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Achieving synergies through collaboration in a complex organisation

- A case study at Serendipity Professionals

Master's Thesis in the Master's Programme Management and Economics of Innovation

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Preface

This master thesis was conducted during the spring semester of 2018 at the division of Entrepreneurship and Strategy. The doctoral student Marouane Bousfiha was the supervisor from the division and the examiner was associate Professor Henrik Berglund. The study was conducted in collaboration with Serendipity Professionals under the supervision of Julia Fransson (Serendipity Ixora) and Kamjar Hajabdolahi (Serendipity Professionals).

The study has given us valuable insights for how innovative, growing companies could tackle challenges associated with the aim of achieving synergies from collaboration and knowledge management. This thesis has given us a great opportunity to understand in depth how a complex company, as Serendipity Professionals, can create successful innovations and how they face challenges as many others when they come to a certain stage of development. When the company grows within a few years from one to over fifty employees divided into different subsidiaries, the importance of shifting focus to work on organisational structure, culture and leadership becomes crucial for the company's survival. We are deeply thankful to Serendipity Professionals for inviting us into their organisation with an open mind, honesty and positive energy. We would like to direct a special thanks to Julia and Kamjar who took the time to listen, explain and help us whenever needed. Moreover, we are grateful for the time and effort our interviewees have devoted us and for their interest in our findings.

We would also like to thank our supervisor at Chalmers, Marouane, who has been available for diverse questions and fast read-throughs when needed. Thank you for keeping us on the right track and for putting up some well needed boundaries from time to time. Our wish is that we have contributed to a deeper understanding of the effects of culture, structure and leadership in collaborations and the possible benefits and synergies these could lead to.

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Abstract

Within complex, innovative organisations, many challenges may arise as the company grows. Some of these challenges are associated with the goal of adding value and increasing profits, and can be tackled through more efficient knowledge management as well as cooperation. When companies try to create synergies from their different competencies, they can be stalled by the numerous and often diffuse implications, leaving them unable to even know where to start. This master thesis will answer the question of how a complex organisation can achieve synergies, with a focus on creating new business opportunities. Iteratively, three main factors that influences value-adding cooperation within the organisation emerged, namely culture, structure and leadership. From these three factors, the main prerequisites, incentives, challenges, management, systems and processes for collaboration have been discussed in order to practically find out how an organisation can achieve synergies. Through discussion and analysis of qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, which was compared to existing literature within the main factors, the following conclusions could be reached. The first is the importance of having a well defined and widespread company vision. The second is having a strong common company culture. The third is effective knowledge management. The fourth is having strong social motivators that relate to the intrinsic goals of the individual. The fifth and final conclusion is having efficient communication channels. If the organisation focuses on these five conclusions, the collaborative ability will improve and consequently synergies can be achieved.

Keywords: synergy, knowledge management, subsidiary, collaboration, cooperation, culture, structure, leadership

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1 Introduction

There are many challenges for a quickly growing company that constantly keeps producing new innovative subsidiaries within a wide range of industries. Some of these challenges can be to keep a common company culture, having a joint vision, the need for coordination and finding structure and processes that work for the whole organisation.

When a company is created, the founder or the entrepreneur takes on the roles of sales, business development, product development, PR, HR and any other role needed. As the company grows and scales up its business, the entrepreneur needs to hire employees to delegate activities, management and decision making to prevent bottlenecks (Kaffer, 2010). Many entrepreneurial firms seem to thrive in an ad hoc environment up to a certain point. However, as the number of employees and departments keep growing, the firm will sooner or later need to implement elements such as standardised processes, digital tools, communication channels, support functions, policies and a common vision to be able to optimise its business and stay competitive.

There is an immense amount of literature today on how to improve organisations and make them more effective and efficient, within subjects such as knowledge management, organisational culture as well as structure and leadership. However, many of these studies are quite broad and diffuse, and lack practical, concrete suggestions of how to actually apply the theories to one's own organisation. Knowledge management for example is argued by many (del Giudice & Maggioni, 2014; Wiklund & Sheperd, 2003; Leonard-Barton, 1995; Baporikar, 2014) to be an extremely important theoretical field that can lead to major competitive advantages, facilitate decision making and make organisations more effective and efficient (Baporikar, 2014). It is however quite difficult to grasp the theory and even harder to apply and yield benefits from it (Birkinshaw, 2001; Birks, 2000). There is a need for an attempt to practically apply the above-mentioned fuzzy organisational theories to more dynamic and growing entrepreneurial organisations to be able to give these kinds of organisations more concrete, hands-on recommendations.

This thesis has been carried out at Serendipity Professionals, hereafter referred to simply as Professionals. Professionals is a holding company of ten subsidiaries, most of which are consulting companies selling their expertise both to internal and external companies. The interaction between the different independent subsidiaries are inconsistent and in some cases non-existent. The CEO's vision for the future of Professionals is that a greater part of the business will be focused on creating new companies and ventures within Professionals with support from the consulting services. This creates a great need to unite the subsidiaries and explore possible synergies to achieve the new vision. Synergies will, in this master thesis, be defined as when the created value of several subsidiaries, or divisions, are greater combined than the value created separately by each subsidiary or division, for example by starting new companies together which will increase the competitive advantage.

The aim of this master thesis is to provide an analysis of a complex, growing organisation and to identify and analyse the opportunities for synergies, knowledge sharing and cooperation between a company's subsidiaries or divisions. The ambition is to shine a light on what influences cooperation and what could be gained from it, both from a theoretical and an organisational point of view. To achieve the aim of this study, a main research questions was formulated:

“How can a complex organisation achieve synergies between subsidiaries with the focus on creating new business opportunities?”

The study establishes, after reviewing relevant literature and analysing the collected data, that culture, structure and leadership strongly affects cooperation. It thereafter explores how these factors in turn

could be broken down to more concrete subcategories that collectively could help the organisation achieve synergies. The study has been conducted as a qualitative case study where the empirical data was collected through rich personal interviews. The major conclusions answering the research question are the importance of having a clear and well communicated common vision, uniting the employees with a sense of belonging and a common culture, having effective knowledge management, switching from monetary incentives to social incentives relating to the intrinsic goals of the individual and establishing clear communication channels.

The report consists of seven chapters with corresponding subheadings. The first chapter, *Introduction*, explains the context of the study as well as the aim and the issue under investigation. The second chapter, *Literature review*, presents the literature that has been used in order to analyse the issues found in the empirical material. Relevant literature within the subjects of knowledge management, cooperation, organisational culture and behaviour, organisational structure and support and leadership are summarised in this chapter. The third chapter, *Method*, discusses the background behind the choice of research strategy, design and process as well as data collection, data analysis and the research quality. The fourth chapter, *Result*, presents the empirical data that has been collected through the qualitative interviews. The fifth chapter, *Analysis*, discusses the relationship between the empirical data and the studied literature within the subject. The sixth chapter, *Discussion*, discusses the main findings and their significance, as well as theoretical implications, suggestions for future research, sustainability aspects of the study and limitations. The seventh and final chapter, *Conclusion*, briefly summarises the main takeaways from the study.

2 Literature review

The subject of achieving synergies was found to be very limited in the existing theory. However, many aspects of what is described to be synergies in this report are connected to the field of knowledge management. For example, knowledge management describes that when competencies and information is distributed and shared more efficiently, the organisation can create value in terms of competitive advantage, innovation, as well as saving time and effort when not having to reinvent the wheel for every new project. The goal of achieving synergies was therefore highly connected to effective knowledge management, which therefore represents the first part of this literature review. Furthermore, collaboration and interaction between subsidiaries or divisions became a prerequisite for obtaining these goals. Consequently, the broad field of cooperation was examined and is presented in the second section of this chapter, see Figure 2.1 for this chapter's disposition. As described in more detail in the method chapter, the review of relevant literature in the fields of knowledge management and collaboration resulted in a division of collaboration into three main influencing factors, namely Culture, Structure and Leadership. These factors do not in any way cover the entire field of collaboration theory, however they were deemed as the three most relevant factors that influence collaboration in this particular study. The factors were further investigated and comprise the remaining part of the literature review. The framework below in Figure 2.1 supported the process of answering the research question with much support from the collected empirical data as well.

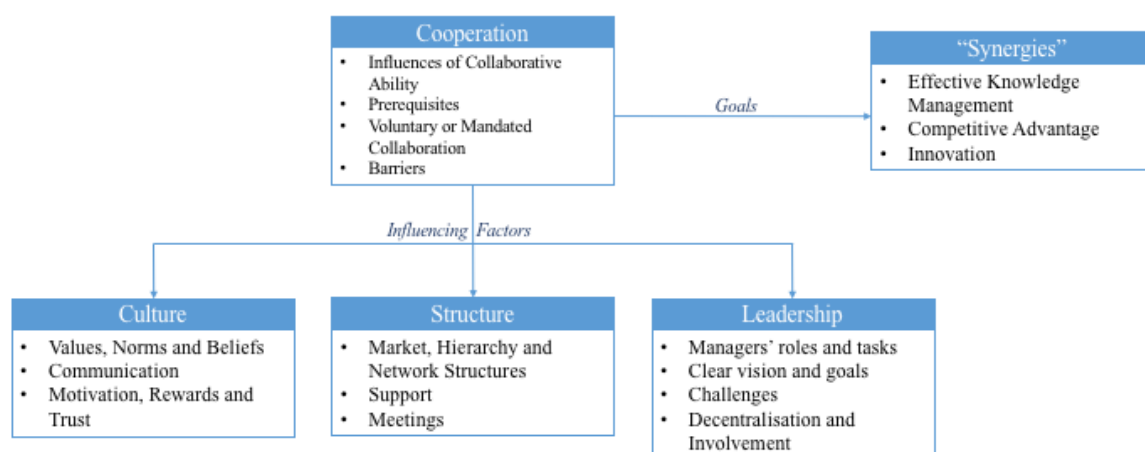


Figure 2.1. Empirical framework of the overall findings in the literature review.

2.1 Introduction to knowledge management in organisations

Globalisation and decreasing trade barriers in the changing economy of today change the way firms compete (del Giudice & Maggioni, 2014). Knowledge management is progressively accepted as a way to improve business performance and innovation. Firms are competing based on how they create and use knowledge (Leonard-Barton, 1995) and they must rely on processes of learning and creation of knowledge in order to stay competitive (del Giudice & Maggioni, 2014; Wiklund & Sheperd, 2003). Bhatt (2001) argues that both business and academic communities stress that an organisation can sustain its competitive advantage through leveraging knowledge. Baporikar (2014) as well as Leonard-Barton (1995) acknowledges that knowledge is of greater value than traditional tangible assets. When

knowledge is seen as the most important resource, firms try to locate, organise, transfer and leverage knowledge more efficiently throughout the organisation. Wiklund and Sheperd (2003) agree that knowledge-based resources are of significant importance and Eisenhart and Martin (2000) state the importance of organisational and strategic processes of firms since these assist the transformation of resources into value-creating strategies. To explore the field of knowledge management further, the first step is to develop an understanding of knowledge, as will be discussed below. The subsequent section will review knowledge management more thoroughly.

2.1.1 Knowledge in organisations

The definitions and fields of knowledge and knowledge management is far from one sided. Knowledge in organisations as well as the distinction between knowledge and information have been defined in ambiguous ways, according to Quintane et al. (2011). For example, knowledge could be viewed as either an objective commodity or as a socially constructed process (Quintane et al., 2011), or the different perspectives of knowledge could focus on either technology or social systems (Bhatt, 2001). When trying to define knowledge in relationship to innovation, there is also a question whether knowledge is an individual phenomenon or if and how it can exist in group or organisational level (Quintane et al., 2011). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) presented the concept of knowledge as either tacit or explicit, where tacit knowledge is highly personal and hard to express or view. Explicit knowledge on the other hand is systematic, easy to express, communicate and share in the form of numbers and words. Knowledge creation then occur in an organisation when tacit knowledge is transformed into explicit knowledge, and it is not until then knowledge can become valuable for an organisation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

According to Grant and Baden-Fuller (1995), knowledge includes information, technology, know-how and skills and is acquired by individuals. According to Bhatt (2001) data is considered to be raw facts while information is an organised set of data. Knowledge is then perceived as *meaningful information* and whether information is meaningful or not depends on the interpretation. Furthermore, knowledge is most often viewed as a resource (Wiklund & Sheperd, 2003; Grant & Baden-Fuller, 1995). Grant and Baden-Fuller (1995) explain that knowledge is a key resource in the firm, which contributes to value adding and is of strategic significance. Grant and Baden-Fuller (1994) continues by stating that since time and cognitive limitations exist, individuals specialise their acquired knowledge at the expense of broadening their knowledge. Wiklund and Sheperd (2003) describe knowledge as the superior resource in the resource-based view of the firm. They specifically focus on knowledge-based resources applicable to the discovery and exploitation of opportunity, which is closely linked to a firm's innovative capability. According to Wiklund and Sheperd (2003), these knowledge-based resources are positively related to a firm's performance. In turn, the innovative capability is the connection between firm performance and the knowledge based-resources.

