



**KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS**

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**IMPROVING EMPLOYEE ALIGNMENT AT KEYPROJECT BY  
MEANS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION**

Final Master Thesis

**Supervisor**

Lecturer Aukse Blaženaitė

**Kaunas, 2017**

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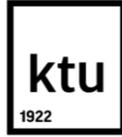
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International Business 621N12004

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Improving Employee Alignment at KeyProject by Means of Organizational Communication

**DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

10 May 2017

Kaunas

I, **Izzet Bora Aydemir**, hereby confirm that Master's Thesis entitled Improving Employee Alignment at KeyProject by Means of Organizational Communication is solely my own work and all the data and research findings presented are true and obtained fairly. None of the thesis parts contain plagiarized material from printed or internet sources, all direct or indirect quotes of other sources are fully and properly acknowledged. I have not made illegal payments for this work to anyone.

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## SUMMARY

The goal of the research is to propose a development plan for increasing employee alignment through improving communication at KeyProject. The tasks below are set to be completed in order to reach the aim.

### ***The main tasks of the thesis:***

- 1) To make a practical analysis of current situation of employee alignment at KeyProject in order to find out which aspect of alignment needs development at KeyProject
- 2) To develop a conceptual model in order to propose the development guideline for increasing employee alignment by means of communication
- 3) To Carry out an empirical research on employee alignment at KeyProject
- 4) Based on empirical research result to propose the development plan for increasing employee alignment at KeyProject by means of communication

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## INTRODUCTION

In the time of increasing competition in the market, employees play an important role in increasing the competitiveness of a company, employees can be driving force in distinguishing the company from other actors in the market with their qualification. However, it needs to be pointed out that qualification and motivation are not enough in getting the best out of that potential. Sometimes, it might happen that the company cannot be successful in the presence of highly qualified employees and encouragement. If the company has well qualified and highly motivated employees, but the performance is low, such type of companies usually lacks alignment (Nguwi, 2013).

Alignment is the level to which departments and teams in a company have a chance to work in collaboration to operate effectively and reach high customer satisfaction (David, 2005). In an aligned system, employees are aware of the strategies, business goals, and their tasks. Employees understand the level of impact they have in an organization and how their performance or tasks influence to the overall performance of a company. While choosing employees, leaders make sure that employees, their behaviors or performance are consistent with companies` values and employees don't feel abandon and feel like the part of a big family. However, it is also impossible to reach desirable overall performance in the absence of alignment (McAdam, 2002).

As the object of the research, employee alignment at KeyProject is chosen, as this company is young and there is space for improvement.

**Aim:** *The goal of the research is to propose a development plan for increasing employee alignment through improving communication at KeyProject*

***The main tasks of the thesis:***

5) *To make a practical analysis of current situation of employee alignment at KeyProject in order to find out which aspect of alignment needs development at KeyProject*

6) *To develop a conceptual model in order to propose the development guideline for increasing employee alignment by means of communication*

- 7) *To Carry out an empirical research on employee alignment at KeyProject*
- 8) *Based on empirical research result to propose the development plan for increasing employee alignment at KeyProject by means of communication*

**Research methods:** Literature analysis, Empirical research, Document analysis

## **1. SITUATION ANALYSIS AND ALIGNMENT PROBLEMS OF KEYPROJECT**

### **1.1 The description of KeyProject, its structure, functions and activities**

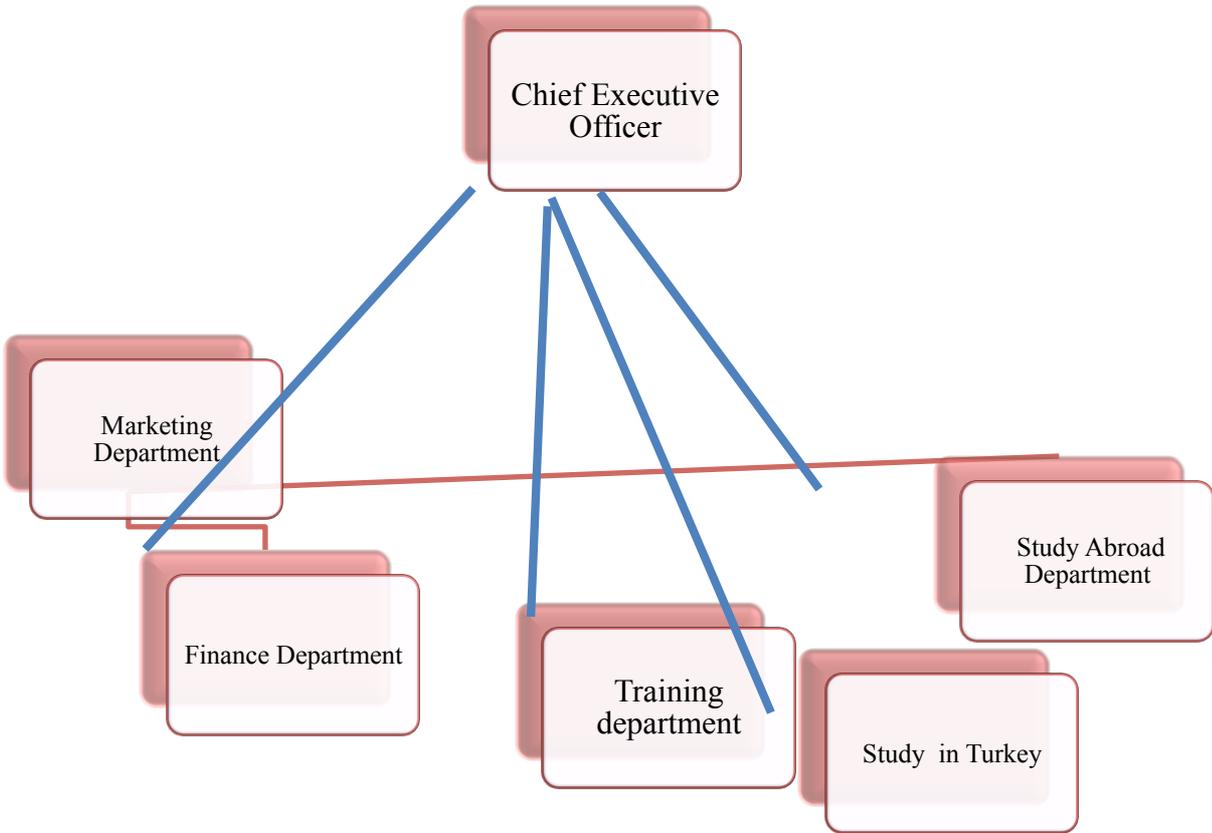
Using observational method, the situation analysis is made. KeyProject is a newly established education company based in Turkey, Istanbul. The main mission of the company is to bring innovation to the education sector and to be able to change monotonous education system. The company was founded on January of 2016, as of beginning it plans to join international programs and send Turkish youth to abroad for youth exchange programs, trainings, conferences and so on. The company is located in Istanbul, it has around 15-20 employees, apart from brand ambassadors with whom it works on distance. Basically, those brand ambassadors are chosen according to their locations, so they mainly try to promote KeyProject in their area in schools, universities, student associations and so on. The goals of the company are to open its branches in other regions of Turkey and offer a service of language courses (<http://www.keyproject.com/>) .

Although, the company has different services such as joining to international projects, and inform and send Turkish youth to academic conferences, youth exchange programs and so on, its main activity is study abroad student placement. KeyProject collaborates closely with Turkish and foreign universities, schools and students in that sphere. It helps foreign students to choose and apply for Turkish universities, besides that, it helps local students to study in abroad. Students can easily visit its office or contact online and get free advice on study abroad. Through social media channels, and its website, KeyProject shares blogs or articles for students on study abroad. As part of study abroad service, KeyProject organizes info sessions for the specific country's universities. Sometimes such info sessions are attended by university representatives. During those free info sessions, students get a chance to learn more about opportunities such as scholarships, bachelor, master or PHd programs, scholarships and so on. Time by time, it organizes campus visit for students in order to get practical information about the country, university or program they wish to study. Study abroad service is not constrained by only student placement, it also consists of assisting students to collect necessary

documents, to apply for visa and for university, to help to choose university, to find suitable accommodation and so on (<http://www.keyproject.com/>).

Alongside with student placement, it organizes trainings on different topics such as body language, career development, job application techniques as well as academic areas such as quant finance, neuro marketing, and various IT programs and so on (<http://www.keyproject.com/>).

KeyProject also offers courses for university entry exams, both international and local ones such as SAT, GMAT, YOS and so on. As is mentioned previously the company also cooperates with foreign organizations such as language course organizers and helps mainly Turkish students to get a chance to go to Italy to learn Italian or to go to Malta, UK to learn English.



**Figure 1: The Organizational Structure of KeyProject (<http://www.keyproject.com/>)**

KeyProject has around 15-20 employees, disregarding the freelancers and brand ambassadors. Freelancers are mainly trainers, designers, and programmers. In terms of cost efficiency, it is better to acquire their service as outsourcing.

Due to variety of its services, KeyProject is divided to different departments as a functional structure in order to operate more effectively. As is seen from the Figure 1, the company is divided as following: CEO in the head and departments such as Study Abroad, Study in Turkey, Marketing, Training and Finance departments operate under it.

Finance department is responsible for preparing financial analysis, accounting analysis, tax reports and so on. Also, by keeping an eye on financial trends, they inform the executives regarding upcoming situation in the country or area the company operates.

Marketing department manages the online and offline promotional campaigns. While there are some events or exhibitions, marketing team participates and represents KeyProject. As is mentioned previously, apart from full time employees, there are brand ambassadors as well, and usually brand ambassadors are managed by marketing department.

Study abroad and Study in Turkey departments have similar activities, but different target groups. Both helps students to find the right university, accommodation and help on filling application forms, writing motivation letters and so on.

Training department deals with organizing trainings, finding right trainers, discussing programs or structure of training and so on. They also do promotion for increasing public awareness on upcoming trainings. Training department also works in collaboration with universities, their professors and so on.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Considering the fact that KeyProject is newly founded company, generally in terms of functional division and task division, or general structure of the company, it can be assumed that KeyProject is well organized.

In KeyProject, the employees go out together, do a lot of social activities together and so on. General level of motivation is high in the company, but the results of employee performance is not in a desirable level, as far as observed by executives and low customer feedback. Considering the fact the employees are well qualified and motivated, the main reason behind low outcome could be the lack of alignment in terms of communication, culture, strategy perspectives.

Each employee has his own tasks and all the tasks are divided according to the competence of employee. The company has a good motivation system as well. CEO behaves friendly with employees. Usually, birthdays are celebrated, the best employee of the month is chosen and so on. The company has focused on its employees a lot. Despite motivation and highly qualified employees, when it comes to the performance, there is usually a low performance of the organization. The lack of leaders for each department could be the main reason behind such situation. Due to variety of its services the company is divided into several departments, however still each department is managed by the CEO of the company, and due to the workload, he cannot separate a time for increasing alignment. Employees need to be given a clear direction, should ensure they are more aware of their influence to the company's overall performance, alongside with effective motivation system or strategy to make employees more engaged.

So, it can be concluded that there are employees need to have a sense of where they are going, or what they are trying to achieve and it could contribute to overall accomplishment in short and especially in a long term. The management needs to ensure the consistence of employees with institutional logics, values, as the **main problem** is that employees are not well aware of the tasks as well as the basic policies, values of the company.

Based on the description of the situation and the problem, it can be pointed out that there is a problem with internal communication, if the company can improve the internal communication, it can improve the alignment. With internal communication, increasing the employee awareness on the basic policies, the mission, values, and the goals of the company is meant. There is need have a strong alignment to operate effectively, achieve high results and accomplish the goals It can be achieved through developing a communication among the executives, employees and subordinates.

