-ranking manager] and what I told him. So, that they were aware that, I would tell them that I didn't approach him, he approached me... ...you did not approach top management directly. (Middle manager, line role)

The informant then goes to describe, how SKF has changed in this respect over the years and that from many parts of the company this belief has disappeared. Thus, it seems to be more natural for higher management to get directly involved in initiatives driven by persons below their direct subordinates.

4.2.3.3 Asking questions and challenging

Asking open-ended questions is generally seen as a central part of coaching. Whereas some informants mention coaching, asking questions is discussed even more frequently. Many leaders also recognize it as an area of improvement for themselves.

For me it [Purposeful Action Taking] means creating a culture of enquiry... ...I need to constantly work on my skills in asking questions and patience (to listen), because I think it's such a central part of motivating others. (Unit-level manager, line role)

I can ask more questions. Challenge them more. I mean, in case of a proposal, challenge it a little bit more. Let them think and let them develop a different thinking. So, yes, to ask questions more, I believe I can develop or support their development into Purposeful Action Takers... ...I mean, they are responsible. They have the freedom to decide but they are responsible for what they decide. (Middle manager, line role)

In my opinion, coaching is the big thing, and that as a manager you give the responsibility to the level where things are done. (Unit-level manager, line role)

The most difficult part of asking questions, however, may not be finding the right questions, but being able to genuinely listen:

...have that kind of climate also within a group that it is open for discussion, open for inputs. Be more humble and be willing to learn from each other. It doesn't matter if you have one year in the company or one year to retirement, that kind of attitude is really important. (Middle manager, support role)

One manager describes, shortly after taking responsibility for a business area with a need for radical change, the dialogue with the leader of that business:

I think, for three or four months we were talking three times per day. I remember, sometime he was like, "I can't take it any longer, you know, I just can't, you are changing my whole way of thinking here. And you challenge me in every, every, thing which I thought was the right thing to do. Now you challenge it." I'm, "yeah, I'm challenging you, I'm not saying that I'm right. I'm just saying have you thought about this?" And now, what is it, six months later, I think we are there. (Group Management Team member)

It is apparent from the interviews that the managers at all levels perceive coaching, and asking questions in particular, as an effective means to influence behavior and thus implement strategy. Building on Rouleau's findings on the effectiveness of "overcoding" (2005, 1426), coaching is also likely to be most effective, when the coach is able to adapt coaching to the socio-cultural and professional context of the coachee.

The strategic practices identified in the study are summarized under the categories of "Managing", "Leading" and "Coaching" in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Practices enabling strategic agency.

<u>Manage</u>	<u>Lead</u>	<u>Coach</u>
Showing direction and setting boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating organizational goals • Setting expectations • Establishing controls 	Creating trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting and learning from mistakes • Avoiding blame • Building relationships 	Giving energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining own health and energy levels • Encouraging others to do the same
Performance management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting specific objectives and incentives • Adapting objectives and incentives to the situation 		
Establishing accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying the consequences for not meeting the expectations 	Explaining “Why” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensegiving • Supporting sensemaking 	Attention, interest, caring and feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting attention on important topics • Ignoring less important topics • Giving reinforcing feedback
Organizational structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the structure • Going around the limitations of the structure 		
Allocating resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing the limited resources • Granting or denying new resources 	Setting an example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading by example • Sharing examples within the organization • Making connections between people across organizational boundaries 	Asking questions and challenging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking open-ended questions • Listening patiently and genuinely • Challenging others’ thinking
Selecting the right people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruiting • Appointing to key roles • Job rotation 		

The characterizations of each practice fittingly demonstrate the Strategy as Practice approach’ claim that strategy is something that the members of the organization “do”. Indeed, each of the characterizations contains a verb.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has looked at how strategy is implemented in a large corporation in practice and, specifically, what is the role of strategic agency and what managers at different organizational levels do to enable agency in others. While the strategy process and Strategy as Practice approaches have expanded the focus from top management to many other types of strategic actors, they often focus on one or a few specific groups, such as middle management or external consultants. Here, the focus has been on all managerial roles, from the CEO to the first-line managers.