The production, from input to valuable output, often consists of many different types of specialised knowledge from individuals (Grant & Baden-Fuller, 1995). According to Baporikar (2014), the only sustainable advantage a company could experience with knowledge originates from what people know, and what they decide to do with it. Bhatt (2011) instead explains that the value creation, the firm's competitive advantage, could arise from a firm's 'knowledge base' with prior knowledge, which then generates positive feedback in order to support the creation, validation and distribution of knowledge.

2.1.2 Knowledge management in organisations

The field of knowledge management has, since the early 1990's, been a trend when it comes to managing knowledge to achieve performance objectives for a firm (Baporikar, 2014). Baporikar (2014) states that the purpose of knowledge management is to avoid reinventing the wheel as well as facilitate informed decision-making. Further, there is no doubt that managers of today find knowledge management challenging to practise in reality.

Knowledge management can, according to Baporikar (2014), be divided into the processes of creating, capturing, storing, sharing, applying and reusing knowledge. Bhatt (2001) instead argues that knowledge management processes can be divided into knowledge creation, knowledge presentation, knowledge distribution as well as knowledge application activities. He continues by stating that, for an organisation to fully be able to capitalise knowledge, there needs to be a balance between these activities which requires the organisation to focus on organisational culture, technologies and techniques and the interaction between these three in order to stay competitive (Bhatt, 2001).

Gold, Malhotra and Segars (2001) has another perspective on knowledge management but their conclusions are similar to Bhatt's (2001) ideas about the influence of culture, technology and techniques. In Gold, Malhotra and Segar's (2001) capability based view, they highlight that in successful knowledge management, identification and assessment of prerequisites in terms of resources and capabilities is key. They mention that technology, structure and culture are infrastructural capabilities essential for successful knowledge management. These factors are further elaborated below.

- *Technological capabilities* are important since they involve how fragmented information and knowledge flow can be integrated in the organisation through linking information and communication systems. These linkages can eliminate naturally occurring communication and information sharing barriers in the organisation. Organisations therefore need to invest in comprehensive technology infrastructures supporting the critical communication and knowledge types. This includes collaboration and distributed learning technologies that could eliminate structural and geographical obstructions to interaction and thereby facilitate collaboration between individuals in the organisation.
- *Structural elements* often inhibit collaboration and knowledge sharing. Many organisational structures are possible but one important aspect is the reward and incentive system since it can affect the knowledge flows. There is a need to structure incentives so that employees feel motivated and rewarded for generating and sharing knowledge as well as facilitate knowledge flows. The importance of distributing and sharing knowledge is something that Alavi and Leidner (2001) stress as well. Knowledge is embedded in individual employees as well as the organisational culture, routines, policies, systems and documents. The authors argue that the firm's ability to apply this embedded knowledge to create new knowledge and to take action is vital and that information technologies (see previous bullet point) plays an important role in this process. Information technologies for sharing information are for example Internet, intranets, data mining techniques and software agents.
- *Culture* is key in effective knowledge management, mainly since the interaction between employees is important in innovation processes. The creation of new ideas often stems from dialogues that can be seen as a way to create or transform knowledge. Another important cultural aspect is the corporate vision that could create a well-defined organisational purpose to achieve goals. A vision could include a system of values such as trust and openness, and creates a sense of connection between employees (Gold, Malhotra & Segars, 2001).

Baporikar (2014) as well as McLaughlin (2011) identifies numerous barriers to effective knowledge management. McLaughlin (2011) presents a list of barriers, originally extracted from Barson et al. (2000) and Szulanski (1996). Barson et al. (2000) mention culture, individual rewards for sharing knowledge, poor targeting of knowledge, geographical distance, risk/fear of losing profit as well as existing resources, such as time, technology and data transfer as barriers. Szulanski (1996) mentions barriers such as organisational context and lack of motivation as knowledge management barriers.

Knowledge management and organisational learning are concepts that have been developed in parallel and are often referred to one another (Wang & Ahmed, 2003). Organisational learning includes factors like strategy, culture, structure, processes and systems and employee participation, which assimilates

the influencing factors mentioned in the beginning of the literature review. Individual learning is strongly linked to organisational learning and the organisation has the task to integrate individual learning into the organisational learning (Wang & Ahmed, 2003). According to Leonard-Barton (1995), to create a learning organisation, management is of great importance. Their tasks are to create an environment that invites shared problem-solving and experimentation, implement and integrate internally generated tools, processes and methodologies as well as adopt knowledge expertise from the external environment. However, learning and the difference between learning and unreflective change are still confusing subjects. Organisational learning is not a simple assembly of individual learning processes. Organisational learning engages interaction and cooperation between individuals in the organisation, organisations as an entity as well as between the organisation and the environment (Wang & Ahmed, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, cooperation and interaction within an organisation plays a crucial role in knowledge management in order to share and integrate information and knowledge effectively (Gold, Malhotra & Segars, 2001). The topic of cooperation will therefore be further discussed below.

2.2 Cooperation within organisations

“A critical success factor for any community - at work and outside work - is the extent to which it can coordinate itself to communicate and achieve common goals: in other words, to collaborate.” – Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012, 1)

To collaborate is defined as *“to work together”* (A & C Black Publisher, 2006). To cooperate is also defined by A & C Black Publishers (2006) as *“to work together”*. Therefore, literature on both of these variants of the word will be used. According to Tyler (2010), all kinds of organisations, whether they are work-centred, legal, political, community based or something else, benefit when the people within them cooperate to a greater extent. Benefits that could be gained from cooperation can for example be reduction in costs by sharing best practices, increased profits by sharing expertise and more innovation by sharing ideas (Hansen & Nohria, 2004).

Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012) have constructed a framework of factors that influence collaborative work by studying and synthesising existing literature on the subject. One major factor that influences the collaborative ability in an organisation is context. The location and distribution of workspaces in the work environment is one contextual factor that has been found to strongly influence the collaborative ability. Co-located work can facilitate productivity, informal communication, group effectiveness and breed liking among co-workers, which facilitates cooperation according to the authors. Organisational structure and organisational culture are also important contextual factors. Moreover, another important factor according to the same authors is support. Without proper management support, resources, digital tools and networks, even well designed teams with skilled people can fail. The same article also mentions overarching factors such as trust in one another, common goals and vision, incentives to collaborate, management, constraints and conflict (Patel, Pettitt & Wilson, 2012).

According to Einbinder et al. (2000), there are four major prerequisites that contribute to the success of collaborative endeavours between organisations: incentives, ability, capacity and willingness to cooperate. According to the authors, the strongest incentives are those that align the goals of the individual organisation with the goals of the collaboration system as a whole. The ability to cooperate is dependent upon the knowledge and skills of the members, as well as having the authority to carry out one's own responsibilities. Therefore, bureaucratic organisations with many rules, procedures and hierarchies often become a barrier to collaboration. Related to the capacity prerequisite, some kind of higher organisational mechanism could be useful for guiding and coordinating activities of the participating organisations to facilitate coordination according to the authors. To increase the willingness to collaborate in an organisation, the authors suggest that one should invest in developing shared values and trust among the members. One such way of doing so can be to create communication forums like conferences or workshops for the purpose of networking, sharing

information and developing support. Having formal information systems that permits free availability to relevant data also contribute to a climate of openness according to Einbinder et al. (2000). However, the emergence of trust and shared values can be impeded in situations where participation in collaborations is mandatory, which can lead to uneven or inequitable participation. This problem can be avoided by making participation in the collaboration voluntary. Furthermore, the broader the range of professional and demographic backgrounds, the harder it is to achieve trust and shared values (Einbinder et al., 2000).

In a similar manner as Einbinder et al. (2000), Tyler and Blader (2001) separate cooperative behaviour into two differentiated forms: mandated cooperative behaviour and discretionary cooperative behaviour. Mandated cooperative behaviour occurs when group rules or norms require or dictate cooperation. Discretionary cooperative behaviour on the other hand is voluntary and not directly required. Tyler (2010) claims that for individuals, social motivators such as attitudes, values, identity, procedural justice and motive-based trust are the biggest motivators for cooperation within work organisations, in contrast to instrumental motivators such as money, environmental contingencies and material self-interest. Therefore, Tyler (2010) argues that efforts to improve motivation for cooperation should be directed towards understanding how to increase social motivators. The author also implies that social motivators have a particularly strong influence upon voluntary/discretionary cooperative behaviour, such as helping others and coming up with new ideas.

Another barrier for collaboration that affects alliances negatively is individualistic behaviour (Lozano, 2008). When individuals in an organisation attempt to accumulate resources and power for personal gain it creates imbalance, ineffectiveness, low morale and conflicts between the individuals and groups in the organisation. Individualistic thinking and behaviour affect the group culture and the individuals' values and beliefs, which make the group unwilling to collaborate with other groups and tries to focus all available resources to their own group. Lozano (2008) further argues that individualistic behaviour in organisations may create perceived large, short-term gains but this would be unsustainable for the organisation in the long run. In order to overcome individualistic thinking, it is important to advocate collaboration by setting milestones and objectives as well as create short-term gains for collaborative behaviour (Lozano, 2008).

In the previous sections, culture, structure and leadership has often been mentioned as influencing factors of both collaborations and in turn effective knowledge management and value adding. The following sections will now discuss culture, structure and leadership in more detail.

2.3 Organisational culture

As mentioned earlier, knowledge management is deeply connected to the people of the organisation, which in turn are strongly linked to the organisational culture (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Gold, Malhorta & Segars, 2001). Gold, Malhorta and Segars (2001) describes organisational culture as one of the main challenges with knowledge management. According to Grayson and O'Dell (1998) culture and behaviour could both enhance and obstruct internal sharing of knowledge in the organisation.

At the very basics, culture is a system of values and beliefs, practices, rituals, symbols and heroes (Shani et al., 2009). It is shared by all members of a social group and can be transmitted from one generation to another. Additionally, culture is something that people get socialised into directly from the start. Organisational culture is also taught to new members, as a 'correct' way to perceive, think and feel about certain problems (Schein, 2017). According to Schein (2017), organisational culture is a pattern of basic assumptions that is invented and developed by a group when learning to cope with problems related to external adoption and internal integration. These assumptions have served the group good enough to be considered valid for the whole group (Schein, 2017). According to Hogan and Coote (2014), Schein's further ideas on the organisational culture create a framework for processes that fosters innovation. For example, by valuing open communication and cooperation in firms, through norms and expectations as well as artefacts foster the innovation process. Artefacts

could be success stories or physical arrangements to facilitate innovation-related activities (Hogan & Coote, 2014). Organisational culture is also affected by communication and motivational aspects (Shani et al., 2009). Since these are strongly connected to the collaborative ability and influence the organisational culture, the role of communication and motivation will be further discussed below.

2.3.1 The role of communication

According to Hoogervorst, van der Flier and Koopman (2004), employee behaviour can be described in the context of the organisational culture, structures and systems as well as the management practices. Communication in turn aims not only to transfer information but also to affect employee behaviour and is incorporated in this organisational context. Culture acts as guidance for behaviour, which makes behaviour regulated in the organisational culture. Shani et al. (2009) state that communication influences every organisational process and outcome. Communication could both influence the behaviour of one self and others as well as enhance the efficiency and collaboration. Since communication is an interpersonal process, individual motivation and perception as well as culture affect the way people communicate and the way the communicated message is sent and received. Shani et al. (2009) present a list of communication barriers that are illustrated in Table 2.1 below. These barriers are conflicting assumptions, inadequate information, semantics, emotional and nonverbal barriers, cultural differences, rumours and gossip and inadequate or limited communication systems. Closely linked to these barriers, von Krogh (1998) mentions four barriers for people to share and justify their tacit knowledge publically so that it gets accepted as explicit knowledge. These barriers are lack of a common language, stories and habits as well as lack of formal procedures and company paradigms (involving strategy, vision, mission and core values). Shani et al. (2009) explain that cross-cultural communication, described in the table below, occurs when people from different cultures communicate with each other. It is a major challenge for organisations since it could lead to miscommunication. Miscommunication is when the message is not received as it was intended by the sender (Shani et al., 2009).