## **2. THEORETICAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE ALIGNMENT PROBLEM RESOLUTION BY MEANS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

Conceptualizing Alignment: in today's complex and dynamic business world, organizations are massively evolving to cope with the market demands, leading them to develop different structures and mechanisms to enable them compete in the market. Many researchers and experts have cited that a clear and compelling vision is the foremost cure for getting employees committed to their responsibilities in the organization as a competitive strength (Bart & Taggar, 1998). However in the reality of today's world, corporate mission and strategy, objectives and goals, as well as the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders are left vague, and as such they are considered by the employees as mere platitudes and abstractions, rather than concrete specifics. The complexity today's business environments have restricted companies from living up to the ideal model of inclusiveness and high level engagement for their workforce (Harter et al, 2002)

This acknowledgement of the dynamisms of an organization and the importance of the correlation between the workforce's mission and the organization's goals indicates a suitable position for this thesis to begin exploring the concept of alignment. A definition of alignment is when the components of an organization are designed to function smoothly in synergy, bringing about more efficiency in implementing organization strategies (Tosti and Jackson, 2003). Building on the relationship with strategy, Semler (1997) defines alignment as a descriptive concept that refers to the length at which strategy, structure and culture of an organization combine to make the goals of the whole organization achievable. In recognizing organizational alignment as an active process rather than an outcome intended or otherwise, Powell (1992) proposes that alignment is the suitability of the response by the organization's leadership to the immediate environment. And that alignment represents the match between the organization's value proposition and the demands of the market. Powell (1992) considers this a strong competitive advantage for any organization. Kathuria, Josh & Port (2007) follow suit in adopting a more outreaching perspective by defining alignment as the compatibility between an organization - its internal network and resources - and the external environment's demands as a means of bolstering the organization's performance. And Weiser (2000,

p.90) as quoted in Alagaraja et al, (2015) simply describes alignment as a state wherein the entire organization is “headed in the same direction”. Of particular relevance to this discourse is Alagaraja& Shuck (2015) adopting a more employee-centric perspective and defining alignment as a dynamic organizational competence which is a result of the mutual sense of purpose among the stakeholders.

**Table 1: Summary of Organizational Alignment Definitions (Conducted by author based on Alagaraja& Shuck (2015), Kathuria, Joshi,&Porth, (2007), Powel (1992), Semler (1997), Tosti and Jackson (2003))**

| Authors                        | Definitions of Alignment  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Alagaraja& Shuck (2015)        | A dynamic organizational competence which is a result of a continuous mutual sense of purpose among the stakeholders.   |
| (Kathuria, Joshi,&Porth, 2007) | The compatibility between an organization - its internal network and resources – and the external environment’s demands as a means of improving the organization’s performance.   |
| Powell (1992)                  | A response by the organization’s leadership to the immediate environment. And that it represents the match between the organization’s value proposition and the demands of the market. He considers this a strong competitive advantage for any organization. |
| Semler (1997)                  | The length at which strategy, structure and culture of an organization combine to make the goals of the whole organization achievable.  |
| (Tosti and Jackson, 2003)      | when the components of an organization are designed to function smoothly in synergy, bringing about more efficiency in implementing organization strategies   |

As this study seeks to point out the role of communication in helping the achievement of alignment, we shall consider alignment to be the mutual understanding of purpose within the organization achieved through a consistent direct and purposeful communication between the departments of an organization. (Alagaraja et al 2015). Following the definitions of alignment in the context of an organization, it is prudent to state a premise that declares employee alignment an indispensable component for achieving an organization’s goals and objectives.

## **The Importance of Alignment**

In a bid to cope with today's dynamic business world, organizations and management, as well as theorists and researchers seem to be in consensus that strategy plays a crucial role in defining every organization's operations in the market, and this explains the amount of growing interest in strategy development and implementation. As a result, all organizations willing to compete are involved in a process of constantly developing and refining several strategies and blueprints which they hope will enable them to realize their business goals and objectives. While the strategies that an organization could employ in any situation are a function of several factors such as the local business environment, industry, organizational structure, management, etc. studies over time have shown that there is a considerable gap between the defining of a strategy and the implementation of the strategy. For indeed, businesses over and over again have shown to be more adept at developing strategy than implementing it. In the light of this discourse, some such as Guth & MacMillan (1986) have identified ways in which organizations can improve the execution of strategies, others such as Gupta (1984) while affirming the importance of implementation in any organization have asserted that the level to which an organization can realistically execute its strategies towards realizing its goals depends to no small extent on the prevalence of the match between the strategy and the organization's mission (Gupta, 1984).

Real alignment is achieved if and when all the strategies and goals of an organization reinforce each other, this gives an organization the edge because they focus less on taking decisions on what to do but rather spend more time simply doing (Nautin, 2014). Aligning with the goals and strategies always give an organization a clear sense of direction to take at every crossroad. And this sense of a clear line of action and direction which enable flexibility can make the difference in establishing a business' dominance in any market.

Across all industries today, a strong indicator of an organization's steadfastness in the market is its ability to respond rapidly to market changes. Christopher (2000) describes this as the capacity of an organization to identify and capture opportunities faster and more often than rivals do. This is a primary differentiator in business performance. In a survey of business executives conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit Limited (2009), an overwhelming majority of 88% of the respondents reference their organization's dexterity as vital for success. We are at a time in history where no business can satisfy the informed choices and high expectations of today's greatly enlightened consumers, without being sufficiently flexible – a quickness to respond to changes in the consumers' taste not excluding rapidly taking advantage of new insights revealed by investigation and research of consumers' behaviour. Highlighting this characteristic is essential, as this is a key demonstration of the importance of alignment in an organization. As pointed out earlier, alignment guarantees the ability to

adjust rapidly, because it ensures that operations are carried out at the desired speed, while expending minimal effort, and maximizing returns.

Furthermore, alignment is a multi-faceted component of an organization's culture, as it covers not only the way operations are executed, but the management of the human capital. Where the organization's goals and objectives align with the employees' interests – compensation, development – there is indeed a high level of employee satisfaction which (Harter, et al; 2002) concludes is closely linked to significant business results of a “magnitude that is important to many organizations”, and that this is true for many organizations.

Besides, the alignment within an organization is a fool proof way to breed a sustainable culture within an organization. Culture within an organization is a crucial issue, because many highly-ranked businesses today are largely influenced by their culture, which makes them attractive to top talent – a key competitive advantage – and makes their offerings more alluring to the market. It is so significant that some experts have suggested that culture trumps strategy, because while it may be easy for a competitor to replicate your strategy, it is extremely difficult, nigh impossible to replicate culture. Building a culture takes time as well as deliberate effort, and it cannot be done without proper alignment in the organization. Mainly because employees are inclined to sustaining the culture when it is clear that the culture is concerned about their interests and aligned with their personal values; this is even more so, when the business' plans and strategies are in transparent congruence with the stated mission of the organization Powell(1992).

Indeed, the most acute factor of any strategy is its transition into reality; and the single credible measure of a strategy's success is in the quality of its execution. The successful implementation of the strategy of any organization requires true organizational alignment.

### **Theory based on agreement of the six aspects of Alignment**

Mirroring the problem this study seeks to solve, which is aligning employees with the tasks as well as the basic policies, values of the company, Semler (1997) suggests that only a systematic agreement between strategy, structure and culture is a path way to alignment making the goals of an organization feasible because a systematic agreement creates an internal environment that enhances achievement of the organizational goals, by eliminating internal barriers that naturally will impede or reduce the effectiveness of the work towards those goals. For a systematic agreement to be in place, it means there is a well laid internal communication structure in place too. In this theory, if the management of an organization can systematically create agreement in each aspects of alignment, they would attain a high level of internal organizational performance that can only come from cooperative activities. The aspects of alignment being mirrored here are; process, reward system, values, norms,

performance, and environment. According to Semler(1997), no single aspect of alignment is standalone, but they are all largely interdependent. Therefore, according to the scope of this thesis, significant attention will be paid to the process and performance aspects of alignment.

**Process Aspect:**alignment between the objectives of the hierarchy of activities within the organization. In an organization which is sufficiently aligned, clear relationships between targets and processes, departments and individual tasks are established in a way that each organizational unit is cognizant of the other units, and works with an understanding of the contribution of their collective output to the corporate goals.

**Performance Aspect:**this aspect covers the degree of harmony between the actions and attitude of the company's workforce, and the desired attitudes that is necessary to make the organization's goals a reality. It is highly essential that the organization is suitably aligned in this regard as it demonstrates that the behavior displayed by the business units is directed towards the accomplishment of the corporate goals. Semler (1997) further explains that if the actual behavior displayed in the organization matches the desired behavior for achieving the goals, then the alignment of the other aspects is expected to be formidable and should result in satisfactory business outcomes.

### **Perspectives of Organizational Alignment**

Having earlier established that there can be no alignment in an organization without the direct influence of the organizational management, and to better understand how management can influence alignment, it is beneficial to step into the shoes of organizations and by analysis of earlier conceptualizations of organizational alignment, we can consider the different models or frameworks through organizational alignment can be achieved in an organization. There are different ways in which organizational leaders and researchers perceive or think about alignment (Alagaraja, Rose, Shuck and Bergman, 2015). And in their work, Alagaraja *et al* (2015) identified three main perspectives of alignment that inform theory and research. They are: *process, relational and strategic*.

#### **Process Perspective on Alignment**

The steps to the creation of value by any organization comprise a laid down deliberate process. Even when a process for operation isn't documented, organizations will naturally adopt a process after repeated operations. This perspective of alignment focuses on understanding the functional process of how an organization works while generating and optimizing ways to further improve that process. This perspective of alignment refers to alignment as a flow that is continuous and dynamic (Alagaraja *et al*, 2015) which was earlier discussed while comparing definitions of alignment. The emphasis in this prospective is the alignment of micro and macro level processes, functional, cross functional, cross-organizational processes and focusing on individuals through engagement and commitment of

customers, stakeholders and employees. The chances of an overall performance when organizational process is aligned with and between units and sub-units, across regulators, suppliers and customers is high. Process alignment enhances the capability of different units and sub-units to head towards a common strategic goal and reduce or eliminate internal inadequacies and inefficiencies of the organization (Weiser, 2000).

### **Relational Perspective on Alignment**

Some researchers and organizational leaders view alignment from a relational view. This perspective views alignment through the lens of internal cum external relationships of the organization. It explores the length at which an organization can experience inner congruence between the different components, units and sub-units of its environment, both internally and externally (Alagaraja *et al*, 2015), as well as the overlap between these two aspects. Alignment between strategy and structure, organizational size and strategic planning, has the very welcome effect of strengthening the performance of an organization. The idea here is that every organization should be flexible enough to adapt and respond to changes that may occur in its internal and external environment. Many researchers have suggested that how an organization can create value and “fit” to its environment is as a function of the organizations relation or interaction with that environment.

### **Strategic Perspective on Alignment**

In the view of some other scholars and organizational leaders, organizational alignment makes more sense as a strategy. To them, an organization can achieve alignment based on the influence the strategy in place has on the organization. The idea backing this view is that strategic alignment can be created for achieving competitive advantage (Alagaraja *et al*, 2015). In the work of Avison, Jones, Powell and Wilson (2004) they found out strategic alignment has a direct positive relation to the performance of an organization which was because of integrating information technology strategy to the performance of the business. Many researchers have described patterns for strategic alignment and use some key indicators for performance measurement (Avison *et al*, 2004).