At the focal company of the study, SKF, the elements of strategic agency are largely described in the concept of "Purposeful Action Taking". On the individual level, becoming a "Purposeful Action Taker" seems like a tall order. Based on the focal company's description of it and the responses of the interviewees, a Purposeful Action Taker is expected to take up challenges that others have not and also bring them to completion, be an entrepreneurial risk-taker, but also involve others across organizational borders and act within the code of conduct. Is this realistic and do such persons exist?

Bruch and Ghoshal's (2004, 7) research indicated that only about 10% of managers take purposeful action. The perception of SKF's management is that in today's competitive environment, exceeding that share by a bit is not enough. Instead, in their view, a significantly higher percentage of Purposeful Action Takers is needed for a company to thrive. How much is enough? Surely, not every manager can be a Purposeful Action Taker? As the focus of this study has been on qualitatively understanding the role of agency in strategy implementation and what managers do to enable agency, the attempt has not been made to measure the share of Purposeful Action Takers in the organization. Also, the results of Bruch and Ghoshal's (2002, 2004) research are nearly two decades old. In order to have a valid benchmark for practitioners, it could be beneficial to investigate the share of Purposeful Action Takers in companies in the 2020s.

Neither SKF's formal description of Purposeful Action Taking nor the responses of the interviewees address the ways to deal with the fact that most

people do not have all the traits of a Purposeful Action Taker. Could they nevertheless form an organization that consistently takes purposeful action?

A lot has been written about different personalities, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they fit together, in the workplace and in the society in general (see e.g. Selden & Goodie 2018 or Goodstein & Lanyon 1999). Towards the “lighter” end of the spectrum, Erikson (2014) simplifies different kinds of personalities into red, blue, yellow and green and discusses their specific traits and how each act and communicate with others. Li’s (2020) research focuses on the impact of heterogeneity on team performance, specifically whether less disciplined “outliers” who occasionally make extraordinary contributions improve overall team performance and under what conditions.

With managers from all organizational levels included, this thesis has identified a large variety of strategic practices to enable agency. In the spirit of the Strategy as Practice approach, it addresses the human side of how leaders’ personal actions influence others but surfaces also several structural matters that have an impact on the enablement of strategic agency.

The use of “manage”, “lead” and “coach” as categories of strategic practices provides a way to differentiate between the practices predominantly related to systems and processes, such as recruitment, organizational design and performance management (manage) and practices related to influencing through human interaction, either on a personal (coach) or group (lead) level. Naturally, neither any of the practices fall into one category only, nor are the categories clearly defined and free of overlap. They do, however, reveal the wide variety of methods that managers can and do apply to enable strategic agency.

One of the research questions has been, whether and how the interpretation of the praxis, that is, the strategic initiative of Purposeful Action Taking and the methods to enable its implementation differ in different organizational levels and functions. While the results are not conclusive in this respect, some patterns appear in the data.

In their characterizations of Purposeful Action Taking, the managers higher up in the organization tend to emphasize acting in the benefit of the corporation as a whole or “putting the SKF hat on”. They seem to feel relatively free to choose to focus their efforts on wherever they perceive the value to the company to be the biggest at a given time and see little internal restrictions in their way. In comparison, the managers closer to the daily operations see finding time and energy for “something extra” and overcoming internal roadblocks as challenges for the Purposeful Action Taker behavior. To bridge the gap of differing perspectives between the extreme ends of managerial hierarchy, the role of middle management is essential. Balogun and Johnson’s (2004) study describe in depth, how middle managers navigate through a change process, where they at first are recipients of change and then become active change agents.

When it comes to the strategic practices enabling agency in others, the informants seem to emphasize the practices that they perceive to be within their

authority and control – as could probably be expected. The top management, for example, talk more about changing the organizational structure to support the needed behaviors and the decisions to hire, appoint or fire people. On the operational level, the focus is more on selecting the right people when allowed to recruit and managing effectively within – and regardless of – the existing organization. The management higher up also promotes job rotation more, while in the unit level the concern is more about having enough resources and holding on to the best talent.

An interesting example of the differences between organizational levels is that of performance measurement and incentives. While the top management views them as almost redundant and would rather just do a general profit sharing when the company does well, the operational management favors more specific goals that link more directly to individual achievement. The middle management, perhaps unsurprisingly, takes a more flexible approach and discusses the ways to adapt the performance measurement and incentives to specific situations, in order to get strategic initiatives implemented, even when the commitment is needed from different parts of the organization with potentially conflicting goals. The middle management's approach seems to be a fitting example of Salih and Doll's (2013) finding that middle managers contribute to strategy implementation by translating the more generalized strategic objectives of the top management into daily efforts and aligning them horizontally.