Table 2.1. Communication barriers, adopted from Shani et al. (2009).

Communication barriers in organisations	Explanation
Conflicting assumptions	The sender often takes for granted that the receiver shares the same assumptions and past experiences and therefore will interpret the message in the same way. Often this assumption overlap is very small.
Inadequate Information	Not enough information is provided to do the assignment properly. Individuals are then forced to make assumptions about the missing data or the amount of information needed to complete the task.
Semantics and language	Word usage and language affect how messages are perceived. Meanings and associations of words are highly personal and could easily lead to misunderstandings.
Emotional blocks	Feelings associated with past experience often influence both the sender and receiver when communicating.
Nonverbal barriers	Voice tones, gestures and facial expressions could often confuse the receiver and therefore affect the message being sent.
Cultural differences	Cross-cultural communication can lead to miscommunication which is the result of misperception, misinterpretation and misvaluation of the message from the sender.
Rumour and gossip	Indirect or informal communication affects all communication and could either be true or false. It is often hard to recognise its existence, impact and source.
Communication systems and technology	When communication only takes place through a computer screen, the message becomes limited and even harder to decode for the receiver.

In recent years, information technology has developed communication systems that facilitate the communication between employees that are not located in the same physical location. As described in Table 2.1 above, even though new communication technology has made communication easier, face-to-face communication is still vital for the organisation's effectiveness (Shani et al., 2009). Organisational structures and systems are described by Hoogervorst, van der Flier and Koopman

(2004) as important aspects to create consistency in the communication, which are important to avoid cynicism among the employees. Structures and systems could for example be reward systems, management information systems, task structures, hierarchical structure and communication systems. One important management task is to find this consistency in the structures and systems. Furthermore, managing communication is a critical task for managers in order to overcome communication barriers (Shani et al., 2009). The manager's role involves creating an open and supportive environment where people can speak freely, use social technology when needed as well as coach and set goals and milestones that facilitates individual performance, to name a few. Other aspects of leadership and management will be discussed in chapter 2.5.

2.3.2 Motivation, rewards and trust

Motivation and rewards are common themes within culture, as can be seen in the previous sections. Motivation, basically, *"refers to the inner urges that cause people to behave in a certain way"* (Shani et al., 2009, 101). Managers' task to increase motivation is to make use of unexploited human resources and create an environment where employees can contribute to their best ability. Motivation is often described in the context of individual needs. Herzberg (2003) explains that there is a difference between what makes people satisfied and motivated when working and what makes them dissatisfied. He explains that people get unsatisfied or unhappy by so called 'hygiene factors' such as work conditions, salary, peer and supervisor relationships and company policies and administration. If these hygiene factors are fulfilled, it only means that employees are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. In order to achieve employee motivation and satisfaction, factors called 'motivators' must be fulfilled as well. The motivators are personal growth, advancement, work itself, recognition, responsibility and achievement. Satisfaction, and in turn productivity, can therefore only be achieved when people perceive that these factors are fulfilled (Herzberg, 2003). According to the Human Relations' viewpoint, described by Shani et al. (2009), individuals want to feel important and useful and they desire to belong and be respected by others. These needs are described to be more important than money when it comes to work motivation.

Shani et al. (2009) highlight the importance of equity and rewards in motivation. Equity is concerned with the fair judgement of an individual's efforts and performance in relation to others. The perceived fairness of rewards is one part of equity. Shani et al. (2009) further presents the Porter-Lawler model, originally subtracted from Porter and Lawler (1968), which links motivation and rewards to effort and performance. Effort is described to be affected by the value a reward has for an individual as well as the estimation of how probable the outcome is. Furthermore, the individual must also believe that the performance will lead to the actual reward or desired outcome. Rewards must therefore be closely tied to performance. There are two sorts of rewards that could be subtracted from performance; intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Shani et al., 2009). Intrinsic rewards are rewards coming from the work itself or from the individual's sense of accomplishment, success or self-esteem. Extrinsic rewards come from external sources given by others in the organisation and could for example be money, respect and recognition. Shani et al. (2009) explains that extrinsic rewards are like Herzberg's (2003) hygiene factors while intrinsic rewards are like the motivators.

According to von Krogh (1998), trust between co-workers and people compensates for a lack of knowledge. Since perfect knowledge about other people and their intentions never exist, trust becomes a powerful tool since it enhances knowledge creation in organisations. According to Shani et al. (2009) trust is an important factor in leadership, but also in negotiations and particularly in cross-cultural negotiations. Trust between the negotiating parties enhances the possibilities of positive outcomes. It could also be the determinant for initiating negotiations in the first place. In order to build trust, it is important to get to know the counterpart both professionally and personally as well as treating each other with respect (Shani et al., 2009).

2.4 Structure and support

As previously mentioned, important factors that facilitates collaborative work is support in the form of resources, digital tools and networks and contextual factors such as organisational structure (Patel, Pettitt & Wilson, 2012). This section will dig deeper into these subjects.

2.4.1 Structure of relationships

Coase (1937) describes that firms can choose their structure for relationships with external or internal parties based on either market or hierarchy transactions. When a firm has a hierarchical structure, all transactions take place within the firms, i.e. in-house production. On the contrary, a firm can choose to have a market structure and let some parts of the firm's activities be carried out by other external parties, in an arm's length, contractual market relationship. How the firm choose to structure depends on the costs associated with in-house production versus market contracts (Coase, 1937). Powell (1990) argues that in between these two extremes there is a middle-way. When two firms are having a close, long-term relationship, the boundaries between the firms blur out and therefore the two firms' form a network. This network becomes a partnership, which is better than a market relationship in terms of learning and transferring of knowledge. Powell (1990) continues by saying that networks should take place in settings where the participants have common backgrounds, either geographical, ethical, professional or ideological. In homogeneous groups, the degree of trust is higher, which enhance the willingness to collaborate. It is also important that the participants do not have market behaviour in a network setting since it will create a hostile environment and damage the relationship. In a similar manner, Barthélemy and Quélin (2006) state that trust between parties that have a long-term collaboration could lead to less complex contracts between the parties.

2.4.2 Support functions

Employees should have access to the knowledge required for them to do their job (Patel, Pettitt & Wilson, 2012). Therefore, organisations need to ensure that knowledge is captured, structured, transferred, stored, made available and used whenever necessary. To facilitate this, clear guidelines, information, policies and documentation processes should be established. Organisations that are good at collaboration are also good at keeping these knowledge procedures up-to-date (Patel, Pettitt & Wilson, 2012). To facilitate acquisition, dissemination and utilisation of information in an organisation, and to avoid dysfunctional conflicts between units, managers must also create internal coordinative mechanisms, such as cross-functional teams and multifunctional training for example (Chen, Li & Lin, 2013).

Technologies such as knowledge management tools, emails and scheduling tools allow teams to work towards a common purpose by coordinating and communicating information (Patel, Pettitt & Wilson, 2012). Collaborative technologies can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of collaborative work, the quality of the end product, organisational relationships, co-worker satisfaction and reduce project costs.

As previously mentioned, it is crucial for an organisation to have explicit knowledge available throughout the organisation. One form of technology for managing knowledge that is used by many companies is intranets. An intranet is a private network, which grants selective access to its common Internet applications (Edenius & Borgerson, 2003). Intranets can connect colleagues in potential fruitful collaborations that integrate and generate knowledge (Ash, 1998; Kirchner, 1997). According to Lai (2001), intranets can be used to store corporate documents, forms, news, policies, phone directories, pricing information and product specifications. Furthermore, Lai (2001) found that intranets improve the performance, communication and collaboration between widely scattered corporate departments, as well as between individual employees. Other benefits with intranets are that people will work smarter as they will find information faster and more easily, it helps employees find the right people and content and saves time by reducing the need for physical meetings (Natarajan, 2008).

Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012) also highlight the importance of support systems in the form of networks. They have found that some companies have what they call 'connectors', which are people with vast personal networks who knows how to reach skilled people such as experts, and can therefore help connect people.

2.4.3 Meetings

According to Schwartzman (1989), few studies appear on meetings in the research literature since meetings are considered to be so basic in social life that their significance has not been acknowledged. Meetings have various functions within the cultural systems. Schwartzman (1989) define meetings as *"a communicative event involving three or more people who agree to assemble for a purpose ostensibly related to the functioning of an organisation or group, for example, to exchange ideas or opinions, to solve a problem, to make a decision or negotiate an agreement, to develop policy and procedures, to formulate recommendations, and so forth."* (Schwartzman, 1989, 7). Streibel (2002) explains that bad, inefficient meetings not only cost organisations billions of dollars, but they are also a waste of time and talent for the employees and management and could damage the corporate culture and reputation.

Meetings, when conducted successfully, could lead to many benefits for the organisation, including sharing information, learning from experience, decision-making as a group, coordinating employees, helping employees work better as a team, identifying problems and possible solution and much more (Streibel, 2002). Effective meetings start with management. In order to conduct good meetings, efforts have to be made before, during, as well as after the meeting and should involve participants in every step. Schwartzman (1989) explains that relevant literature often assume that meetings are ineffective, boring, wasteful and so forth. One solution to these problems is to structure the meetings more strictly, meaning better preparation, setting an agenda and meeting priorities and goals. The other solution is to pay more attention to group dynamics, including involving all group members, developing trust and shared responsibility, developing leadership skills and techniques for conflict resolutions and so on. Streibel (2002) agrees with the above, but stresses the importance of involving the other participants as well as having a clear purpose of the meeting. Regular meetings also risk being routine and routine activities have a tendency of becoming boring which will demotivate employees to participate actively. One way to improve meetings is to reconsider if meetings always are the best media or setting to use. For example, one suggestion is to reduce the information load by using other media such as memos or emails to share information and conduct meetings when the purpose better fits the meeting setting, for example to solve problems or to discuss and make decisions as a group (Streibel, 2002).

As mentioned in the knowledge management, cooperation and culture chapters as well as the structure and support chapter, management and leadership are important components in achieving cultural and structural prerequisites for effective collaboration and knowledge management. The following chapter will discuss some important aspects of leadership further.

2.5 Leadership

What distinguishes a formal organisation from a random collection of people is a system of authority and administration that is personalised in one or several managers in a hierarchy that knit the whole effort together (Mintzberg, 1989). Mintzberg (1989) continues by stating that the field of management and what they actually do is incomplete in many ways. Many managers state that they plan, organise, coordinate and control. But Mintzberg (1989) states that these tasks actually do not tell us much about what managers really do. He presents the manager's roles, which include formal authority and status, interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles. These roles create an integrated whole, a *gestalt*, where none of these roles can be subtracted from the framework since it leaves the job intact. Mintzberg (1989) argues that there is great danger in centralising the organisation's data bank, or information, in the mind of the manager. When he or she leaves they take the whole data bank with

them. Challenges for managers therefore involve finding systematic ways to share information, to see the broader picture and making use of analytical inputs.

Shani et al. (2009) stress the importance for executives to lead by creating a vision of the future. The vision must be so powerful that it fosters alignment and execution. Hoogervorst, van der Flier and Koopman (2004) argue that in transformational leadership the focus on mutually stimulating relations exists, which affect the motivation of followers. These relations between leaders and followers depend on mutual trust and should be directed towards a common goal. Transformational leadership can, according to Shani et al. (2009), take place through vision, described as one of the most important instruments. The vision creates meaning out of chaos and reformulates both the leader's and the followers' worldview. Hence, a new collective meaning emerges (Shani et al., 2009). Mintzberg (1989) describes leadership and changing vision in entrepreneurial organisations. In entrepreneurial organisations, the structure is often flexible and simple. When changing vision in entrepreneurial organisations, it is often the shift in the people's mind-set that the leader must focus on. Schein (2017) states that leadership and culture is fundamentally intertwined and that leaders are the main architects of culture. Organisational culture, once founded, also impacts what kind of leadership that is possible in the organisation.