The aforesaid perspectives have identified the potential avenues from which alignment can emerge citing organizational strategies, processes, environmental factors among others. What is most significant is the fact that these literatures have discovered and stressed the importance of not limiting the focus to one dimension of alignment, but of broadening the spectrum of impactful coordination by considering other possible avenues for effectively aligning the organization. For example, Chenhall (2005) focuses on the strategic perspective of alignment in manufacturing firms but repeatedly asserts the necessity of establishing alignment between the organization’s offerings and the needs of the

market – internal and external environment; relational perspective - (Chenhall, 2005). Of course, the perspective of alignment an organization will focus upon, depends upon its structure and the nature of the industry or external environment. It is essential that organizational leadership are conversant with the perspectives of alignment that are relevant to their organization and industry, what they mean and their impact; and also, how they can go about not only achieving this alignment, but sustaining it as well (Alagaraja, et al 2015). Furthermore, Alagaraja (2015) points out that sometimes misalignment can occur in an organization, therefore understanding the perspectives of alignment will be useful for identify and resolving areas of misalignment in an organization (Alagaraja, 2015).

This thesis shall employ the perspective of process alignment as it directly pertains to the development of communication within the organization. Kanter (1994) maintains that an organization is truly aligned when reaches a state where its units can make collective efforts, and communication exists for that purpose; the purpose of coordinating multiple resources, processes and arrangements towards the common goal (Koschmann 2012).

### **Employee Alignment Theoretical model**

The discussion of alignment in an organization cannot be complete without the mention of aligning the workforce with the organization. It is not enough to strategize, plan, set targets and goals without taking into consideration the organization's workforce. The business environment is highly demanding and ever changing. Organizations rely on the competencies, capabilities and commencement of their workforce to compete in the dynamic business environment that offers so much opportunity (Lee, 2011). Therefore, employees should be aligned with the strategy of the organization. Employee alignment is the concept of aligning employees strategically with the objectives of the organization to increase their performance. Employees can be said to be strategically aligned with the organization when their behavior correlates with the strategy of the organization (Lee, 2011). The idea here is for the employees to engage in strategically supportive behavior, in other words individuals in an organization behave in a contributory way, backing the strategic goals of the organization. The research of Gagon and Michael (2003) about aligned employee behavior resulted in two types of employee behaviors: Task performance/in-role behavior and contextual performance/organizational citizenship behavior. Task performance behavior refers to activities that supports or directly contributes to the transformation of the organization's inputs to outputs. Contextual performance refers to activities that support the social and psychological context that the organization's technical core was embedded. The human resource department (HRD) of every organization plays a major role in aligning employees to the organizational strategic goals. The idea here is for the HRD to expand its traditional role, this will have a significant impact on the value creation of any organization. It is the function of the HRD to ensure employees of an organization are

properly aligned with the organizational strategic goals. Therefore, the HRD must be organized in a way that can play a major role in the strategic planning of the organization. Beehr, Glazer, Fischer, Linton and Hansen, (2009) have outlined three categories of prerequisites to achieve employee alignment. The first category is communication about goals and Objectives, the second category is employee enhancement and the third is managerial effectiveness (Beehr et al, 2009). Communication about goals and Objectives is the length to which the strategic goals of the whole organization, including various units and sub-units within the organization are made known to the employees. The second category, employee enhancement is the targeting of organizational efforts to support and develop the employees to attain the organizational strategic goals. The third category is managerial effectiveness is the extent to which leaders of the organization support strategic goals of the organization, while managing their subordinates (Beehr et al, 2009).

The scope of this research demands that the main focus is placed on communication as the primary prerequisite for employee alignment, because it serves the vital purpose of facilitating the workforce's understanding of goals. Beehr (2009) explains that organization objectives are likely to be more visible and real to employees if they are communicated consistently, it increases the likelihood of business units setting their own goals in a way that is consistent with the organization's, especially if they receive continuous feedback related to their progress. However, one must note that the organizational workforce cannot be truly aligned with its mission without viable managerial effectiveness as Powel (1992) maintains that alignment is a result of managerial decisions and actions rather than "luck". It follows therefore, that organizational alignment in all its various forms can only be achieved through the pro-activeness of management which sets the ball rolling and their active engagement grooms and preserve the momentum of the alignment efforts. In addition, Beer et al(2005) conclude that effective management and leadership are motivated to empower their people to confront the "tensions" that hamper alignment and by encouraging cooperation, they reshape alignment at all the levels of the organization. Indeed, improving employee alignment by means of an effective system of organizational communication demands that the Leadership leads the improvement of communication, while the management follows up and effectively "manages" the improved communication framework. McKinsey (2008) describes an elaborate system of a vertical or top-down communications process which originates with the Leader – usually the CEO – delivering a captivating vision of the future. She must further cascade the vision through each management layer, with each manager customizing the story of the vision to his audience until this new wave is perceived by all the members of the organization. In essence, this process incorporates a bottom-up component which fosters its effectiveness, as all levels are thoroughly involved. In a nutshell, communication facilitated by managerial effectiveness form the basic requirements for increased alignment in the organization.

## **Organizational benefits of aligning employees**

Organizational alignment is a state not an outcome, it cannot be created as a result, it can only be improved upon Semler (1997). It means, intricately alignment exist in every organization. When alignment of staff is strong, there is a greater chance of meeting the organizational strategic goals. These are some of the benefits an organization can get from aligning employees by strategic organizational communication:

- **Maximized talent and skills:** Organizational leaders want to always get or “squeeze “out the best form their employees. Effective communication with an aim to achieve alignment requires dialogue. This is a solid way to establish engagement of employees as all departments feel involved in the conversation, and the outcomes of such conversation are one in which everybody resonates with, as their deliberations birthed them. Covey (1989) describes how he witnesses an organization in the hospitality industry draft a mission statement. This result in a highly aligned enterprise where each member feels empowered and connected to the mission. When employees feel that they can speak their mind without fear of being silenced or without intimidation and that they are being heard by the organizational leaders, aligning of employee will naturally occur and bring out the best of their competencies, skills and abilities consistently. When employees are aligned to strategic organizational goals, it is clearer to see where talent is needed, if it exists within the organization and how it can be deployed effectively for the individual to maximize their skill. This boost confidence of employees to follow a clear career path, yield high work satisfaction and in turn translates to better and improved performance for the organization.

- **Improved self-supervision:** Even though units and sub-units of organization have supervisors, it is the desire of every organization that functional operational processes run smoothly with or without close supervision of immediate supervisors of the function. When the operations of an organizational are well communicated and employees are aligned with the organization, they’ll have a clear vision of their task, less ambiguity about their roles, responsibilities and priorities and will naturally develop a “self-check” on their functions even before the immediate supervisors’ spot grey areas. This calls for clarity as a required standard for effective communication, Straw (2013) finds out that it is very common for management to overlook certain aspects of communication because these aspects appear “obvious” to them, whereas they could be completely mysterious to other members. Communicating with clarity is key to achieving alignment. This engenders employees’ pro-activeness because instead of waiting to be told what to do, they already have an inclination of what should be done within the scope of their roles and responsibilities. This breeds efficiency and high performance in any organization.

- **Effective and efficient decision making process:** The productivity of any organization can be crippled by indecision. Little indecisive actions accumulate and cause a ripple effect, impacting the whole organization. When an organization is properly aligned with its employee due to poor communication, there is a greater clarity of who holds the right to take decisions on functional processes. Quick decision making translates to reduce time in execution of operations. Employees do not have to figure out who to do what or be who to be consulted for decisions to be made. Everyone knows who or how decisions are made and abide by it. This allows employee to focus more on performing their task. Also, when an organization is strategically aligned to involve the employee in some decision-making process, it increases the morale of the employee, which in turn enhances productive efficiency for the organization (Kuye and Sulaimon, 2011).

- **Enhanced employee engagement:** Recent research suggests enhanced employee engagement have a direct link to high performance and profitability growth of an organization. Employee engagement is the emotional, psychological commitment and connection employees have towards the organizational goal. Aligning employees with the strategic goals of an organization through relatable communication channels breeds smooth engagement among employees and in their work. Engaged employees lead to a higher service quality and productivity, higher customer satisfaction which can bring about increased sales or patronage of value created by the organization (Kruse, 2012).

- **Prudent use of resources:** When employees are aligned with an organization, employees can differentiate between activities that promote growth, facilitate the strategic goals and activities that just support them only when they have been adequately informed through various means of communication. This helps the employee channel their limited resources to the right quarters, focusing on aligning with the functional organizational priorities. This helps the organization to do more with less resources and benefit by the reduction in cost of creating value, while increasing performance.

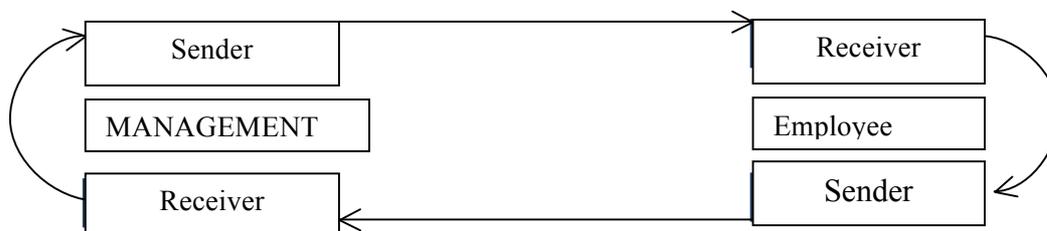
- **Customer/Client satisfaction:** For organizations that are keen on satisfying customers and/or client, every customer satisfied with the service they render is a plus to the organization. One of the strategic goals of every organization is always centered around satisfying those they serve, customers, client or those they create value for. The modus operandi of making this achievable can only be translated to the employees when they are aligned with the organization through continuous effective communication. It is imperative for employees to understand the extent of commitment the organization has to customers and/or clients so as to factor in initiatives in their functional operation that can achieves the purpose of satisfying the customer and/or client.

## 2.2. Theoretical Analysis of Organizational Communication

**Defining Organizational Communication:** as the global society, has radically transformed into becoming a true information society, the forms of sharing information have become more sophisticated and so have the organizations which make up the societies. Organizational communication has indeed become a field of great interest and increasing importance, as a large number of leading business executives have attributed the successes of their organizations to the fluidity of the communication therein, several theorists advocate that communication in the organization must not be considered lightly, and as a result, theories, frameworks, and conceptualizations in this field are legion.

Koschmann (2012) propound two perspectives from which the concept organizational communication may be viewed, and these are: the informational and the constitutional. The former is a more simplistic and insight constraining perspective which views communication within an organization as simply the transfer of information within the internal system of the organization. This interprets communication as a different phenomenon from the organization, and although it is within the organization, it can be studied separately than the organization. This forms an inadequate perspective to view such a fundamental process, and passes over opportunities to understand the intricacies of today's complexly structured organizations. The later perspective – the constitutional – views communication as the essence of the organization, or in other words, the organization. In this context we must view organizations as instruments of realizing a desired end. For rarely is an organization established as the end, it is always the means to an end. This is what Koschmann (2012) constitutive view of organizational communication proposes. That communication is the organization that exists for the purpose of managing several resources to achieve the desired end. While Modaff, et al(2012) and Jablin (1990) choose to define organizational communication as the circulation of information – how information goes back and forth and the transmission of meaning – within an organization and their definition is based on the concept of the “message”; Goldhaber (1973) views it as the flow of information within a network to cope with external pressures and the accompanying uncertainties. This definition underscores the environment aspect of alignment highlighted by Semler (1997), and is considered important as it shows the relationship between inner alignment and the organization's performance in the industry.

Koschmann (2012) as mentioned earlier considers organizational communication as the essence of the organization and therefore presents it as the arrangement of different activities and procedures into a coordinated form for collective action. For the purpose of this thesis, we may also consider Wrench *et al* (2015) who have defined organizational communication as the process where stakeholders in an organization try to create meaning in the minds of other organizational stakeholders, intentionally using verbal, non-verbal and/or mediated messages. The idea here is for the other stakeholder to get the message you are attempting to pass across in the exact way you intended it. Organizational communication was defined in the World Bank’s “CommGap” (communication for governance and accountability program) (2011) as “balancing creativity and constraints focuses on how individuals use communication to work out tension between working within the constraints of pre-existing organizational structures and promoting”. These sources take on organizational communication from different viewpoints, and Lewis (1985) takes on the working manager’s hat while attempting to keep it simple and simply defines communication as the sharing of messages, thoughts, or impressions which result in a desirable degree of mutual understanding between a sender (the manager) and receiver (the employee).