In the empirical part of the study, a distinction was made not only between informants from different organizational levels, but also whether they are in a line management role or in a support function. With a relatively low numbers of interviewees, however, clear patterns differentiating the line managers' responses from those in the support functions could not be made. For any differences in responses, there is a high likelihood that other variables than organizational role influence the results just as much, if not more. For example, the informants vary in their past work experience, tenure at SKF, gender and cultural origin, which potentially might have a more significant effect than the current position in a line versus support role.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this study comes from the data gathering focused on all managerial levels and various kinds of potential practices to enable strategic agency, providing a large number of enablers for further research to take a deeper look at. At the same time, the focus of this study has been specifically on the managerial role and on strategy implementation. Had the scope been even wider, for example, including also non-managerial roles and strategy creation, the list of strategic practices enabling agency would have likely been even longer.

It could also be argued that this study contributes to the Strategy as Practice research by providing a concrete way of applying the activity framework to strategy implementation. The terms praxis and strategic practices are defined somewhat differently than in earlier research. For example, Whittington's (2006, 619) view of strategic practices could be interpreted as a set of tools in a toolbox,

while praxis is the real-life use of those tools. In that respect, they are the two sides of the same thing.

In this study, however, praxis has been defined as the goal-oriented activity to reach the organizational objectives, and strategic practices as means of enabling the said activity. As such, they are clearly two distinct things, for example an Account Manager acquiring a new customer (praxis) and a Manager encouraging the Account Manager to approach the new customer (practice). Based on this definition, it could also be said that praxis is achieving results through one's own actions, whereas strategic practices are used to achieve results through others.

While some papers (e.g. Golsorkhi et al. 2010, 132-137) lean more towards this study's interpretation of strategic practice and praxis, they remain on a more general level. The simplified definitions of praxis and practices, as the one made here, may not make use of the terms as widely as they are used in social sciences, but make it easier to apply the concepts to research on a practical problem, such as strategy implementation.

Moreover, the strategic initiative to be implemented that has been studied here deals with changing organizational behavior. Compared to, for example, mergers and acquisitions or entering new markets as a strategic initiative, becoming a Purposeful Action Taking organization influences the organizational outcomes in a more indirect way. A Purposeful Action Taker could, for example, be someone who initiates and drives through a strategic acquisition. The ability to enable strategic agency across the organization might, in fact, have become a significant source of competitive advantage as the business environment has become more unpredictable.

Being a qualitative study, with data-gathering through a semi-structured interview, nature of this research has been more explorative and to some extent descriptive than conclusive and prescriptive. While it provides many enablers for strategic agency, the list is not exhaustive by any means. Also, there is no assessment of which methods are the most effective and in which situations.

While it could be hypothesized that the methods used by experienced managers are mostly "battle-tested" and thus efficient, such an assumption could well be wrong. The potential reasons for adopting inefficient management innovations (and rejecting efficient ones) have been well recognized in literature (see e.g. Abrahamson 1991). Especially, considering the changes in the competitive environment, it could be just as well hypothesized that at least some of the methods that managers use are no longer effective, but only performed because they used to work in the past. For a practitioner, the results presented here are more descriptive than normative, giving ideas to reflect on in one's own context rather than clear recommendations.

Using the activity framework in a similar manner as applied here, but through more structured data-gathering methods, future research could be conducted to measure the effectiveness of various strategic practices in enabling the strategy praxis, that is, implementation of strategy. The application of the framework could also be expanded to actors other than managers, such as non-

managerial employees and external actors like strategy consultants and even a firm's customers and suppliers. A more structured research setting could also allow for a more in-depth understanding on the use and effectiveness of different strategic practices in different managerial roles and at different organizational levels.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, an interesting area for future research would be to study the number of individuals that are Purposeful Action Takers in various organizations and contrast that with Buch and Ghoshal's (2002, 2004) results. In addition, further research could be conducted around organizations that take more purposeful action than the others. Addressing the questions above, the research could also look at whether the purposeful action on an organizational level is more a result of a higher share of Purposeful Action Takers or a result of people with a more narrow set of traits associated with Purposeful Action Taking, complementing each other through teamwork.