According to Grayson and O'Dell (1998), management and enforcement of co-workers are keys in establishing a supportive culture for internal knowledge sharing. One challenge for management is to get employees to recognise the long-term gains and payoffs of knowledge sharing. The culture must have well-defined incentives which reward, celebrate and support the process of sharing knowledge. Leadership can be defined as *"a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal"* (Shani et al., 2009, 198). They argue that leadership strongly affects communication, motivation, culture, group dynamics and performance as well as organisational behaviour. Weiss, Anderson and Lasker (2002) state that effective partnership collaborations need leaders that value and understand different perspectives, empower partners and perform boundary-spanning functions. A so-called 'boundary-spanner' can be described as a network manager who builds effective personal relationships with a wide range of actors, which facilitate collaborations (Williams, 2002).

In order to achieve maximum group performance and effectiveness in decision-making, leadership and responsibility could be distributed in different ways (Shani et al., 2009). How responsibility and decision-making is distributed depends on the centrality of the group members, meaning how connected the members are to other members of the group. For more simple and well-defined tasks, centralised leadership is preferred for effective group decision-making, giving a competent leader is in the centralised position. This means that only the leader is directly connected to the other members of the group and the leader is the only one making the decisions. For more complex and open-ended tasks, decentralised leadership is more effective, meaning all or most members of the group are connected to each other and have the authority to make decisions (Shani et al., 2009).

Within partner organisations, it could be useful to strive towards "high involvement management" which emphasises decentralisation and participation in decision making (Lawler, 1986; Einbinder et al., 2000). This approach enables flexibility, responsiveness and ability to engage and make decisions in on-going collaborations and organisational improvements (Einbinder et al., 2000). Higher centrality of members is strongly linked to higher satisfaction of the group experience. In addition, when talking about group dynamics in small groups, leadership is critical in accomplishing group tasks and improve group performance.

3 Method

This chapter will explain how the study was conducted in order to answer the research question and achieve the research purpose. It is divided into research strategy, research design, research process, data collection, data analysis and research quality. The writers of this thesis will be described as either ‘the researchers’ or in some cases ‘the interviewers’.

3.1 Research strategy

Research strategy can be divided into two main dispositions; either qualitative or quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this case, the purpose of the research is to answer the question *how can a complex organisation achieve synergies between subsidiaries with the focus on achieving new business opportunities?* This research question is demanding in-depth understanding of a complex problem, which is best supported by a qualitative research strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) argue that a qualitative study is best suited for open-ended questions. Since the answers to the research question could be many and are not obvious for the researchers before conducting the study, the question can be said to be open-ended.

Case studies are a suitable approach when conducting qualitative research (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). The purpose of a case study is to investigate, explain or describe as well as answer questions beginning with *why* or *how* (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015; Yin, 2013). According to Blomkvist and Hallin (2015), case studies are appropriate when few examples are being studied and the research questions are complex. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), case studies are based on direct observations or personal contacts, most commonly through interviews. It is important that the case study has a well-defined identity that allows it to be isolated from its context (Denscombe, 2016). This study has been conducted at one organisation since the complexity of the study had to be understood in an isolated setting. Involving several organisations would have made the study less focused and made it impossible to explore details in depth and nuances that appeared along the way. The aim of the study is not to compare different organisations or cases. According to Blomkvist and Hallin (2015), case studies generate rich empirical data that could exhibit the complexity of a certain phenomenon better than a quantitative study. New dimensions and theories could therefore be discovered or developed. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002), in order to develop in-depth understanding of a problem, studying a single organisation or entity and interviewing managers within the organisation, could be the most suitable design.

3.2 Research Design

According to Blomkvist and Hallin (2015), deciding on a research design is the next step in the process. The research design should concern what type of empirical data would help answering the research questions. As mentioned earlier, the chosen research design is a case study.

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002), in research conducted as part of a Masters degree, it is best to adopt a flexible strategy, since learning processes often involve mistakes and false starts. This study has an abductive approach. An abductive study allows theories and ideas from the literature to continuously be compared with empirical data. Literature and empirical data therefore are allowed to influence each other during the study (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). Since the nature of the research problem is of high complexity and uncertainty, an abductive approach was the most appropriate. The abductive approaches often turn to new literature and theories to be able to understand the findings of the study (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015), which is appropriate in this case.

The choice of data gathering method is part of the research design according to Blomkvist & Hallin (2015). Interviews are a common qualitative data gathering method since it is possible to learn more about how individuals are reasoning and could also bring new ideas and dimensions of the studied

phenomenon. Interviews are suitable in order to understand the research phenomenon in depth and when it is desired to discover new dimensions of the studied subject. Since the research question had a qualitative nature and the researchers were interested in developing a deep understanding of the studied problem, interviews were suitable in order to collect the appropriate data. The researchers considered other suitable data collection methods as well, although the lack of written documentation in the organisation made other data collections methods suboptimal. The data collection will be further discussed in the ‘data collection’ section.

3.2.1 Research Context

The study was chosen to be conducted at Professionals since the organisation is large enough to have different divisions/subsidiaries but also small enough to suit the scope of the study. Professionals is part of the larger company of Serendipity Group AB, hereafter referred to as Serendipity, which is known for identifying, developing and investing in technologies and trends that have a global market potential. The innovativeness of the organisation was also of a certain interest since innovations and new business opportunities often are intertwined with competitive advantage, effective knowledge management and value adding. Professionals was decided to be suitable since the organisation has a well-defined organisational structure, see Figure 3.1 below, which would facilitate the data collection as well as the generalizability. The organisation’s experiences of the difficulties to find synergies also matched the purpose of the research and the research question.

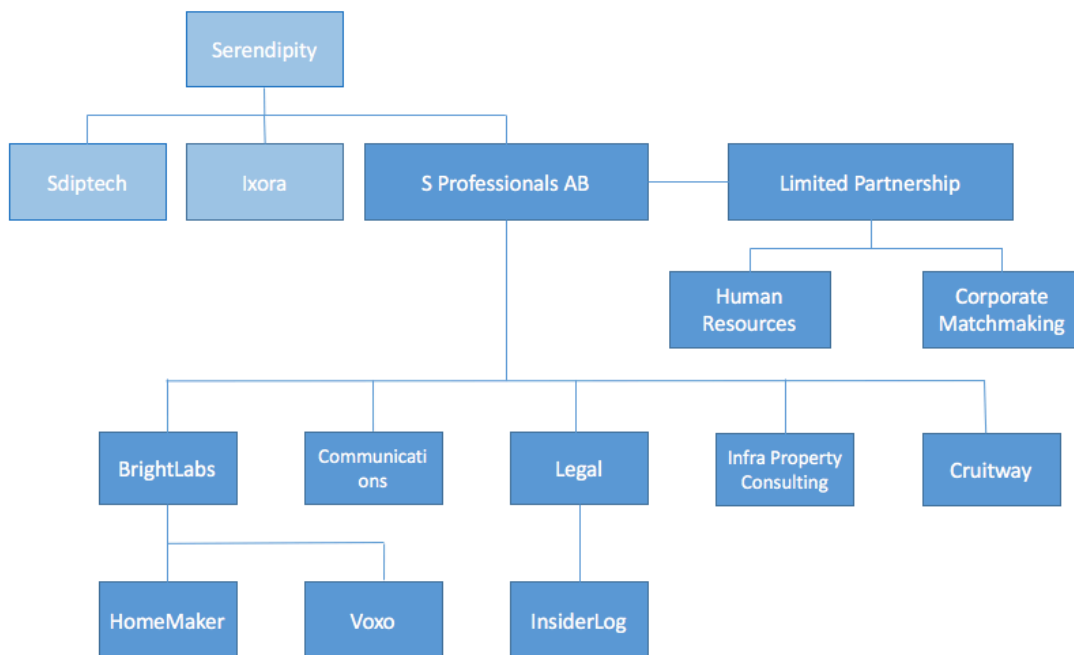


Figure 3.1. The organisational chart of Professionals.

The interviewees chosen for this study all play a key role in the organisation since they are the main responsible for their subsidiaries, namely they are *partners*. The partners were chosen since they have the requested insights needed for answering the research question. They possess a key role when it comes to collaboration and synergies that could be obtained between the subsidiaries. Their thoughts and arguments are therefore of great importance in order to understand practically how the organisation can change in a sustainable way. To be a partner at Professionals means that you are acting as a CEO for a subsidiary and the roles have the same requirements, independent of which subsidiary it is. The partner is therefore responsible for the operative work as well as budgeting and allocating resources between the different projects. They are also responsible for the employees of their subsidiary. For confidentiality reasons, role descriptions of the different partners will not be disclosed. What could be said is that the role descriptions are very similar in terms of responsibilities and years of experience. The interviewed partners have been partner between one and four years.

What distinguishes them is that they often have a background within their area of expertise. For example, the partner of an IT-focused subsidiary is an engineer in data science and so on.

The subsidiaries differ in terms of scope and mission. The subsidiaries are mainly focused on selling consulting services to external customers but they also conduct internal business where they buy and sell services from one another. Four of the subsidiaries are product focused while the other six are service focused. Some cases exist where two or more subsidiaries have started a new company or subsidiary together. There are also a few cases where one subsidiary has started a new company on their own. These subsidiaries have their own partner now. The services and products offered from the subsidiaries are within the areas of human resources and recruitment, mergers and acquisitions, legal, PR and communications, IT, property management, digitised recruitment services, digitised construction services, digitalised handling of insider information and automated voice content analysis.

3.3 Research process

The research process has been of an iterative nature, as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below. The research formulation involved the creation of a planning report, initial dialogues with the CEO of Professionals as well as the supervisor at Chalmers University. After the research formulation, a first literature search as well as an informal and a formal interview with the CEO was conducted. Before the CEO interview as well as before the first and second round of interviews, interview guides were created and in the latter case revised. The literature review and the collection of data, in terms of the interviews, was then collected and analysed simultaneously during the period of the study, in accordance with its abductive approach. The interviews were then transcribed and codified in order to facilitate the analysis. In the analysis, empirical data was compared to literature compiled in the literature review. The analysis of the data was somewhat intertwined with the collection of data and literature review in order to make sure that the study continued to support the research purpose. It also contributed to collecting additional data and explanations along the way. The discussion was then based on the analysis, which led to the final conclusions.

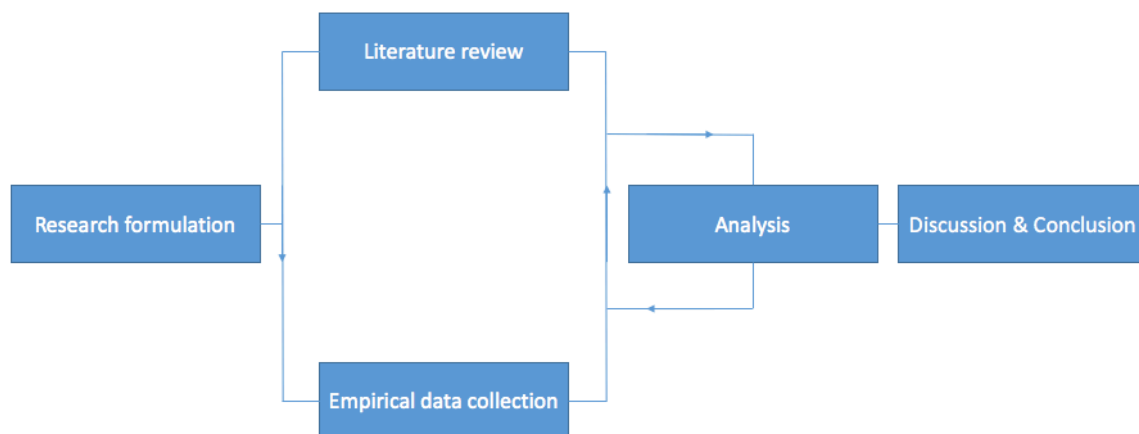


Figure 3.2. Illustration of the research process.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) state that reviewing literature helps researchers learn from previous research and provides a context. Researchers therefore improve their understanding of the topic and can identify gaps. In line with Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), the review process started by identifying the topic, scope and aim of the review in order to be able to develop

keywords. In this case, relevant topics and fields were compiled in an excel document and key words such as information sharing, knowledge, innovation, collaboration and so forth were highlighted. Second, relevant literature was searched, logged, evaluated and elaborated. Lastly, the reviewed literature was organised and summarised by subject. As the study progressed, these subjects supported the creation of the interview guides used in the data collection process. The collected empirical data was frequently compared with relevant literature in accordance with the iterative process described above. Towards the end of the study, patterns both in the literature and in the collected data emerged through analysing and discussing which factors that mainly influenced the research aim- how an organisation can achieve synergies. These factors were then divided into Synergies, Collaboration and subsequently three main influencing factors of collaboration; Culture, Structure and Leadership. Review Table 2.1 and Figure 3.3 for more information on the factors and the data analysis process.