**Figure 2: Basic Organizational Communication(From Lewis 1985, p. 11)**

In much similarity to the conceptualization of alignment, we will compare the different concepts of organizational communication and adopt or develop one suitable to the goal of the thesis.

**Table 2: Summary of Organizational Communication Definitions (conducted by the author based on Koschmann (2012), Goldhaber (1973), Wrench *et al* (2015), Greenbaum 1979, Lewis (1985))**

| Author           | Definition of Organizational Communication      |
|------------------|---|
| Koschmann (2012) | The essence of every organizationand exists for |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
|                            | the purpose of managing several resources to achieve the desired end  |
| Goldhaber (1973)           | the flow of information within a network to cope with external pressures and the accompanying uncertainties   |
| Wrench <i>et al</i> (2015) | the process where stakeholders in an organization try to create meaning in the minds of other organizational stakeholders, intentionally using verbal, non-verbal and/or mediated messages. |
| Lewis (1985)               | The sharing of messages, thoughts, or impressions which result in a desirable degree of mutual understanding between a sender (the manager) and receiver (the employee).                    |
| Greenbaum 1979             | The formal and informal flow of communication within the organization.  |

With these abundant and largely approaches to organizational communication, we can identify a few commonalities such as: organizational communication exists within a complex open system which can be influenced by its environment, and which in turn influences its environments. Secondly, organizational communication is meaningless and empty without content or information and this includes messages, and media, not excluding their translation, direction, and purpose. Thirdly, organizational communication encompasses people and their impressions, feelings, ideas, and skills. Therefore, we shall adopt the definition of communication as the flow of ideas within a network for the purpose of coordinating its internal resources – processes and departments - towards accomplishing the organizational goals (Koschmann, 2012). Consequently, organizational communication is successful when the sender of a message and the receiver of that message achieve a high degree of similarity in their comprehension of what was actually transmitted. Effective Communication at an organization is a precondition for alignment because if units and sub-units of an organization do not know the overall strategic goals of the organization, and its relationship with their external environment, they cannot align their goals with that of the organization. As the thesis proposes to engender employee alignment by improving communications, understanding the works of organizational communication is key to transforming the situation within the organization

Organizational communication as a system comprises of different components which Blazenaite (2011) have highlighted as the process, categories, barriers and stages of communication within the system. Structuring organizational communication in a way to promote organizational

alignment calls for the right balance between these components in a way that they complement each other strategically, optimizing the existing channels and networks of communication which the organization naturally adopts.

The focus organization of this thesis, shows no significant weaknesses in quality nor motivation of the employees, transforming into an aligned organization will require a clear transmission of the message of the organization. In a bid to achieve this, the following sections make a study of the communication flow within the organization and how they can be optimally designed to enable employee alignment.

### **Directions of Organizational Communication Flow**

Just as in any communication process, organizational communication process involves the sender, the message, the medium and the receipt (Turkalj and Fosić, 2009). Communication flows from the sender (could be a group or individual), which is the source of the information or data through a medium, could be verbal, non-verbal, hand written, electronic to the receipt or receiver of the message, information or data who attempts to interpret and understand what is sent. Many a times the content and context of the message determines the medium by which it is sent. There are so many diverse media used communicate in an organization. Formal communication is based on a system and process of transmitting information which is documented, planned and can be adjusted according to the needs of the organization while informal communication is not predetermined. Based on unconscious or deliberately acquired organizational culture, organizational communication flow can expand into two distinct directions: vertical and horizontal (lateral) (Turkalj and Fosić, 2009).

**Vertical Organizational Communication:** When communication flows up to a high level in an organization, it is referred to as upward organizational communication. Subordinates use this flow to convey their performances, limitations, proposals, employees' opinion and work insight to their immediate supervisor. In as much as upward communication is initiated by those at the lower levels of an organization, it will only be successful if those at the higher level allow it to be effective (McCroskey, McCroskey and Richmond, 2005). Upward communication is well maximized and managed can breed a loyalty in an organization because those at the lower level have a medium to express their thought on how they feel. Another aspect of vertical communication is the flow of information from superiors to subordinates, in a command chain. The information or message from the superiors is what employees need in other to perform their functional duties. More often, the most common problem with this is that the message is lost in transmission; therefore there should be a backward connection or feedback mechanism to confirm the message (Turkalj and Fosić, 2009). When

upper levels of management want this flow to work, it is usually more effective. There are five elements that flow downwards in an organization, they are: job instruction, rationale, ideology, information and feedback (Turkalj and Fosić, 2009).

**Horizontal Organizational Communication:** This is the transmission of information among people of the same level in an organization. It is sometimes called lateral or across-lines organizational communication. It usually refers to unit managers working at the same level (status) or among subordinates working under a supervisor. This flow of communication speeds up information conveying process and breeds mutual understanding.

### **Organizational Communication Networks**

To gain deeper insight as to how organizational communication can be optimized to achieve employee alignment, it is prudent for us to consider the channels through which information flows within the organization. Apart from the directions of organizational communication flow, there are some channels by which communication flows, which is imperative to organizational communication as part of the organizational behavior or culture in alignment with the strategic goals of the organization. (Fox; 2001 as quoted in Turkalj and Fosić, 2009) presents two “partially complementary systems” that describe the flow of messages. They are: formal network and informal network.

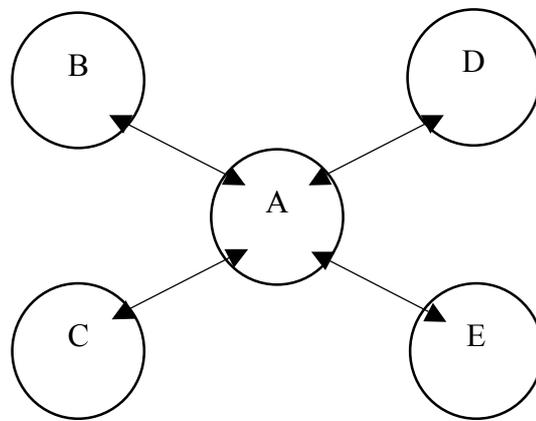
#### **Formal Network**

Communication network patterns are derived from experiments in labs, in which the experimenter can manipulate the structure of the groupings (Lunenburg, 2011). Network means the channels through which the message is conveyed from one person to another (Turkalj and Fosić, 2009). Formal networks as a partially complementary aspect of organizational communication are important as they affect the formation of informal networks which is discussed later. The formal networks serve as the links for communicating the organization’s vision, objectives and strategies; and also lends credibility to the profuse transmission of information along the informal networks. The subject organization of this thesis while adopting a liberal structure will do well to put in place a clear formal network for transferring more specific business oriented information. Literature analysis have identified 3 different forms of formal networks, which are the wheel network, chain network and circle network.

#### **Wheel Network**

The wheel or star network is a two-level hierarchy and is the most structured and central organizational communication network because each member can communicate only with one other

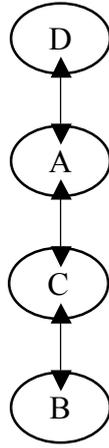
person (Lunenbug, 2011). The wheel network breeds openness which enables a joint communication of the group (Turkalj and Fosić, 2009). In the wheel network, there is an individual at the hub of the wheel and all other individuals submit to the individual at the hub of the wheel. For instance, a school organization vice chancellor has four lieutenants (Assistants) namely vice chancellor academics, vice-chancellor administration, vice-chancellor social and vice-chancellor sports. In Figure 4, the vice-chancellor is A and his assistants are B, C, D and E respectively. The four assistants or subordinates send information to the vice-chancellor and the vice-chancellor sends information back to them. Usually such information will involve decisions making.



**Figure 3: Wheel Communication Network (Lunenbug, 2011)**

#### Chain Network

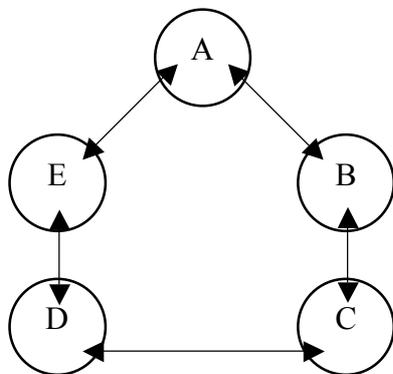
Under this communication network, information flows up or down the line. Information is gotten from the immediate superior and it is passed down to the immediate subordinate, it goes on and on until a chain is created and everyone is connected to where the message originated from. The chain network is the second most central organizational communication network. Two people only communicate with one another and subsequently can only communicate with one person. Information is sent through this network is like a relay pattern (Lunenbug, 2011). For instance, a lecturer (B) reports to the departmental head (C), who in turn reports to the faculty head (A), who reports to the vice-chancellor (D).



**Figure 4: Chain Communication Network (Lunenburg, 2011)**

Circle Network

The circle organizational communication network is a decentralized network and information is shared equally among the members. Each person disseminates information and is a receipt of information from two or more persons in the network (Lunenburg, 2011). There is an equal chance for each member to participate. Circle network has a downside of being prone to information distortion because as message pass form one person to another, it could be edited or mangled by the sender of the message.



**Figure 5 : Circle Communication Network. Source : (Lunenburg, 2011)**

The successful alignment of employees with organizational strategic goals depends decisively on the ability of management to communicate, since communication is the means by which organizational teams are coordinated (Sirbu, Vasile and Rosca, n.d.). Therefore, more ways should be sought to improve organizational communication.

Communication Channels: channels are the links that facilitate communication; therefore channels ought to be optimized for the purpose of communicating information as accurately as possible because ill-defined channels can result in unintended and mostly negative consequences. The company adopts a relaxed and mostly informal channel for communicating, but this may be identified as a key source of organizational misalignment. Complex messages require richer communication channels to increase the likelihood of clarity.

### **Informal organizational communication**

Informal communication network is also known as the grapevine network in an organization. Grapevine network flows in all direction up, down, or horizontal. It's an unpredictable pattern and are not by any formal organizational model. This communication network serves as a channel for employees to vent and express their fears, anxieties and other issues bothering on their job. It gives employees a sense of belonging and helps the administration and management learn from employees feel about decisions taken by them (Lunenborg, 2011). One of the negative characteristics of the grapevine network is that it is known for propagating rumors and messages can be easily misinterpreted or their meanings even lost. According to Modaff (2012), a rumor is a belief in circulation that is not verified.

Depending on your background, the definition of informal organizational communication varies. While some scholars and business leaders will describe it simply as the transmission of information, and data within an organization, while some believe informal organizational communication is about creating an atmosphere of mutual respect for all the employees. But from the research of a great deal of scholarship in this field of specialization, a generally agreed definition of this term is that it is the interactions among members of an organization, from the superiors, to other collaborators and the subordinates. Chan (2002) describes a network of inter-personal relationships and structures which are remarkably distinct from the formal organizational hierarchy and business process coordination. Internal organizational communication can be viewed as a process which is essential on which the employees establish relationships, form formal and informal networks, exchange, information, create an organizational culture forms values, harmonize activities and collaborate, and align for the strategic goals of the organization (Réka and Borza, 2012). The role of internal organizational communication is for the development and creation of value the organization offers to her consumers/clients, make and improve organizational changes and collaborate with colleagues within the organization. There are many studies that have put a direct link between internal organizational communication and the extent to which the staff are informed to performance and job satisfaction (White, Vanc and Stafford, 2010). Internal organizational communication is a subset of a business communication that is effective, built on the foundation of the idea that human

communication and interaction is a series of dialogues and not repetitive monologues (Sarpong, 2012). The informal communication in the organization is characterized by an abundance of dialogues, the trading of information back and forth, therefore the internal organizational communication is always about a continuous dialogue between staff members, also between staff and their immediate supervisor or subordinates. Internal communication in an organization places a huge role in building the organizational culture of the organization. Indeed, it is highly significant to pay sufficient attention to the informal structure of the organization because poses greater importance to employee alignment than most organizations realize, due to the numerous undocumented interactions that take place in the day to day execution of the organization's tasks. The nuts and bolts of the informal communication within the organization must be understood by the management because of the undeniable effects it has on the formal communication channels that exist.