Lest we forget, the ultimate goal of an organization's strategy is to "deliver greater value to customers or create comparable value at a lower cost, or do both" (Kornberger 2017, 1755). As the environment that the organization operates in changes, the organization needs to change, in order to continue to increase its value creation. In this context the strategic agency of the Purposeful Action Takers is needed to make the value-adding change happen.

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APPENDIX 1: INVITATION FOR THE INTERVIEW

Sample

Jussi Hienonen

Subject: Purposeful Action Taking in practice - interview for a Master's Thesis
Location: Skype Meeting

Start: pe 10.5.2019 10.00
End: pe 10.5.2019 11.00

Recurrence: (none)

Meeting Status: Meeting organizer

Organizer: Jussi Hienonen
Required Attendees: ██████████

[→ Join Skype Meeting](#)
 Trouble Joining? [Try Skype Web App](#)

[Help](#)

Hi ██████████,

It was nice to meet you again in Gothenburg last week. As we discussed, I'm working on a thesis as a part of my IDP and would like to interview SKF leaders for the empirical part.

Here is the Skype meeting invitation as promised. I just picked an available time from your calendar that I thought might be convenient for you, but please feel free to suggest another one, in case this isn't the best time.

The interview is expected to take some 30-60 minutes and requires no advance preparation from you. To describe the research and the main themes of the interviews:

- The goal of the thesis is to understand, how managers at different organizational levels implement strategic change in practice, through their own actions.
- The research will focus specifically on how Purposeful Action Taking is being implemented as a strategic goal. Hence, the themes in the interview will include:
 1. Your interpretation of what "Purposeful Action Taker" means
 2. You personally as a Purposeful Action Taker
 3. What do you do to enable and encourage Purposeful Action Taking by others in SKF?

I really appreciate your interest in participating this and looking forward to our discussions!

1

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Could you please tell me a bit about yourself?
 - a. ...your career at SKF so far?
 - b. ...and your current job or area of responsibility?

PURPOSEFUL ACTION TAKER - MEANING

2. How would you describe a Purposeful Action Taker to an outsider, who knows little or nothing about the idea of PAT?
 - a. Pay attention to e.g. use of verbs ("doing" vs. "being")
 - b. What does PAT mean in practice and in daily work?
 - c. What kinds of issues does it manifest?
3. Why was the idea of PAT introduced?
 - a. What is it intended to change?
 - b. What has changed in your opinion/experience?
 - c. Is the goal near/far?
 - d. Where is SKF now in this journey of moving from the "starting position" into PAT (e.g. x% from start to goal)?
 - e. In which areas you feel most progress has been achieved?
 - f. Where are the biggest challenges?
4. What is required for the change to happen?

SELF AS A PURPOSEFUL ACTION TAKER

5. How would you describe yourself as a Purposeful Action Taker?
 - a. In which kinds of issues/practices of your own work is the PAT idea seen the most?
 - b. Strengths?
 - c. Development areas?
 - d. Areas, where you've seen most change in your own behaviour?
 - e. Area that you're focusing on now / will focus on next in developing yourself as a PAT?
6. How much "room to operate" do you have as a PAT?
 - a. In which kinds of issues are you especially able to take purposeful action most freely?
 - b. Are there issues/areas you would like to, but cannot for some reason?

- i. What's stopping you?
- c. What factors in the company structure, policies, routines, cultures etc. support the change to becoming a PAT?
- d. What factors in the company structure, policies, routines, cultures etc. slow down the change to becoming PAT?
- e. How and in which ways are able to influence the factors/issues blocking progress towards people being PAT?
 - i. Practical case from above; How have you tried to influence? What were the results?

ENABLING AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS AS PAT

7. How and which ways can leaders enable PAT in others?
8. How do you enable and encourage PAT (please give practical examples, what did you do?)
 - a. within your own team?
 - b. outside of your own team?
9. What factors in the company structure, policies, routines, cultures etc. support this?
10. What factors in the company structure, policies, routines, cultures etc. slow this down?
11. Specific areas to the above
 - c. SKF has a relatively strong business unit setup (e.g. Country Sales Units and Manufacturing Units). How does this support the practicing of PAT?
 - i. How does it slow it down?
 - d. How do SKF's performance management and reward systems support the practicing of PAT?
 - i. How does it slow it down?
 - e. How do SKF's training programs / specific trainings support the practicing of PAT?
 - i. How do they slow it down?
12. How do you encourage / facilitate interaction between different parts of the company?