3.4 Data Collection

The data collection started by having an informal introduction meeting with the CEO followed by a recorded interview with the CEO with the support of an interview guide, see Appendix A. The purpose of the CEO interview was to get the necessary background information about the organisation as well as the issues and challenges the organisation faced. The interviewers wanted to both understand the current situation, according to the CEO, as well as what he thought about the future in terms of goals and vision. All data used in this report was collected through either the CEO, the partners or the researchers own experiences since no other written information was available to examine.

The partners were reached through the CEO. Since there was no available data, the interviewers had to gather the contact information from the CEO. Thereafter, the interviewers emailed the partners individually although the written message was the same. Some partners answered by email and others by phone or in person at the office. The goal was to interview all partners at Professionals, however two, very similar, subsidiaries had the same partner and one subsidiary had just had a new partner with no connection to Professionals before. It therefore seemed reasonable not to interview the newest partner and the partner from the two subsidiaries was interviewed in one session. One subsidiary had two partners: one with more of a boundary-spanning role and one with more responsibility for the operative part of the subsidiary. Both of these partners were interviewed.

The main data collection method was qualitative semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are often organised in different themes determined in advance. An interview guide is commonly used although some questions are not formulated beforehand (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). This interview structure allows for a flexible order of the interview subjects and questions, which can be adjusted along with the direction of the conversation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This also allows for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions to particularly interesting answers. The other option would have been to conduct unstructured interviews, which require more skills and experience from the interviewers to be successful. Another data gathering method used was the researchers own observations. These observations included the way that the researchers got introduced to the company, the office environment and the absence of documentation that was requested. Observations were only used in settings where they helped explain a phenomenon and were never used alone without other data points supporting the observation. Both data collection methods involved only primary sources, which means that the empirical data is produced for the sake of this study (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015).

The interview guides for the partner interviews were partly based on the information provided by the CEO during the CEO interview. Other questions of the interview guide were based on relevant literature. The first interview guide was divided into 23 questions, see Appendix B. For each open-ended question, the interviewers had prepared a couple of follow-up question to either clarify or elaborate the answer more. After conducting four interviews, the interview guide was revised in order to improve some questions and add some new ones when new interesting thoughts had been recognised. The revised interview guide did not differ a lot from the first guide, but constituted of 26

questions, see Appendix C. The interviewees did not receive the interview guide beforehand. The reason for this was that some of the questions involved possible solutions and therefore the interviewers wanted the interviewees to be unbiased by these questions when answering. Two partners requested the interview guide beforehand, and the interviewers therefore sent them a modified questionnaire, excluding the 'solution-oriented' questions. Anonymity and confidentiality terms were explained to all interviewees at the beginning of each interview session.

All interviews except one was conducted in person. The interviews in person were approximately one hour long and were all held in Swedish. The quotes used in the result chapter could be found in the original language in Appendix D. Both of the master thesis students attended these interviews in person. One of the interviewers took notes and closely followed the content in order to ask follow up questions or ask the interviewee for clarifications. The other lead the interview, asked the questions according to the interview guide and made sure that it was followed and completely answered. The interviews were recorded, after given consent from the interviewees. One interviewee was unavailable to meet in person and the interview was therefore held over the phone. This interview was approximately 20 minutes long.

3.5 Data analysis

Before analysing the empirical data, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) suggest that researchers should compare and organise their data so that it facilitates the analytical process. Bryman and Bell (2011) state that codification of data into component parts is a common approach in qualitative analysis. This approach, called thematic analysis by Blomkvist and Hallin (2015), strives to reveal themes within the collected data.

As mentioned earlier, each interview was recorded and then transcribed word for word. To some extent, the interviews then got summarised to easier make sense of the transcriptions. The researchers then developed codes, or categories, for the main concepts in the interviews. These codes, translated into English, can be seen in Table 3.1 below. The interviews were then coloured so that every partner had their own colour. Short summaries of each interview can be found in Appendix E. According to Blomkvist and Hallin (2015), this is a common method in thematic analysis. Afterwards, in line with Blomkvist and Hallin (2015), the content was summarised into each category and then compared in order to facilitate the processing of the data and finding patterns. The original transcription was kept intact in order to find relevant quotes as well as for the researchers to be able to go back and double check or read in which context some parts were extracted from.

Table 3.1. Categories and explanations of main concepts subtracted from the empirical data.

Collaboration	Shared resources, contacts, experiences
	Prerequisites/Incentives
	Benefits
	Disadvantages
	Challenges
Culture	Solidarity
	Same room
	Competition/Rivalry
	Introduction of new employees
	Individualism/Silos
Structure	Available information
	Platform
	Framework
	Meetings
Leadership	COO
	Vision (own, alignment, Professional's vision)
Other	Joint service offering
	Benefits of being part of Serendipity
	Internal business

The notes from the interview sessions were mainly used as a support. For example, the interviewer could make a note about other, surrounding factors that could influence the answer, for example a change in voice tone, hesitation, jokes or sarcasm. This was in some cases taken into account since these factors sometimes told the interviewers more about the answers than the answer itself. For example, many partners hesitated before answering the question of Professional's vision. The choice to note silence, hesitations and so on should depend on the aim of the research and whether or not it is relevant, according to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015).

After codifying and summarising the empirical data into categories, the results were compared with the literature in order to find commonalities and incongruences. In Figure 3.3 below, the analysis process is described beginning with transcription of the interviews and then organising the data into different categories, as described above. The third step was the process of clustering the categories into different themes. As mentioned in the research process, the analysed categories was developed into a framework where culture, structure and leadership emerged as the main influencing factors. Moreover, the main points found in the factors went through a second round of analysis and discussion where the researchers systematically examined every main point in order to identify the overall patterns. This led up to the conclusions, which were divided into five main findings. Since the researchers found that many of the sub-themes from the main factors of culture, structure and leadership were intertwined and dependent of each other, the main conclusions are based on combinations of sub-themes from the original framework.

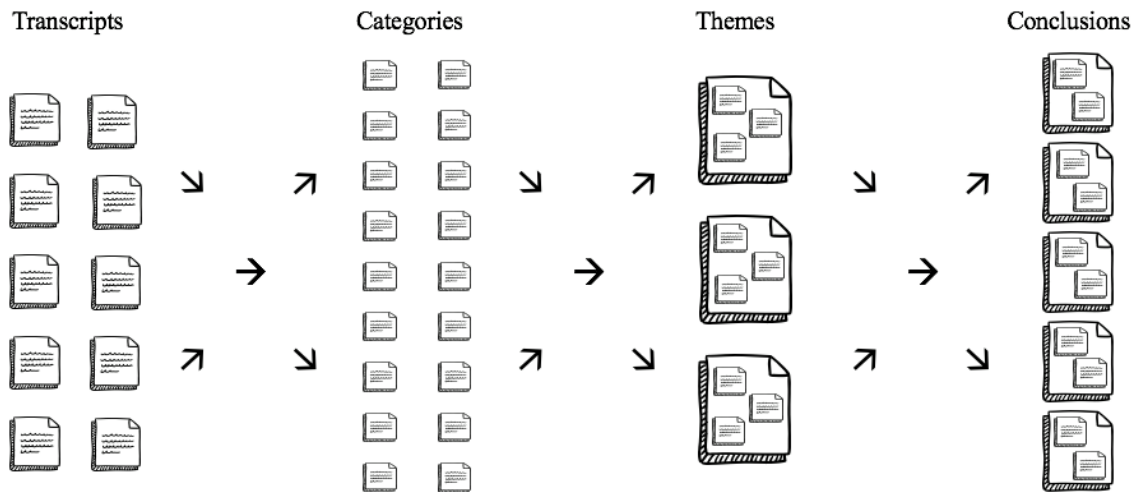


Figure 3.3. Data analysis process

3.6 Research quality

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) and Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) there are contradicting views on how to evaluate the research quality. This section will follow Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson's (2015) as well as Blomkvist and Hallin's (2015) viewpoints since the former is written for qualitative research in management and business and the latter for engineering students. They are explaining the research quality according to validity, reliability and generalizability.

3.6.1 Validity

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) defines validity as *"the extent to which measures and research findings provide accurate representation of the things they are supposed to be describing"* (p. 343). According to Blomkvist and Hallin (2015), validity is achieved by the means of (i) the literature review being about the specific subject field that is stated in the research purpose and questions, (ii) the theory being referred to and used in the analysis, (iii) problematisation, purpose and questions corresponding to choice of data collection method and informants and (iv) the discussion is about what the purpose says it will be about and the research questions are answered.

The validity of this study will be supported by the alignment of the research purpose and questions to the content of the literature review as well as the data collection method, analysis and discussion. As described earlier in this chapter, the research design corresponds to the purpose of the study. Furthermore, by searching literature by different authors and within different fields abductively as well as referring thoroughly, the literature review could reach a higher extent of validity. Validity has also been reached through that the researchers continuously have been equally part of all steps of the study to make sure that the process matches the purpose.

3.6.2 Reliability

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) reliability is accomplished through transparency about the data collection and interpretation. As mentioned earlier, all data is from primary sources. This makes the data very close to the research object and the purpose of the investigation (Blomkvist & Hallin, 2015). In order to accomplish reliability, the source must be correct and produced using the right method. The rich empirical data mainly produced through interviews shows many and complex nuances and perspectives to the research problem. The reliability of this study therefore depends on the answers from the interviews, including their honesty, interpretation of the question and the interviewers interpretation of the answers in turn.

The interviewees generously shared their thoughts in the open-ended questions during the interview sessions. The reliability of this study is also supported by the assurance for anonymity for the interviewees. This could be perceived as a safer sharing environment since specific quotes cannot be connected to a certain person. Another factor increasing the reliability is that the researchers have been involved equally in all steps of the research process. In order to present the data without being biased or include personal interpretations, the researchers have discussed and collaborated through the processing and analysis of all data. After transcribing the interviews, a brief summary of each interview, including the key takeaways, was distributed to the partners in order for them to comment if the researches had interpreted their thoughts in a fair manner. Lastly, through documentation and clarity about how the study was conducted, reliability is achieved.

3.6.3 Generalizability

Generalizability should answer the question whether or not the concepts and constructs of the study could be relevant in other settings (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). According to Yin (2013), case studies are often criticised for not having the same generalizability as natural scientific designs. Blomkvist and Hallin (2015) states that case studies can never obtain statistical generalizability, meaning that from studying one case, there is no statistical probability that the findings will apply to all other cases. However, case studies, if conducted properly, could have analytical generalizability. Analytical generalizability is obtained by discussing in what way the results of the case study could be applicable to other cases. In this manner, the organisation of Professionals is somewhat unique in terms of its structure and aim. The researchers had difficulties identifying similar companies or direct competitors, which implies in some ways that this case is unique. Furthermore, the organisational relationships between the subsidiaries of Professionals could be viewed both from an intra-firm and an inter-firm perspective. This could be viewed as a strength in terms of generalizability, since the result could be applicable both between firms and within the same firm, for example between departments. However, it could also be viewed as a weakness since the organisational structure is unique and could therefore weaken the generalizability. Moreover, the literature often turns to either intra-firm or inter-firm relationships, which could make the literature somewhat compromised since both types have been used together in this study.

4 Results

This chapter will present the collected data, divided into subjects concerning the different factors presented in the literature review. The two first subjects are thoughts on synergies and cooperation, where the interviewees describe their experiences in the company's context. These sections are merely functioning as an introduction to the common thoughts on the current situation of these subjects. The main focus is however on the subsequent three influencing factors of culture, structure and leadership. See Figure 4.1 for an overview of the different topics of the result section. For confidentiality reasons, the quotes do not disclose the name of any companies, people, customers, partners or subsidiaries. This do not affect the relevancy of the quotes and the names are mainly replaced with for example [Partner X] or [Subsidiary X].