### **Team Communication**

It is typical of modern organizations to develop small groups of teams with more concise and concentrated efforts towards achieving organizational goals. These “organizations within organizations” have tremendously grown in importance within the past decade. For example, teams are notable for being testing grounds for novel ideas before taking them publicly into the organization, such intimate activities create a need for healthy relationships to be formed and sustained through communication. Even as far back as the late 20th century, Barker and Tompkins (1994) discovered that a surprisingly large number of employees feel more at ease with their teams than other members of the organization with whom they feel little or no ties to. In (Goldhaber, 1973) organizations are defined as social systems,, therefore a team can be considered as a sub system within the environment of the organization, and functions as any system would, described by Blazenaite (2011) as possessing inputs, outputs as well as consistent interactions with their external environment. In the context of alignment, it is of crucial importance that the activities and purposes of teams are in congruence with the general goals of the organization as a whole. The advent of information technologies has increased the abilities and facilities for team members to communicate. More and more organizations due to their increased globalization are utilizing virtual teams which are made up of geographically diverse individuals employing Information Technological media to communicate. In a nutshell, many technologies and software developed for the sole purpose of team communication and collaboration can be employed by organizations towards promoting the alignment of their organizations.

## **Ways of Improving Organizational Communication**

The successful alignment of employees with organizational strategic goals depends decisively on the ability of organizational leaders to communicate, since communication represents the means by which organizational teams are coordinated (Sirbu, Vasile and Rosca, n.d). Therefore, more ways should be sought on how communication can be improved.

### **Give careful thought to Communication Channels**

Organizational communication channels are means through which people within an organization communicate. Careful consideration must be given to channels being used to convey information because an inappropriate channel can give rise to negative consequences. The communication channel or medium used to relay messages to employees affects how accurately the message is perceived and received. When information is spread across different channels, it also relays how the information is perceived and the levity of its importance. Organizational communication channels vary in their information richness and channels that are information-rich carry more verbal and non-verbal information (Carpenter, Bauer and Erdogan, 2010). Complex messages require richer communication channels to ensure clarity.

### **Consistency of Information in Formal Communication**

Worthy of mention is the need for consistent and standardized communication within the organization. Unclear, inaccurate and inconsistent exchange of information wastes valuable time, resources, conclusively alienates the employees and damages the goodwill within the organization resulting in poor execution on the organization's goals ("Getting the message?" 2015).

### **Strategic Communications**

Organizations need to make plans and communicate them to the employees when there is enough time to carefully plan the messages and channels used in dissemination of the information but is is a different scenario in crises and emergencies. In emergencies, organizational communication is particularly challenging because of the high degree of uncertainty, and sometimes panic. All these indicate the need for a timely and accurate information sharing procedure (Stephens, Barett, and Mahometa 2013). A communication strategy can be developed and put in place for use in a situation of urgency or emergency. This should also include a backup plan in case certain methods are unavailable (Stephens et al 2013). The communication strategy would include communication channels for transmission of information, mode of communication, signs, symbols or languages used to communicate. During a crisis, it is imperative to be quick and consistent but is is also important to be open to the employees and stake holders (Wolf and Mohamed, 2013). Employees want to feel informed, safe and connected during such situations. This can be achieved with regular dialogues, before, during and after the crisis (Wolf and Mohamed, 2013). A culture of openness in

communicating with employees in times of crisis helps them appreciate and align mentally with the organization.

### **Effective Communication process for Disseminating Feedback**

Getting feedback is an essential of communication. For employees to listen and act, there should be a feedback mechanism where employees can share pertinent information about the organization discussing experiences within the organization in terms of reaching and aligning with the goals of the departments and the organization at large. Organizational leaders should have a culture of asking for feedback about the communication channels, frequency and content of the message. According to Husainn (2013), appropriate communication provides the employees with the feedback and reinforcement which enables them to make better decisions, while remaining aligned with organizational goals. Differences in personality and perception can make messages to be understood differently. For this reason, a continuous feedback mechanism will ensure a high degree of quality and accuracy of the messages, giving room to no misunderstanding and misinterpretation (Sirbu et al, n.d.).

Organizational communication based on the existing scholarship in this field is key to improving alignment. It is most important for the employees to be knowledgeable about the transformation goals of management, and understand the applications of the formal and informal networks of the organization while acquiring familiarity with the appropriate channels for passing across different forms of information.

### **2.3. Summary of Conceptual Model**

The concept of alignment is fundamentally the state wherein the entire organization is moving in the same direction (Algaraja, 2015) and this is an ingredient for maximizing organizational performance (Kathura, et al, 2007). The conceptualization of alignment in this study culminates in the definition of alignment as the mutual understanding of purpose within the organization achieved through a consistent direct and purposeful communication between the departments of an organization. (Algaraja, 2015). This sees to it, that all the processes and activities of the organization sub-units are relevant to the organization's strategy in general. While the primary focus of the paper is the alignment of processes in the organization, we made the premise that the organization is insufficiently aligned if its workforce – a key competitive strength (Lee, 2011) – is not aligned, that is, if their behaviour, assignments, rewards, and teams are not aligned with the overall strategy of the organization. This thesis cites the research of Beeher et al (2009) which identifies three prerequisites for achieving employee alignment. Namely, communication – the extent in which all the goals, units, processes, and

strategy are made know to the employees; the second prerequisite is employee enhancement, while the third is managerial effectiveness. The scope of this research aggrandizes communication as the key precondition for employee alignment, as one of the purposes of communication is facilitating the employees' comprehension of the goals. The tangibility and acceptance of the organizational objectives according to Beehr (2009) increases effectively when they are consistently communicated in the internal network of the organization. Increasing awareness about the organization's mission when they had hitherto not done so requires the pro-activeness of management as Beehr et al (2015) arrived at the conclusion that effective management enables the teams to overcome the tensions that resist alignment. McKinsey (2008) amplifies the role of management and does so by describing vertical communication process which begins with the CEO and cascades down the structure to the individual teams.

To further understand how organizations can become better aligned by improving their communication processes, theory on organizational communication is examined as Kanter (1994) maintains that an organization is truly aligned when reaches a state where its units can make collective efforts, and communication exists for that purpose; the purpose of coordinating multiple resources, processes and arrangements towards the common goal (Koschmann, 2012). Having gone through conceptualization so organizational communication, a definition is adapted and that is the flow of ideas within a network for the purpose of coordinating its internal resources – processes and people – towards accomplishing the organizational goals (Koschmann, 2012). We see that communication is effective when the sender of a message and its recipient achieve high proximity in their comprehension of transmitted message. Communication flows within the organization, and achieving alignment requires that this flow be optimized accordingly. The vertical communication flow which is the flow of from subordinates to their superior and vice-versa is highly essential to achieving alignment. Reason is that this flow conveys the goal and strategy, instruction and feedback as well as employees response to them. This is so sensitive that Turkalj (2009) and Fosic (2009) in an attempt to reduce the loss of meaning recommend a backward connection or feedback mechanism to verify that the intended meaning is achieved.

It should be mentioned that several criteria of communication should be met in order reach better alignment by improving the communication: Strategy, Delivery of Communication, Team Communication, Culture, and Structure. Several criteria of communication should be met in order reach better alignment by improving the communication: Strategy, Delivery of Communication, Team Communication, Culture, and Structure (Mark, Chavez, Yu, 2016).

Strategy criteria is the fact that after defining the goal, strategy should be set accordingly in order to identify the ways to reach the chosen goals, and the employees should be informed on the

strategy so that they would know why they do what they do and in order to ensure that there is not deviation from the goals (Mark, Chavez, Yu, 2016). Delivery of communication is also a crucial aspect as the companies need to ensure that they the information that is conveyed has been reached to the right audience, right time and in a right way. Team communication needs to be in a high level as well in order to ensure the alignment.

When team is a small group of people united by a common goal with mutually complementary abilities, there is a high level of mutual trust, understanding and respect. One of the most important factors of effective team work is strong communication along with functional identification, mutual dependence management, management in the presence of differences, management of the degree of team closeness from outside influence. The combination of the advantages of teamwork makes it an attractive goal of management activity. So, the team creates an atmosphere of community, participate, help and support, which is an important factor of individual readiness for additional efforts and risk in the performance of tasks (McKinsey, 2008). A certain level of support is provided to each member by the fact of belonging to it due to a special climate of mutual assistance. When the teams are smaller, it becomes easier to motivate and manage. The team controls the emotional experiences of its members through their stimulation and weakening. In the team there is an unconscious reciprocal exchange, "infection" and multiple reinforcement of emotional experiences. In this case, there is a clear control over the manifestation of emotional experiences, which the team is encouraged or condemned (Teresa, Joanna, 2014).

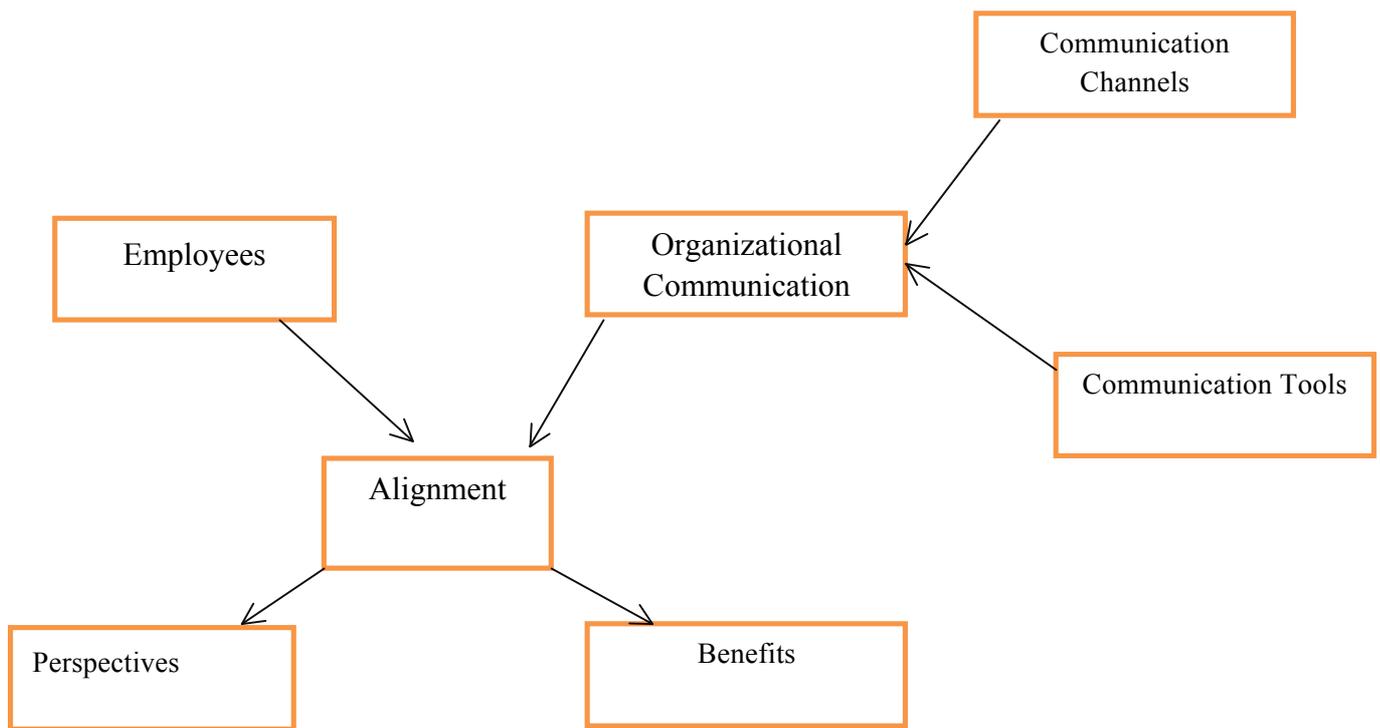
As other important criteria, the organizational structure is a kind of model for the organization of an enterprise with the enumeration of all units and a mandatory indication of the accountability of each of them. This model is designed to provide an understanding of the logic of the organization's activities and how its components interact with each other. It can also be said that the organizational structure determines all formal relationships within any company and, in fact, records the belonging of a particular area of tasks to the competence of a particular unit (Mark, Chavez, Yu, 2016).. Ideally, the structure of any company should be built in such a way as to contribute to the achievement of its goals and objectives. Even if the employees are hire high-class pros, but in the structure of the organization are not well designed, all efforts will go to waste (McKinsey, 2008).