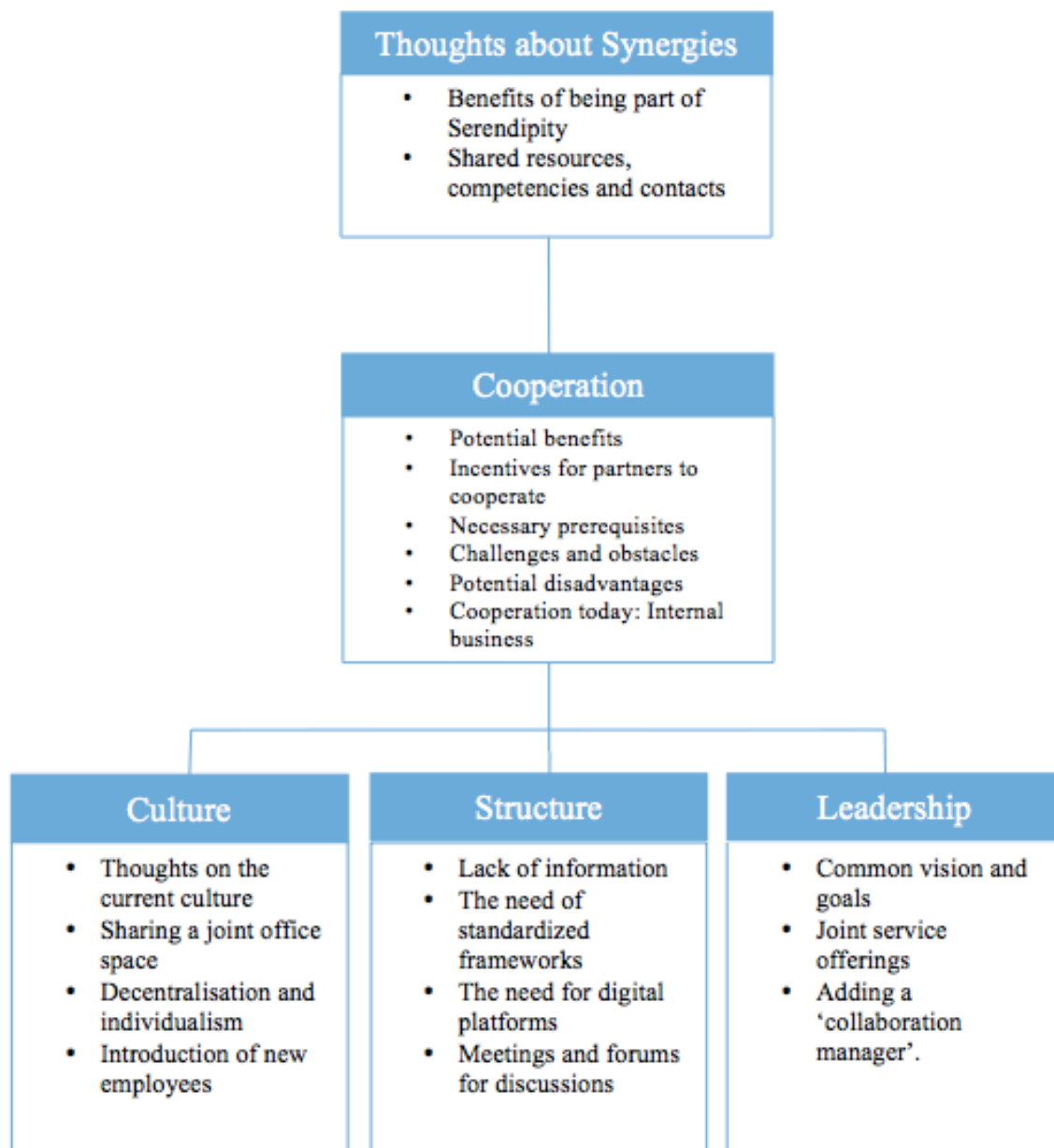


Figure 4.1 Disposition of results.

4.1 Thoughts about synergies

In the following section, the interviewees' perspective and thoughts on synergies as of today will be presented, in terms of the benefits they experience from being a part of Serendipity and Professionals as well as the sharing of resources, competencies and contacts.

4.1.1 The benefits of being a part of Serendipity and Professionals

One question that the partners answered was what difference it made for them to be part of Professionals and Serendipity instead of being an independent firm. Many partners answered that the competencies within the other subsidiaries was one advantage with being part of Professionals. Many expressed that it was easy to ask for help and a few mentioned that without the competence of the other subsidiaries, they would not have come this far with their products or services. Partner 6 said: *"[One] reason has been that we have been able to see the bigger picture, [...] that we got [Person X] into the team, [we] started to think on a digital, scalable business model. [...] We would not have been able to buy [Company X] so we would not have been able to get digitised."*

Other advantages mentioned by many were the cultural aspects with a relaxed and fun environment and the feeling that they were part of something bigger than just their own area of expertise. Many of the subsidiaries are considered to be quite small and new companies on their own. Therefore, the context of being part of Serendipity was mentioned as a kind of support in terms of the structure, not having to fix everything by yourself and that the other people at the office can recommend candidates or share news on social media. A few also mentioned the flexibility and freedom to build their subsidiary without restrictions as an advantage. Partner 1 really like being in a diverse working environment with many competent and passionate people as illustrated in the quote below:

"Here, you have an extremely diverse environment where [...] everyone is really good within their area and [they] are really passionate in their area. To work in an environment where you have a lot of different competencies [...] that is amazing, and also to feel that we could do almost anything." – Partner 1

The context of Serendipity was also highlighted by many when speaking of customers and new business partners. Since the subsidiaries are quite small individually, many partners explained that new clients feel more secure and positive when they know that the subsidiary is part of Serendipity. The brand and size of the entire company makes a big difference when selling products or services as illustrated in the following quote: *"We get a completely different respect in meetings et cetera when we say that we come from Serendipity. We are not two pizza bakers that want to [do business]."* – Partner 4. Another client related aspect is that many partners claim that they could share clients or contacts with other subsidiaries or get recommended by others to a possible client. Some partners mentioned the big network as one advantage as well.

Lastly, some partners mentioned the internal business, where the subsidiaries buy and sell services internally, as a benefit as well. Mostly because they felt like they knew their internal clients better and that they had mutual trust. Read more about internal business further down in section 4.3. They also expressed that the internal business was valuable both in terms of financial aspects and in terms of close collaboration to develop better products and services. When talking about selling services to internal clients in contrast to external clients, Partner 7 stated: *"We are much closer to the [internal] clients and we understand what it is we do exactly and therefore the products gets better as well and we know the history so that we understand how something fits into a context."*

4.1.2 Shared resources, competencies and contacts

All partners have ideas for how they could either share resources, competencies and/or contacts amongst each other. For example, Partner 5 thinks that Professionals could gain from coordinating their purchasing decisions to be able to save costs:

"For example, I would like to have a lot more digital presence. [...] And there I think that we could share some of the costs. [...] I think that we generally could make some purchases if we coordinated ourselves a bit more and discussed what we are planning to purchase in the near future. [...] And maybe sometimes we could also host events together and things like that when we need to reach out towards similar customer segments." – Partner 5

Partner 5 also has ideas for creating experience exchange within the company:

"There are really good experience exchange opportunities in the [Serendipity] community. We're a bit bad at that also, to make those exchanges happen. [...] Take [Partner X] and [his subsidiary] and he is going to talk about how they work with digital marketing and mail sequences, yeah well, then it is really good for Professionals to do that because then you see that you have eight other subsidiaries that can take part in that, that experience exchange. While [Partner X] gets, it can just be one or two thousand kronor bills, a few thousand kronor in Facebook advertising during a week." – Partner 5

Several partners emphasise the importance of knowing more about what the other companies are interested in and what kind of contacts they have to be able to help each other out more and to be able to know who to ask for help:

"For me, it would be important to get clarity in what the others want with their subsidiaries. Because now it's like, I don't mind throwing loads of customers in [another subsidiary's] direction, but I don't even know if they want them. [...] So I think that a more widespread understanding for what kind of deals the other areas are after, then we're starting to get somewhere." – Partner 6

"But if you have better knowledge of how everyone, who people know and who their clients are, then you might not have to start by calling some operator [...] instead you could perhaps go straight to the CFO or COO which they're already in contact with." – Partner 4

Partner 6 thinks that it is unprofessional that one subsidiary might contact a potential customer without knowing that they might already be a customer of another subsidiary:

"Stockholm is very small, and I think that it would be really beneficial to realise how many contacts we actually have, within the company. And it may sound like I have a huge network, but I think everyone here has a huge network. And really it is like this, we have [Customer X] as a client. Someone else wants [Customer X] as a client. That connection is not there at all today. And that is bloody unacceptable, because that is not professional." – Partner 6

4.2 Cooperation

As described in the introduction chapter, the CEO of Professionals wants to increase the cooperation between the subsidiaries to enable them to build more companies together, achieve synergies and to gain new business opportunities. Therefore, the partners were asked about which incentives and prerequisites needed to be in place for collaboration to work, what advantages and disadvantages there were as well as what obstacles and challenges to cooperate.

4.2.1 Potential benefits of cooperation

All of the nine partners would like to see more cooperation between the subsidiaries in one way or another, and they could all see several benefits by doing so. However, they all agree that cooperation should not be forced on without motives, there has to be clear incentives to why one should cooperate

more. All nine of the partners also talked about the possibility of sharing customers with each other as a potential benefit of increased cooperation, as seen in the quotes from Partner 1 and 4 below.

“We have an extreme amount of customers. We have so many customers. Within all segments. [...] But there we can, we could really benefit from letting each other in more, and having smarter offerings for the customers.” – Partner 1

“I think [the CEO] wants, and others also, that you find, if [Subsidiary X] is already a client of a firm, or if they have [Company X] as a client, then you can add on more of the services that we provide within Serendipity.” – Partner 4

Several partners talk about the possibility of having a ‘joint service offering’, where the subsidiaries market themselves together with a joint offering to be able to bring in larger customers and bigger deals and to have a more unique offering: *“I think that it [more cooperation] can lead to bigger deals. For me, it’s also a mystery that we [Professionals] have not looked into framework agreements and procurements and such”* – Partner 6. Read more about this further down in section 4.5.3.

One partner suggests that several subsidiaries could purchase external services together and split the costs. Some partners also talked about building companies together with the other subsidiaries as a benefit of increased cooperation: *“It’s really about being able to land large deals together, or to join forces and build companies together with others within Serendipity”* – Partner 8. This is furthermore very much in line with the new vision of the CEO.

4.2.2 Incentives for the partners to cooperate

As previously mentioned, all partners emphasise the importance of having clear incentives to cooperate. Incentive meaning something that encourages a person (or partner in this case) to do something. Partner 8 frames it like this:

“There is really only one prerequisite, and that is that there has to be incentives [...]. If there is a deal, then of course you should cooperate. [...] But here it is like ‘Yeah but cooperate more’. ‘Yeah but why? What is the deal? Will we make more money? Will we be able to grow?’ If the answer is not yes on both of those, then no one will cooperate.”

Seven of the nine partners mentioned some kind of monetary incentive as the most favourable one. Partner 6 puts it like this: *“I care where I make money, to be perfectly honest. If I am putting in my eight to ten hours a day, then I will put them where I make money”*. Since the partners’ salaries are dependent on the profits of their subsidiary, most partners speak about incentives that will bring in more deals or bigger deals to their respective subsidiaries. Furthermore, one partner suggests monetary rewards when the overall company is doing well as an incentive for partners to help other subsidiaries, since they will be more interested in the profitability of the entire company then. When asked which incentives were needed to cooperate, Partner 1 responded: *“Prestige, assignments, more stickiness with the clients, money in the end haha, those kind of incentives I think.”*

Partner 4 thinks that joint deals where as many other subsidiaries as possible can join is a good incentive: *“But on the other hand, if we found a deal that as many as possible could join in on, this is a typical Professionals deal, then I think it would be more interesting to have meetings to find the next Professionals deal, when you know what you are after.”*

4.2.3 Necessary prerequisites to facilitate cooperation

There were many suggestions and opinions concerning which prerequisites that need to be in place in order for cooperation to work smoothly between the subsidiaries. Prerequisites are defined as

something that needs to be obtained in order to gain something, in this case, cooperation. Partner 9 has several interesting thoughts:

“I think that one of the prerequisites [...] is that there are no restrictions [...]. That you look at win-win scenarios all the time that does not hold any company back in any way and that you can use each other’s competencies very well [...]. It has got something to do with individuals, that the individuals are both very open and have trust.” – Partner 9

A third of the partners particularly stress the importance of collaborations being a win-win scenario for everyone involved, as demonstrated in the quotations above and below:

“If you are to look for collaborations then it has to be win-win for both, that both will gain from it. Otherwise we are doing a favour to some other branch or the opposite, and then I do not think the incentives are good enough.” - Partner 3

Several partners thought that using frameworks could facilitate the cooperation between subsidiaries. Read more about this in section 4.4.2. Partner 5 believes that a framework is necessary if the subsidiaries are to share resources: *“I think that we need to have some, like if we have a framework for what you need to look at, for example [...] “why don’t we hire someone together and share that resource?” [...] and then that you have... maybe meeting up once a month and discuss then.”*

Partner 7 said the following concerning a failed attempt to share customers between subsidiaries and which prerequisites need to be in place to make it work:

“And it might come from the fact that they suddenly might not want to throw us in and start talking with their customer. So I think that it’s about not daring to let each other in completely. And then it’s not interesting for the one that is left outside. [...] There has to be continuity in it and a sound process so that you know that it works. Because I wouldn’t either be comfortable with like, anyone at [Subsidiary X] starting to call our customers and talking about Serendipity Professionals.” – Partner 7

As illustrated in the quote below, Partner 2 thinks that it is important to have more social gatherings at the company since it is much easier to ask for help or to cooperate when you know each other better:

“One thing can be to just let people get to know each other more by more often having gatherings in some way. Because often it can be that information comes just by two people sitting and talking. [...] If it’s that there is an after work sometimes [...] or breakfast some days. [...] Because that threshold [to cooperate] is much, much higher when you haven’t sat down and talked about something general. [...] Like making sure that everyone, especially when you’re new, no matter what level you work at or what to say, or what role you have, so that you always get to go around and say hi to everyone and get like an intro.” – Partner 2

Most partners think that the subsidiaries should have more knowledge about each other’s businesses to be able to help each other find more business opportunities:

“The other Professionals companies should maybe have a better idea of what we are doing or what we are looking for, because they are out meeting companies all the time. So, there can be possibilities for... well, they have other eyes and ears on them when they’re out, and don’t just sell [their products or services] or something else.” – Partner 3

4.2.4 Challenges and obstacles to cooperate

In this context, a challenge is defined as a potentially difficult situation and an obstacle is defined as something standing in the way of the goal, which in this case is cooperation. Many partners mentioned that a major challenge with increasing cooperation between subsidiaries is that all partners are so

focused on their own businesses and so involved in their own deliveries, so that it is going to take a lot to get them to zoom out and change focus to cooperation. Below is Partner 1 and 7's versions:

"Everyone is so extremely devoted to their own business, so you see, I think that everyone is fostered in kind of '[the CEO's] environment' that everyone should have, that everyone should create value. Everyone is here to make money more or less. And, you sometimes lose, you fight so much for your own business and get so extremely operative in your own, and many also get stuck in delivery. Many of those who lead the businesses are also extremely operative in their own projects. [...] We never have time to open our eyes or see the bigger perspective and think about 'yeah this would be a really awesome deal both for me and for [Partner X]' because right now I am only thinking about myself and [my subsidiary], and am completely occupied by it." – Partner 1

"And the problem with that is that all the department heads are very, very involved in their own delivery. People are not bosses and corporate heads that are just supposed to think about how we can develop this. No you are the one that is the best in the team when it comes to actual delivery and needs to be very involved in it. So really everyone should set aside 30 % of their time to just 'okay, now I am not going to write contracts or interview candidates or whatever it is that I do, no I am solely going to work on organisational development'. [...] And think that 'okay, there is some kind of partner meeting now, I don't have time for that or I received a question from a customer if we could have a meeting and then I am always going to put that first'" – Partner 7

Partner 8 could not think of any challenges or obstacles at all: *"No, neither obstacles nor challenges."* Three of the partners and their respective businesses will soon move to other facilities due to lack of space in the current facilities. Most of the partners think that this will have a negative effect of the cooperation between the subsidiaries. This is further addressed in the 'Culture' section. When asked if the move would have an effect on the cooperation between the subsidiaries, Partner 9 answered: *"Say for example [Subsidiary X] in two years, loads of other people that have not had any interaction, physical interaction with [Subsidiary Y]. [...] Then this exchange will not come as natural. I am almost certain of it."*

Partner 2 talks about the restricted amount of time that the partners have at their disposal as a potential obstacle: *"Everyone has got stuff to do all the time also so you can't just interrupt everyone with like, you should spend time on each other all the time or that you want to... that you have to gather everyone"*.

In the context of receiving a 'slice of the pie' when helping other subsidiaries find new customers, Partner 4 said the following: *"Then I have to change focus from my own [business]. I make the most money by making money for my own company"*.

4.2.5 Potential disadvantages of increasing cooperation

Eight out of nine partners cannot think of any significant disadvantages with increasing the amount of cooperation between the subsidiaries. Partner 6 however is afraid that increased cooperation could lead to a loss in profitability: *"That we get a loss in profitability because people are running around having coffee with each other."*

Four of the partners mentioned that a loss of focus on the core business could be a minor disadvantage of increased cooperation. Two of the partners mentioned a slight worry that it would take up too much time: *"It's if it takes up more time and stuff, it removes focus from your core business. I can't see any disadvantages except from that."* – Partner 4

Partner 7 shared some possible scenarios that could lead to problematic situations:

"No, I have a hard time seeing what that [disadvantage] could be... [...] If we would join forces and offer a set price to the customer, how do we then split it [the revenues among the subsidiaries]? There will probably be more of those kind of discussions. And if it would not go well at some point and you lose a customer than you kind of only have yourself to blame but it can get... [Subsidiary X] would not be very happy if they started to involve us and then we somehow lost their client. But it feels like the risk of that happening is pretty small though." – Partner 7

4.2.6 Cooperation today: Internal business

To investigate how and if Professionals should focus more on building companies together, the existing internal business collaborations had to be evaluated as well as the partners' thoughts about doing collaborations and make deals internally. To begin with, in the CEO interview, the CEO explained that most of the internal collaborations consist of buying and selling services from one another. It is up to every partner to decide what offer to give to the other partners internally and this could vary from case to case. The CEO expressed a concern for the subsidiaries having different expectations when entering a collaboration or deal. The CEO thought that having the same expectations was important in order to avoid awkward negotiations and conflicts early on. One idea was to have some kind of guideline or a framework to establish how internal buying and selling of services should be conducted, as illustrated in the quote below. According to the CEO, the subsidiaries have bought and sold many services in-house but conflicts and negotiations have occurred in some cases along the way. Since there is no existing framework today, every new collaboration has to be negotiated from scratch.

"We have actually done several cases where it is more of a consulting solving case. [...] There, the big problem has been that you as friends become customer and supplier. [...] There is a synergy effect, that someone is making money directly and someone pays for it, so the risk profile is not the same. On the other hand, I do not think that you have the same professionalism when it is in-house. You relax a little from both sides. [...] [But if] there is a well-defined framework for how this should be handled, and everyone signed-off on it, then you could avoid many conflicts because the basic idea is good." - The CEO

Today most of the subsidiaries buy and sell more services externally than internally. Partner 9 mentioned that without selling services internally, some subsidiaries would not exist since they started off selling exclusively to other subsidiaries within Serendipity. Many partners mentioned that they can ask each other questions and help each other without charging for it but the balance between doing something as a favour and charging for it is sometimes hard to find. Partner 4 states: *"It is hard to charge internally. You often end up working for free."*

Some partners expressed that they buy and sell to each other as well as ask each other for help too little today. In terms of conflicts in the past, the opinions were divided. Some had never experienced any conflicts while others had experienced some, even though they had managed to solve them in the end. One partner said the following when asked for examples of less successful collaborations:

"Not less successful in terms of results, I would say. I wouldn't say that. But then the work dynamic has not always been perfect [...]. Then, you are almost not willing to collaborate later on. [...] Maybe [we] are not that good internally at you know, signing things [contracts] because it feels like it is not necessary. [...] It has led to that my employees come to me and say 'we do not want to work with this person'. Then it's just a red cross directly unfortunately." - Partner 9

The partners expressed many different opinions about the differences of buying and selling internally and externally. The opinions of doing internal business are summarised in Table 4.1 below, since almost all partners expressed their opinions from an internal perspective. Many explained that the biggest difference was the lower internal price, which made internal business more convenient from a buyer's point of view but also contributed to lower priority for internal customers as well as a more

relaxed and less professional setting. Some expressed that the internal relationships affected the business both positively and negatively, as presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Pros and cons of doing business internally. (II) means that two partners said this. If no parenthesis, then only one partner said it.

Doing business internally		
Buying Services	Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability to supplier (II) • Same process as external business but better price • You know the supplier and how they work (II)
	Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You don't feel prioritized by supplier • The price difference is not a good enough reason • Uncomfortable discussions • Harder to specify requirements • Harder to negotiate price
Selling Services	Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer • You understand the customer better • You already have built a relation and trust • The sale process is shorter and more effective • Easier to do business internally
	Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer tries to talk down the price (II) • Giving internal customer a better price • Projects are less well-defined • Customer assumes you do things for free, harder to charge for services • Not prioritizing customer since the deal is less affordable or you know each other well (II) • Business opportunities are limited resulting in less growth of your own business area
General about doing business internally		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different sale processes and terms for all subsidiaries • Deals are dependent on whether you like the person/team or not • You know and trust each other • Need for more mutual respect and professionalism • Risk for friction and conflicts • No framework for how to handle internal business • Contracts between parties are not existing or are not as formal

Many partners expressed different prerequisites that needed to be in place to improve the internal business. Many demanded more guidelines and clarity in the agreements between the parties, like Partner 5 for example:

“Many do not want to take internal orders since they feel that [...] people are going to bargain [...]. When it happens internally, it is easy that frictions occur which it has led to a couple of times. Therefore, there has to be clarity in the agreements that are created between us.”

Some partners agreed that conditions should be clearly stated before entering a collaboration with another subsidiary. Partner 4 suggests that the guidelines could be specific for each subsidiary since all subsidiaries are different in terms of pricing and work process. As long as the guidelines were well defined and easy to access before making an agreement there should not be any problems for the subsidiaries to have guidelines, Partner 4 stated. A few partners also demanded more clarity in terms of what kind of business the different subsidiaries were interested in. Lastly, as some mentioned as a difference in internal business, there is a need for mutual respect between the parties and a more professional tone.

Many of the suggested solutions to the above-mentioned problems involved finding better business opportunities internally. Some partners mentioned that buying and selling consulting services to one another was not interesting for them anymore. Their incentive was to find bigger business opportunities together to sell externally as a united company. Partner 8 agreed that the goal was to find bigger business opportunities by creating win-win situations for the subsidiaries within Professionals. Lastly, Partner 3 disagreed that guidelines or frameworks could improve the internal business since every project and agreement was different.

4.3 Culture

During the interviews, different aspects of culture were often highlighted. Many mentioned aspects of trust and belief in the employees' abilities and freedom to realise personal goals as important cultural factors. Questions about competition and rivalry were raised as well as the influence that the common office space has on the culture. Meetings and forums for discussion were discussed as one way to communicate in the company. This chapter will start by explaining general factors of the existing organisational culture at Professionals, followed by the importance of a shared office space, preventing individualistic thinking and behaviour and lastly, how the culture is affected by the introduction of new employees.

The belief in the ability of the individual and the flat organisational structure that invites different opinions was some of the cultural aspects that were discussed during the interviews. The CEO mentioned that their cultural work was built on the idea that every employee should do what they were interested in and thought was fun. He brought up the role as a lawyer as an example in the quote below. One way to accomplish that was to get people to act outside the boundaries of their professional role.