Organizational culture is a system of norms, values, attitudes, standards of behavior that have developed in this organization, which serves as a means of influence, regulation and control. Organizational culture is always specific, specific and unique, it includes the whole spectrum of relations in the organization, and completely depends on the characteristics of the activities of the organization and its constituent members (Teresa, Joanna, 2014). Organizational culture pervades all areas of activity within the organization itself and also affects the relationship of the organization with

the social environment. When determining the nature of the organizational culture, attention should be paid to the fact that it includes and determines the entire spectrum of relations in the organization. But should not confuse the organizational culture and the simple order in the organization. The established order in the activities of the organization is organizational culture, but the organizational culture is always based on specific goals, it is the result of managerial decisions, and not just spontaneously established relationships. Organizational culture is the key to the development and success of the organization's activities only when it is the result of a well-thought-out and competent activity of the organization's management. When forming an internal culture of an organization, it is important to develop basic norms and values that could serve as a solid support in the daily activities of the organization (Teresa, Joanna, 2014).

Following suit in this discourse is horizontal or lateral organizational communication – which is concerned with the transmission of information across the same level. This aspect is vital, as it influences the workforce's collective understanding of their organization's mission, and can influence alignment negatively or positively if poorly utilized.

Below is a graphical overview of the concepts covered in this theoretical framework relating to alignment and organizational communication:



**Figure 6: Graphical Overview of Conceptualization**

The graphical overview outlines the concepts covered in this theoretical framework as relating to alignment and organizational communication. For organizational communication to be structured in a way that promotes alignment, the communication channels need to be paid careful attention to as these channels describe the ways in which information flows in the organization and as such they have to be optimized in an alignment centric way. Within the past decade, the communication channels available to an organization have dramatically increased and as organizations grow in size, the employees and the management cannot efficiently depend on face-to-face transmission as a means of getting their messages across, hence the need to establish communication channels, and the ones involved and covered in the theoretical framework are the formal and informal channels which according to Fox (2001) are two systems which moderately complement each other. Partially complementary as the formal channel sets the stage for the development of informal networks, and lends credibility to the same informal channels. This is because the formal channel follows the established chain of command is mainly for communicating strategies and policies, as well as the overall message of the organization’s vision, Turkalj, et al (2009). Examples of formal channels will include newsletters and annual reports(Lunenbug, 2011). Complementarily, the informal network back-up the formal network, and although it is an unpredictable system, it forms the network of inter-

personal relationships distinct from the formal organizational hierarchy and is inevitable in any environment; it is only essential that the formal network provides the stimulus that is needed for the informal to adopt an outlook that facilitates alignment, Chan (2002). In addition to the communication channels, there is a legion of tools with the potential to support organizational communication. A tool briefly touched upon as strongly related to alignment is the feedback mechanism according to Turkalj, et al (2009) which is an essential for alignment, as it provides a pathway for employees to communicate inquiries to the management and it ensures that managements are able to effectively oversee employee's activities guaranteeing that their efforts are aligned with the vision of the organization. Some tools which have been highlighted above as applicable to the formal channel are the company's newsletter, and annual report.

Furthermore, the employees of the organization are indispensable in any organizational endeavour as organizations are greatly dependent on the viability of their workforce (Lee, 2011). And as far as alignment is concerned, employees, by means of effective organizational communication need to have their tasks and activities lie in the same direction as the organization. In lieu of this framework, communication cannot be overemphasized as the prerequisite for employees to get aligned as Beehr (2009) advocates consistent communication to guarantee their understanding of organizational goals and their value of their work in the overall strategy. Of relevance to this discourse is the relationship between team goals and organizational goals, as these smaller "organizations" have greatly increased in their importance (Barker, et al, 1994). McKinsey (2008) recommends that to create alignment in an organization where it is absent, different strategies should be tested within a few teams and in the event of their success, be applied to the entire organizations. This amplifies the fact that there can be no alignment – a mutual understanding of purpose – in the absence of employee involvement. Therefore, goal centred communication between teams and management will ensure that their efforts are in congruence with what the organization needs. In a nutshell, Semler (1997) rightly describes alignment as a state and not a result, and as successful communication is that in which the involved parties achieve a high degree of similarity in their comprehension of the transmitted message, this similarity may never be perfect (Koschmann, 2012) but can always be improved upon, so alignment is a state that can be continuously fine-tuned.

In conclusion, an aligned organization has its alignment as a competitive advantage (Bart et al 1998). Keeping the organization is aligned and communication plays a crucial role in this issue, because it is most typical for the organization's strategy to break down and lose its concreteness at the individual or team level and employees would only see the gap between the grandstanding language of the management and their daily activities and routines, therefore, consistent communication is required

to keep all the resources of the organization – strategies, employees, processes – coordinated towards realizing the organization's mission (Sirbu, et al 2010).

### **3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE COMMUNICATION ASPECT OF ALIGNMENT AT KEYPROJECT**

#### **3.1. Research method and data collection**

As theories have been described and analyzed in the previous chapter, they need to be tested in practice as part of methodology phase of the research, as every theory needs. Any developed theoretical model should be tested in order to compare and realize how it functions in reality or in practice (Bhattacharjee, Anol, 2012). In order to analyze the alignment and communication at KeyProject, it is needed to gain enough information about the current situation in the given issues at the company, employees and the management are the best source of information. So, in order to analyze the situation better it is significant to make a research which can be considered as the relevance of the research. The aim of this research is to find out what needs to be improved in the alignment of KeyProject. The main tasks of the empirical research are to conduct a questionnaire, to interview the relevant respondents, to analyze the results, to find out concrete problems that company has on the given issues.

Qualitative research is chosen as the method of the research in order to assess the current stance of alignment from communication perspective at KeyProject. Opposite to quantitative research method, qualitative research enables not only to find out the problem, but also plays a great role in defining the causes behind the given problem more deeply (Bhattacharjee, Anol, 2012).

Questions are conducted based on the literature review and the outcome of the theoretical analysis. Participating respondents are from three hierarchical positions like CEO, Department head and the employees. In depth interview method is used in order to ensure that respondents feel free to answer. The interviews are taken through Skype individually. As can be seen from the table below, while conducting questionnaire, five criteria have been set and the within each criteria some questions are given. The questions are designed in a format closer to nominal scale, however as the research is qualitative more follow up questions are asked. For example, in case the answer is Agree to the statement “company has certain communication channels”, the respondent will be asked what channels are they? The respondents are CEO, 5 department head and 10 lower level employees from the company, so apart from the department heads, each department is represented by two employees. Sampling is chosen based on judgmental sampling.

As can be seen from the table presented below, under the Delivery of Communication criteria, questions are asked in order to analyse and realize how the company defines its tools, strategy and so on. Also, the questions are asked to see whether if there is any controlling system to ensure the accurate delivery. In Team Communication related questions, the respondents are asked in order to find out if there feedback system exists that enables to provide feedback and if the effectiveness of the

communication system are evaluated based on the feedback of the employees and so on. Communication strategy related questions are asked in order to ensure the consistency of the strategy with the culture, values of the company, whether the company ensures the awareness of the employees and so on. It is crucial to take the culture into consideration and to create awareness on the strategy in order to have effective communication which would lead to better employee alignment.

In the culture, related questions, the questions are given to check the consistency of employees with its values, culture is taken into consideration while recruiting. Structure related questions are asked in order to be sure whether the current structure contributes to the improvement of the communication and if there both of communication between the main decision makers and the employees.

**Table 3: Questionnaire of the Survey**

| Statements  | Responses         | Aim& Measure   |
|---|-------------------|--|
| <b>DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION</b>  | Agree or Disagree | To find out whether the company sets communication strategy, defines the tools, modes and if any communication signs and so on. In case the company does not do these or do it in a low level, it means there is a problem, for example , the strategy and tools should be defined according to the type, structure, current and desired situation in the company, if it is not done in that way, then there is a problem. |
| Company has specific communication strategy   |                   |  |
| Company has certain communication channels (if agree, what are they)                              |                   |  |
| Company has certain communication mode (if agree, what is it)                                     |                   |  |
| Company has certain communication signs (if agree, what are they)                                 |                   |  |
| There is a checking system to ensure the message delivered to the right address                   |                   |  |
| <b>TEAM COMMUNICATION</b>   | Agree or Disagree | Aims to identify if the company has feedback mechanism, whether employee's feedback on communication tools are taken into consideration or not,<br><br>It is important   |
| Company has feedback mechanism  |                   |  |
| Employees are asked their feedback regarding the communication tools that are used                |                   |  |
| There is bottom-up communication (from employees to the management)                               |                   |  |
| Small teams are created within the big teams in order ensure the easiness and accurateness of the |                   |  |

|   |                   |   |
|---|-------------------|---|
| communication among team members  |                   | to have bottom-up communication (from employees to the management) and to have small teams that are created within the big teams in order ensure the easiness and accurateness of the communication among team members, in the absence of this, this perspective (team communication) can be as in a low level. |
| <b>STRATEGY</b>   | Agree or Disagree |   |
| Culture is taken account while setting strategy   |                   | To find out if the company takes culture in account while setting strategy, whether they are informed about the strategy, or if the awareness of the employees on the strategy is checked,  |
| Subordinates are informed about the strategy  |                   |   |
| Awareness of the employees on the strategy is checked                                   |                   |   |
| If it is necessary, the employees are trained on the awareness of the strategy          |                   | If employees are trained on the awareness of the strategy. It is important to take the culture into consideration and to create awareness on the strategy and if those are not performed , then there is a problem with that perspective.   |
| <b>CULTURE</b>  | Agree or          |   |
| Consistency of the employees with the company`s culture is ensured while hiring process |                   | To find out whether the employees, their values, behaviors, thoughts are in consistency with the company`s culture, and whether the company ensures it while hiring. So, if they are not  |
| The company checks the awareness of the employees on the company`s culture              |                   |   |
| Employees are trained on the company`s culture  |                   |   |

|  |                      |  |
|--|----------------------|--|
|  |                      | well aware, they should be trained accordingly, if it is not done, that means the company has problem in its employee consistency with the mission statement, values and so on.  |
| <b>STRUCTURE</b>   | Agree or<br>Disagree |  |
| The structure of the company does not hinder the communication   |                      | Answering these questions could help to find out whether the structure of the company does hinder the communication and if there is not only top down, but also bottom up (employee<<management) communication   |
| Structure of the company allows not only top down, but also bottom up (employee<<management) communication |                      | Answering these questions could help to find out whether the structure of the company does hinder the communication and if there is not only top down, but also bottom up (employee<<management) communication, in case the company does not include those traits in its work, then there is a problem with the given perspective. |

### 3.1. Empirical research result and analysis

#### 3.1.1. The result and analysis of employee`s responses

As is mentioned previously, the respondents are CEO, 5 Department head and 10 employees. This section describes the result of employees` response.

There was not any problem found out regarding the DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION, regarding whether company has specific communication channels, mode and communication signs, 100 percent of employees agreed with that statement that the company has all these three important elements of communication. 70 percent of employees have stated that the company checking system on delivery. The communication channels applied by KeyProject are electronic and face to face communications. Regarding the mode of communication, text communication is also used. The delivery of communication is an essence of effective communication at any company and it directly

can influence the alignment at the company that is why having analysed the delivery of communication at KeyProject, it can be said that this criterion of communication does influence to the alignment positively.

**Table 4: The result and analysis of employee`s responses on Delivery of Communication**

| Statements  | Responses         |   |
|---|-------------------|---|
| DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION   | Agree or Disagree |   |
| Company has specific communication strategy                                     | 8                 | 2 |
| Company has certain communication channels (if agree, what are they)            | 10                |   |
| Company has certain communication mode (if agree, what is it)                   | 10                |   |
| Company has certain communication signs (if agree, what are they)               | 10                |   |
| There is a checking system to ensure the message delivered to the right address | 7                 | 3 |

Differently to Delivery of Communication, three aspects of Team Communication have been found to be a lacking effectiveness. 100 percent of employee respondents have stated that the company does not have feedback mechanism, employee`s feedback on communication tools are not taken into consideration. It is very crucial to have bottom-up communication (from employees to the management), according to the responses, it can be concluded that there is bottom up communication, information flow as 8 employees out of 10 agreed. Regarding the small subgroups within the team, it cannot be observed at KeyProject, according to the response of 10 employee respondents. The main reason why small teams might not be observed in the company could be the fact that the company is small sized and there is not much need for creation of even smaller teams, however regarding other lacking aspects of Team Communication such as not having feedback mechanism, not asking employees regarding the communication tools that are used should be a signal for the company to act in order to prevent the company experiencing negative impact of it, especially on the alignment at KeyProject.

**Table 5: The result and analysis of employee`s responses on Team Communication**

| Statements  | Agree | Disagree |
|-------------|-------|----------|
| <b>TEAM</b> |       |          |

| COMMUNICATION  |   |    |
|--|---|----|
| Company has feedback mechanism   |   | 10 |
| Employees are asked their feedback regarding the communication tools that are used   |   | 10 |
| There is bottom-up communication (from employees to the management)  | 8 | 2  |
| Small teams are created within the big teams in order ensure the easiness and accurateness of the communication among team members |   | 10 |

The result of employee`s responses on Strategy is described in the table below. Similarly to the Team Communication, Strategy aspect has been founded to have aspects that need an improvement. To be more precise, all (100 %) have stated that they are not informed about the strategy, they are not trained on the awareness of the strategy and they are not checked on their awareness of the strategy. That is important to note that the fact that there is not only top down communication, but also bottom up communication at the company as 80 percent of employees respondents agreed, and it is beneficial also in terms of ensuring alignment, however other three aspects of Strategy should be improved, otherwise it can keep impacting the alignment at KeyProject badly. It is important for the employees to have enough awareness on the strategy of the company, so that they would be ensured to act accordingly and not to deviate from the strategy, alongside with potential employee contribution to the strategy and employee`s understanding of his tasks and their impact.

**Table 6: The result and analysis of employee`s responses on Strategy**

| STRATEGY   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| Culture is taken account while setting strategy                                | 8     | 2        |
| Subordinates are informed about the strategy                                   | 0     | 10       |
| Awareness of the employees on the strategy is checked                          | 0     | 10       |
| If it is necessary, the employees are trained on the awareness of the strategy | 0     | 10       |

The result and analysis of employee's responses on Culture is described in the table below. According to the responses of employees, overall, it can be said that this criteria is met at the company, to be more precise and detailed, 100 percent of employees have stated that their values, behaviors, thoughts, their consistency with the company's culture are checked and employees are trained on it, but regarding the Statement whether Consistency of the employees with the company's culture is ensured while hiring process, there is 50 percent of the employees who agreed and 50 percent disagreed with it. As the reason for different opinions regarding the hiring process is the fact that though their consistency with the company's culture is checked through some tests, that 50 percent of employees were not fully aware of the reason of these tests.

**Table 7: The result and analysis of employee's responses on Culture**

| Culture STATEMENTS  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|-------|----------|
| Consistency of the employees with the company's culture is ensured while hiring process | 5     | 5        |
| The company checks the awareness of the employees on the company's culture              | 10    |          |
| Employees are trained on the company's culture  | 10    |          |

The result of employee's responses on Structure is described below. According to the responses, the structure of the company does not hinder the communication and the structure of the company allows for both directions of communication as 100 percent of them agreed.

**Table 8: The result and analysis of employee's responses on Structure**

| Structure STATEMENTS   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| The structure of the company does not hinder the communication   | 10    | 0        |
| Structure of the company allows not only top down, but also bottom up (employee<<management) communication | 10    | 0        |

### 3.1.2. The result and analysis of department heads' responses

This section focuses on the result and analysis of department heads' response. 5 managers are asked similar questions. The table below describes the results regarding the Delivery of Communication.

Based on the responses of the managers, it can be assumed that there is not any problem found out regarding the DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION, regarding whether company has specific communication channels, mode and communication signs, 100 percent of managers agreed with that statement that the company has all these three important elements of communication. 5 out of 5 managers have stated that the company has checking system on delivery. The communication channels applied by the company are electronic and face to face communications. As of mode of communication, text communication is used. The delivery of communication is very important criteria to be met in order to have effective communication at any company and it can influence the alignment significantly, based on that it can be said that the fact the company has accurate delivery of communication can contribute the alignment at the company.

**Table 9: The result of department heads' responses on Delivery of Communication**

| Statements  | Responses |          |
|---|-----------|----------|
|   | Agree or  | Disagree |
| <b>DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION</b>  |           |          |
| Company has specific communication strategy                                     | 5         |          |
| Company has certain communication channels (if agree, what are they)            | 5         |          |
| Company has certain communication mode (if agree, what is it)                   | 5         |          |
| Company has certain communication signs (if agree, what are they)               | 5         |          |
| There is a checking system to ensure the message delivered to the right address | 5         |          |

The table below demonstrates the results and reveal the aspects of Team Communication that have been found to be lacking effectiveness. According to the response of managers, three aspects of Team Communication need an improvement. 100 percent of manager respondents have responded that the company does not apply feedback mechanism and employee's feedback on communication tools

are not taken into consideration. It is very important to have bottom-up, according to the responses, it can be concluded that there is bottom up communication, information flow as 4 employees out of 5 agreed. Regarding the small teams within the team, it is not present at KeyProject, according to the response of 5 manager respondents. As the main reason of not having small teams within teams, being small sized company can be shown. Not having feedback mechanism, not asking employees regarding the communication tools that are drawbacks of the company's communication which can influence other aspect of its business, that is why the company needs to take an action in order solve this issue.

**Table 10: The result of department heads' responses on Team Communication**

| Statements   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| <b>TEAM COMMUNICATION</b>  |       |          |
| Company has feedback mechanism   |       | 5        |
| Employees are asked their feedback regarding the communication tools that are used   |       | 5        |
| There is bottom-up communication (from employees to the management)  | 4     | 1        |
| Small teams are created within the big teams in order ensure the easiness and accurateness of the communication among team members |       | 5        |

The result of managers' responses on Strategy is described in the table below. It was found out that not only in Team Communication, but also Strategy has been founded to have aspects that need an improvement. To be more concrete, all (100 %) have stated that as subordinates, they are informed about the strategy, however, at the same time, all of managers stated that the employees are not trained on the awareness of the strategy and they are not checked on their awareness of the strategy. It should be noted out that there is not only top down communication, but also bottom up communication at the company as 100 percent of managers respondents agreed which is also important for ensuring alignment at the company, whereas, two aspects of Strategy should be improved, otherwise it can keep impacting the alignment at KeyProject negatively. It is essential for the employees to have awareness on long term and short term goals, strategy in order to realize why they do what they do and what are their individual impact or value in the process.

**Table 11: The result of managers' responses on Strategy**

| STRATEGY   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| Culture is taken account while setting strategy                                | 5     |          |
| Subordinates are informed about the strategy                                   | 5     |          |
| Awareness of the employees on the strategy is checked                          |       | 5        |
| If it is necessary, the employees are trained on the awareness of the strategy |       | 5        |

The result and analysis of managers' responses on Culture is described in the table below. According to the responses of managers, overall, it can be said that this criteria is met at the company, to be more precise and detailed, 100 percent of respondent managers have stated that employees' values, behaviors, thoughts, their consistency with the company's culture are checked and employees are trained on it. The Statement whether Consistency of the employees with the company's culture is ensured while hiring process is agreed by 4 out of 5 manager respondents. If the company and its employee do not share the similar value, and the culture, it might cause miscommunication between two parties and it can damage the alignment as well, that is why it is necessary for the company to ensure that employees share similar culture so that alignment can be ensured.

**Table 12: The result managers' responses on Culture**

| Culture STATEMENTS  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|-------|----------|
| Consistency of the employees with the company's culture is ensured while hiring process | 4     | 1        |
| The company checks the awareness of the employees on the company's culture              | 5     | 0        |
| Employees are trained on the company's culture  | 5     | 0        |

The result of managers' responses on Structure is described below. According to the responses, the structure of the company does not hinder the communication and the structure of the company allows for both directions of communication as 100 percent of respondent managers agreed.

**Table 13: The result of managers' responses on Structure**

| Structure STATEMENTS   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| The structure of the company does not hinder the communication   | 5     | 0        |
| Structure of the company allows not only top down, but also bottom up (employee<<management) communication | 5     | 0        |

**3.1.3. The result and analysis of CEO's responses**

As is seen from the table provided below there is not any problem found out regarding the DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION according to the response of CEO, all of the statements are agreed by the respondent, so the company has set specific communication strategy, channels, modes and communication signs alongside with checking system on delivery. The delivery of communication is must in order to have effective communication at any company and it can influence the alignment significantly, based on that it can be said that the fact the company has accurate delivery of communication can contribute the alignment at the company.

**Table 14: The result of CEO's response on DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION**

| Statements  | Responses |          |
|---|-----------|----------|
| DELIVERY OF COMMUNICATION   | Agree or  | Disagree |
| Company has specific communication strategy                                     | 1         |          |
| Company has certain communication channels (if agree, what are they)            | 1         |          |
| Company has certain communication mode (if agree, what is it)                   | 1         |          |
| Company has certain communication signs (if agree, what are they)               | 1         |          |
| There is a checking system to ensure the message delivered to the right address | 1         |          |

The table below demonstrates the results and reveal the various aspects of Team Communication that have been found to be lacking effectiveness. It was agreed by the CEO also that the feedback mechanism does not exist and employee’s feedback on communication tools are not taken into consideration. However, it can be concluded that there is bottom up communication, information flow. Regarding the small subgroups within the team, it is not witnessed at KeyProject, as the main cause is shown the size of the company, as it is small, there is not need for small groups. Nevertheless, not having feedback mechanism, not asking employees regarding the communication are drawbacks of the company’s communication which can influence other aspect of its business, that is why the company needs to take an action in order solve this issue.

**Table 15: The result of CEO’s response on Team Communication**

| Statements   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| <b>TEAM COMMUNICATION</b>  |       |          |
| Company has feedback mechanism   | 0     | 1        |
| Employees are asked their feedback regarding the communication tools that are used   |       | 1        |
| There is bottom-up communication (from employees to the management)  | 1     | 0        |
| Small teams are created within the big teams in order ensure the easiness and accurateness of the communication among team members | 0     | 1        |

The result of CEO’s responses on Strategy is described in the table below. It was found out that the company does not take culture in account while setting strategy, they are not informed about the strategy, It is essential to take the culture into consideration and to create awareness on the strategy, it was found out that the employees are not trained on the awareness of the strategy.

It should be noted out that there is not only top down communication, but also bottom up communication at the company as CEO agreed which has essential impact on alignment at the company, however, two aspects of Strategy should be improved, if it is not done, it can influence the alignment at KeyProject negatively. It is essential for the employees to have awareness on long term

and short term goals, strategy in order to realize why they do what they do and what are their individual impact or value in the process.

**Table 16: The result of CEO’s response on Strategy**

| STRATEGY   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| Culture is taken account while setting strategy                                | 1     | 0        |
| Subordinates are informed about the strategy                                   | 1     | 0        |
| Awareness of the employees on the strategy is checked                          | 0     | 1        |
| If it is necessary, the employees are trained on the awareness of the strategy | 0     | 1        |

The result of CEO’s responses on Culture is described in the table below. According to the responses of the CEO, overall, it can be said that this criteria is met at the company, to be more precise and detailed, CEO have stated that employees’ values, behaviors, thoughts, their consistency with the company’s culture are checked and employees are trained on it. The Statement whether Consistency of the employees with the company’s culture is ensured while hiring process is agreed the CEO. If any company and its employee do not share the similar value, and the culture, it might cause miscommunication between two parties and it can damage the alignment as well, that is why it is a superiority for KeyProject in terms of alignment and communication that they do ensure the consistency of the employee culture with the company’s.

**Table 17: The result of CEO’s response on Culture**

| Culture STATEMENTS  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|-------|----------|
| Consistency of the employees with the company’s culture is ensured while hiring process | 1     |          |
| The company checks the awareness of the employees on the company’s culture              | 1     |          |
| Employees are trained on the company’s culture  | 1     |          |

The result of CEO` responses on Structure is described below. According to the CEO, the structure of the company does not hinder the communication and the structure of the company allows for both directions of communication.

**Table 18: The result of CEO`s response on Structure**

| Structure STATEMENTS   | Agree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------|
| The structure of the company does not hinder the communication   | 1     | 0        |
| Structure of the company allows not only top down, but also bottom up (employee<<management) communication | 1     | 0        |

To sum up, based on the result of the empirical research, it can be concluded that the company does well in the main aspects of communication, to be more precise, as a result it was found out that the aspects of Communication such as Structure, Culture and Delivery of communication are in a good level, meaning they ensure the high quality of the communication and do not hinder the communication. Especially, having a structure that does not lead to miscommunication or any kind of problems in communication is always a good advantage of those companies which can have internal and later external positive impact. It is necessary to mention this also that there is not only top down communication, but also bottom up communication at the company which is very important for alignment. However, despite of positive elements found out during the empirical research, there are some aspects of communication that need a development. Those are Strategy and Team Communication. As hundred per cent of managers stated that the company does not train its employees on the awareness of the strategy and their awareness on the strategy are not checked. It is essential for the employees to have awareness on long term and short term goals, strategy in order to realize why they do what they do and what are their individual impact or value in the process. Those aspects of Strategy should be improved, otherwise it can keep impacting the alignment at KeyProject negatively. Another problem at KeyProject is the fact that the company does not take feedback on the communication tools that are used. In addition to that, as a negative result, it was found out that small teams are not created at the company, however this issue might occur due to the small size of the company.

#### **4. PROPOSAL ON DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION PROBLEM AT KEYPROJECT TO IMPROVE ALIGNMENT**

So, as a result of the empirical research, analysis of KeyProject, it was found out that there are several problems that need to be solved in order to ensure effective communication to improve alignment at the company. To be more specific, the problems were found are the fact that the company does not check the awareness of the employees on strategy and they are not trained on strategy, alongside with the fact that KeyProject does not take feedback on communication tools that are used.

While implementing the strategy, it is important for the employees to understand the process in a big picture in order to ensure the high level of implementation. Operating without a goal does not represent any value for employee, it soon might get boring and the employees can get dissatisfaction, more importantly, it might cause distraction in the communication as well. Lack of employee awareness on the strategy can cause problems in communication in a way that the conveying of tasks can't be as effective as it can be in case of high employee awareness on goals, because, when employees understand why they do what they do, what they try to achieve, they would understand the tasks better. Even the most productive employee, who is always focused on the result, needs to understand the value of his work, so as not to lose interest in it, that is why he needs to know what the company is striving for and what it wants to achieve. Employees who do not understand why their work is needed can attend the work, take some actions and get paid for them. But they will not really be part of the company, and this, in turn, negatively affects the effectiveness of their work.

As well as in any area of business, even feedback on the communications tools that are used in the company is very important in order to know that those tools suit the condition and situation of the employees and it does not cause any ineffectiveness in the communication and employees are comfortable and can deal with those tools. Absence of feedback can be considered as an incompleteness in the dialogue, managers, being unaware of whether he is heard, whether his subordinates fully understand what they have been told to do can be a damage for the performance of the company's overall performance.

The development of the internal communications program should begin with an overall assessment of the management environment. Then study the organizational structure and type of existing communications. To assess the current state of the team and the degree of employee satisfaction, it is necessary to conduct a small internal investigation and establish which forms of communication employees consider most expedient and effective. The results of the audit will show

whether it is already possible to introduce new types of communications in the company or identify some difficulties and tension in the team.

Considering the importance of having employee awareness on strategy and having good feedback system from the employees in order to ensure high level of communication for increasing the alignment at KeyProject, the company should develop those aspects of its communication. However, there is need to have more systematic and holistic approach for improving those aspects. While thinking about the improvement, it is crucial to take into consideration several factors such as current human capacity, physical and intellectual capacity, values, mission of the company alongside with its communication and long term company's business strategy.

Creating a digital forum where the employees can exchange information, knowledge can be useful for the communication improvement, through that platform also, employees can add or download any needed documents, files more easily. That would be beneficial for internal networking and getting help, for example, employees can get help more easily, for example in the form, every member can create his own profile and he can mention his main areas of expertise, and when any employee needs help he can check the form and realize who can help him. That can be done by creating special online platform or if financial resources are limited, any social media tools such as Hangout can be used. Apart from these, managers can use this tool to deliver their message, request faster and more effectively. It can save a lot of time as well, as no need to go other department or office for asking things that can be done online. Additionally, face to face communication can be harder for some employees to express themselves.

As of improving the awareness of employees on the company's strategy, trainings, meetings can be organized, however, before that, there is need to have a check on the current level of awareness of the employees so that the improvement plan can be prepared accordingly. As of beginning, general training on the company's strategy, goals, mission, values can be performed and after that the ideal approach would be to hold a monthly meeting at the beginning of each month to inform the employees not only about the long term but short term goals and tasks to be completed to reach those goals.

Creating a platform or box of proposals and general meetings are the two most common ways of communicating between employees and management. But they become ineffective if proposals received from employees do not find an answer. Often this happens due to the fact that there are quite a lot of messages and it is not possible to respond to everything. Sometimes the management of an enterprise refers formally to the very idea of boxes and does not bother to answer. So, it is important to take a feedback and analysis whether those methods are effective. In order for these methods to be effective, group (command) sentences should be initiated, which greatly simplifies the procedure for

replies. It is also important not to turn general meetings into a farce: the dialogue of opponents should not grow into a monologue of one person. In order for the chosen communication channel to be effective, several things should be considered:

High-ranking leaders are useful to attend meetings in advance, communicate with employees, mix with the team - it encourages and unites people;

Organizers of these events should be able to engage the audience in the dialogue

Participants of meetings should prepare questions in advance, submit them in printed form.

It is also important to establish clear criteria for identifying information that is to be disseminated among staff. Such information can increase the degree of satisfaction with the company and stimulate labor productivity. Awareness of the company's affairs and awareness of its role in it leads to the fact that employees support the company's goals, they develop confidence, trust in management. On the contrary, hiding information or simply silencing it leads to rumours and destabilizes work in the team.

Before implementing the communication development plan, following aspects need to be analysed and identified:

On which professional and social groups can workers be broken up

What is the average duration of the employee's work in the company

How to establish organizational communications with remote units of the company;

How they receive information, etc.

Based on the findings, we can begin to develop a communication strategy. It is important to understand what are the business goals, how the chosen strategy meets these goals, which groups of workers need information and what it should be, at what time and how to act on them. And finally, by what means is the company going to achieve this. The planning of the implementation should be done by management team alongside with the involvement of the employees.

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, it can be emphasized that the aim of the paper has been accomplished through implementation of the tasks that have been set at the beginning.

1. The analysis of current situation of employee alignment at KeyProject has been performed in order to find out which aspect of alignment needs development at KeyProject- It was found out that there is an internal communication problem that influences alignment negatively, to be more detailed, employees need to have a sense of where they are going, or what they are trying to achieve and it could help to improve alignment and lead to more effective communication. The consistence of employees with institutional logics, values should be ensured and the employees need to be well aware of the tasks as well as the basic policies, values of the company. In case the company can improve the internal communication, it can improve the alignment. There should be a strong alignment to perform effectively, bring high results and reach the goals. It can be accomplished by through developing a communication between the management and employees.
2. A conceptual model has been developed in order to propose the development guideline for increasing employee alignment by means of communication. Several literatures have been analyzed on how companies can improve an alignment by improving the communication. A company can be claimed to be aligned, when the management, employees can work together through collective efforts towards the common goal (Koschmann, 2012). So, communication is more effective when the sender of a message and its recipient achieve high proximity in their comprehension of transmitted message. Communication flows within the organization, and achieving alignment requires that this flow be optimized accordingly. It was concluded that several criteria of communication should be met in order reach better alignment by improving the communication: Strategy, Delivery of Communication, Team Communication, Culture, and Structure. In a nutshell, an alignment can be a competitive advantage of companies, in case its effectiveness and the effectiveness of its different aspects are ensured. (Bart et al 1998). Both alignment and communication are crucial and play an important role in any company`s accomplishing the success.
3. An empirical research on employee alignment at KeyProject has been performed. As a result of the empirical research, it was concluded that KeyProject performs well in the main aspects of communication, any problem was not found out in Structure, Culture and Delivery of communication and they can be claimed to be in a good level. Another positive result that was found out that there is not just top down communication, but also bottom up communication at the company which is very important for alignment and communication. However, there were negatives findings as well which could prevent from utilizing the

current positive aspects of communication at KeyProject. These are Strategy and Team Communication. It was found out that the company does not educate its employees on the awareness of the strategy and their awareness on the strategy are not checked. It is crucial for the employees to be well informed on long term and short term goals, strategy in order to realize why they do what they do and what are their individual impact or value in the process.

4. So, after defining the major problems, relevant proposals have been made for the improvement. Regarding the improving the awareness of employees on the company's strategy, trainings, meetings can be organized, however, before that, there is need to have a check on the current level of awareness of the employees so that the improvement plan can be prepared accordingly. Additionally, general training on the company's strategy, goals, mission, values should be performed and after that the monthly meetings should be held on educating the employees on short and long terms goals and tasks to be completed to reach those goals. As another proposal, it was suggest that a digital platform can be created where the employees and the management can exchange information and communicate more effectively. Above all, that proposal should be implemented through more holistic approach which means, effective and detailed analysis should be made on the current situation of the company, including long and short term goals, employees, management team, their availability, capacity and so on.

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