"We want to build a culture where you work here as a lawyer, but you are not a lawyer, you are a company builder. Then you do what you think is fun and that you are good at. And that is really hard to accomplish because it is kind of 'fluffy' [...]. But if you build a culture that rewards delivery and value, independent of what it says on your employment contract, then you create an environment where you find collaborations together internally because you like each other as people. Not because you maybe are a good lawyer but because you find other ways to refine your competence." – The CEO

Another aspect that the CEO highlights is that it is important to show the employees that everyone can make partner in Professionals as long as they deliver, put their best foot forward and build their business successfully. This was a way to avoid a focus on hierarchical structures. Some partners also expressed that in order to facilitate cooperation, employees get encouraged to act outside the boundaries of their formal role. By calling employees "company builders" and giving them a broader perspective, there are more possible contact areas between the subsidiaries. A few expressed that the belief in the individual was an important aspect of Professional's culture, as illustrated in the quote below:

"If you work with people that are driven and that you think are competent then you have to give them [...] the tools so that they can succeed and one part of it is to let them make the decisions. That is like the most, most important thing." - Partner 9

Other partners expressed that the culture is a mix between a serious business environment and a casual, fun environment. Some expressed a concern that the different subsidiaries develop their own culture and that the more segregated the cultures become, the harder it will be to cooperate. To maintain the solidarity and not develop a 'we' and 'them' feeling between the subsidiaries was expressed as important to facilitate the cooperation.

In the CEO interview, the concern of rivalry and competition was raised as an obstacle for improved cooperation between the subsidiaries. This concern was disproved by all of the partners as none of them experienced any competition between them. On the contrary, many of them expressed that they felt delighted when the other subsidiaries succeeded.

"I think that we get extremely happy about the other's success. Or I do, [I] think that it is great when the others are doing well and I get more proud." - Partner 1

Some expressed that there was a healthy spirit of competition between the companies. As one of the partners said: *"Everyone wants us to succeed. It is part of the energy when you come in here, that I*

feel a positive pressure to advance and that people will think that it is great if [my company] will grow really big". - Partner 2

4.3.1 Sharing a joint office space

In the past, Serendipity Professionals has shared a joint office space where all subsidiaries were located in the same building. As they grew, some of the subsidiaries moved to a new office while some stayed. Today, seven out of ten subsidiaries are located at the same office. As the company continues to grow, four of the subsidiaries at the common office are going to move to a new location while the three subsidiaries that were not located at the common office today are going to move in with the rest. During the interview with the CEO, the aspect of sharing a common office space was mentioned as an important contributor to the culture and to improved cooperation:

"Up until today really, we have all been seated together, [...] which I think is very fun. That it's a composition of different competencies that are mixed together and then ideas are born as well. [...] That you have a closeness to each other is also an investment or strategy that we would like to maintain." - The CEO

Most of the partners expressed that it is fun to work together and that it is easier to discuss ideas in a joint office. Many mentioned the mix of competencies, the positive energy and the feeling of being part of a bigger company as other advantages with a common office. Three of the partners explicitly mentioned that the common office space offers new opportunities to do business together. Partner 6 said that the only possible advantage with a common office space could be if it leads to more common business opportunities but stated that there existed no such opportunities today. A few partners mentioned that the move to their new office space involved some chaos in terms of office administration. For example, no one was in charge of ordering supply, the key cards to the entrance did not work and they had not figured out how they should clean the kitchen. These office-related issues were something that the writers of this report also noticed when visiting the office.

Eight out of nine partners agree that the common office space is one of the primary advantages of working at Serendipity Professionals. Almost half of them spontaneously expressed that the common office space facilitated the cooperation between the subsidiaries. When asked, almost all partners expressed that the move for some subsidiaries will affect the cooperation negatively. Partner 6 said: *"Now we are seated in different facilities as well. In the future it will probably be three different facilities. It is not sustainable in a long term 'company building perspective'".* Several partners also expressed a concern that when the companies are growing and moving out, the new employees will not know the people in the other subsidiaries in the same way and will not know their competencies. Partner 1 expressed when talking about the move that it would be very unfortunate to lose their competencies in the office. Mostly because the new employees would not get to know the subsidiaries moving out and what they were doing. Therefore, the spontaneous communication could decrease according to some partners. Some partners expressed that it was important to maintain cohesion and act as one company in the future.

4.3.2 Decentralisation and individualism at Professionals

Many of the partners expressed that a problem with the interaction today was that everyone was too focused on their own business area, or subsidiary, to interact with each other, as mentioned earlier. Many expressed that the company was divided into independent 'silos' operationally. For example, Partner 6 said: *"It is an extremely decentralised organisation"*. One reason for this focus on one's own business area, as previously mentioned in obstacles for cooperation, is that the partners are occupied in operations or delivery in their business, instead of focusing on strategic or more general matters in the overall organisation.

Partner 6 expressed that even though most of Professionals are located at the same office and talk to each other on a daily basis, the ‘silos’ are only visible when it comes to interaction related to business matters and not personal interaction. Thus, the partners are thinking individualistically only in the operational work. According to the same partner, the customers and external contacts are also divided into ‘silos’ making them unreachable for other subsidiaries, which also inhibit the interaction.

Some partners expressed that this individualistic thinking made them demotivated and unconcerned about the performance of the overall business. A few expressed that one problem was the structure, that the partners only got rewarded if their own business area performed well, not if the company as a whole performed well:

“If you really want to talk partnership for real [...] then you’ll look at how [...] the whole business performs. You are still responsible for your area [...]. Thus, they’ll [the partners] get a large amount of their result from the different practice areas that they are responsible for but they will also get a chunk [...] because the whole company is going well. [...] That does not exist today. This thing could for example make you [...] think more about the long term and there would be a bigger incentive for being a partner. [...] Today it is like this ‘I could do it but what does it matter?’” – Partner 6

One partner also mentioned that being a partner at Professionals does not have any obligations or responsibilities except leading your own subsidiary. Partner 3 explains: *“I don’t do that much actually in Professionals as a whole [as a partner]. [...] We do not [have] that much contact with the other Professionals branches and their customers and so on”.*

Besides finding the right incentives for the partners to get less individualistic, a few partners suggested that in order to motivate the partners to care more for the whole organisation, they should focus on selling more services together. They explained that if they had a well-defined offer to customers, it would be easier to interact and collaborate between them:

“The thing is that it is hard to define collaboration in any way [...] because everyone is doing their own thing. [...] It would maybe be easier if we merged and packaged a service together for example.” – Partner 9

4.3.3 Introduction of new employees in Professionals

Today the introduction, or on boarding, for new employees are different for different subsidiaries in Professionals. According to the CEO, every subsidiary’s partner knows best how to introduce new colleagues to their subsidiary. He believes that every partner has their own well-defined process of introducing the new employees and that the introduction varies among the subsidiaries. There exist a couple of tools that some subsidiaries use, for example a personnel/staff manual and a staff benefit portal. Professionals also has quarterly financial report meetings, further discussed in section 4.4.4, where the partners report their subsidiaries’ financial results. The new employees are invited to those meetings as well to get an introduction to Professionals. According to the CEO, his new employees get a computer and a telephone and nothing else. He believes that it gets too complicated to give the new employees too much information in the beginning and that it is better to let them get to know their responsibilities and subsidiary first. Through the common events and the quarterly meetings, the new people get to meet people at other subsidiaries, which in some cases could take months.

When asking the partners about how they introduce a new employee to the other subsidiaries and the possibilities for interaction between them, all partners say that they give their new colleagues too little information about the other subsidiaries, and sometimes no information at all. Many expressed that their on boarding was poor in this sense and that it was up to the new employee to, by themselves, get to know the others subsidiaries and learn more about them.

“Information about the rest of the subsidiaries and possibilities for interaction, I think that that is quite scarce. [...] I want that person [that I hire] to focus on their own business and become great at

that. [...] I do not think, once again, that there are incentives for [Person X] from [Subsidiary X] to land a [Subsidiary Y] deal. [...] If it [the incentive] is there, then we are too bad at knowing the exact need for it. So that is also something, there has to be more clarity in those matters.” - Partner 5

When describing their on-boarding processes, all partners had different methods. A few had quite extensive introduction programs for their own subsidiary and booked meetings with all the other partners so that the new employee got information about them. They used all the existing tools and had a whole week scheduled for introduction activities. Many of the others only gave their newcomers a computer and a telephone without much or any introduction to the other subsidiaries.

When asked about how to overcome the individualistic thinking at the company, Partner 2 thinks that it is important that every new employee at Professionals gets the opportunity to shake hands with as many people at the office as possible: *“because [...] if you are new and you have not said hello to a person the first day [...] then the threshold to start talking to each other later is much, much higher.”* This can be verified by the writers of this report, who did not either get an introduction to the other employees at the office, which did increase the threshold to initiate conversations.

Some partners expressed that the introduction at the quarterly financial report meetings were not a great start for the new employees. They said that in order for it to be a fruitful meeting for the other attendants, the new employees should have had an introduction to the different subsidiaries and their businesses beforehand, to better understand the topics and avoid repetition for the partners. Partner 1 said:

“The new employees say that it is very instructive and very useful for them [to participate in the meetings]. So I think that there is a value to bring the newly employed. [But] it is only hard facts with numbers [...] so then they need to have had an introduction about the big picture, about Professionals, beforehand in order to understand [the] numbers.”

Some partners also expressed that it was too much of an effort to sit down with every new employee and tell them about their business. For example, Partner 4 stated: *“[It] sounds cruel but it is rather problematic to sit down [...] one hour and tell them what we do”.*

Many suggestions on how to improve the introduction were presented. Many mentioned the need for more structure and clarity around how the on boarding should be conducted. Some suggested an intranet or digital platform, where new employees could access updated information about the subsidiaries and their employment in writing. Some suggested to make recordings or videos of the partners or other employees explaining their business or other useful information instead of having meetings with every new employee in person. Other suggestions were to introduce the new employee to everyone at the office and to have a welcoming lunch or other events.

4.4 Structure

The abundance of structure, clarity, information, frameworks and processes for sharing information and knowledge was a recurrent theme in the data, which is further explained below.

4.4.1 Lack of information

The partners were asked if they always knew where to find information regarding what competencies and resources were available within Professionals. A third of the partners answered no to that question, and the rest of the partners said that even though they might know where to turn to find that kind of information, their employees probably do not. When Partner 9 was asked the question above, the answer was: *“No, there is very little information exchange there actually. It is zero, it is practically non-existent.”*

In another context, Partner 5 mentioned: *“It is dumb that there is loads of experience in certain people’s heads and that it is not written down somewhere so that someone else can make use of it.”* Partner 6 thinks that a joint forum could be a solution to the gap in information sharing between the subsidiaries:

“There is no one from [Subsidiary X] that has ever asked me about a customer contact, ever. There is no one from [Subsidiary Y] that has ever asked me “do you know any companies?” Because there is never that kind of forum. [...] So, a joint forum, CRM-tool and so on, I believe in that.” – Partner 6.

Two of the partners mentioned the CEO as their ‘go-to-guy’ when they needed information about the rest of the competencies in the company. However, one of these partners, Partner 7, does not think that the subsidiaries need much information from the rest of the company:

“There is no information in the level above because nothing happens in the level above. It’s [the CEO] that is there and he does not make that many decisions about a new direction of something or so. So people do not get that much information and maybe they do not feel that they need that much information from the outside and in to their businesses.” – Partner 7

4.4.2 The need for standardised frameworks

According to the CEO, there is a risk with increasing the collaboration between the subsidiaries when there are no frameworks for how collaboration should be conducted. This might lead to the subsidiaries having different expectations on the collaboration, which might cause unnecessary conflict, according to the CEO. Furthermore, the CEO suggested a simple framework for how ownership of a new start-up could be distributed, where the founder of the project gets the largest share and then smaller shares of the company are distributed according to a framework where a service of a certain size gives the service provider shares of an equivalent size and so on. A majority of the partners think that having standardised frameworks for collaboration between the subsidiaries could facilitate collaboration. However, there are some conditions that need to be fulfilled for the collaboration to work according to the partners.

Some of the conditions that were mentioned by various partners were the importance of transparency, continuity and professionalism in the use of frameworks. Additionally, Partner 7 thought that some processes or frameworks would be good to have. However, Partner 7 also highlighted that Professionals should be careful not to implement too many processes since that easily leads to a lot of administration, which many of the partners would like to avoid. However, if someone else took care of the administration, like a COO, then Partner 7 thought that many of the partners would be on board.

Several partners liked the idea of a framework for internal affairs or for distribution of profits or shares of a new start-up, but emphasised the importance of being able to tweak and customise the framework according to the situation, or as two of the partners phrased it, case-by-case. Partner 2 thinks that a framework could be useful, as long as it is not too detailed: *“When it comes to things like starting companies and who should be owner and partner or so, then there could probably be some kind of framework, but I do not think that it can be specified in detail”*.

Partner 3 thinks that a framework would be in the way, and would rather tailor make every new deal according to the situation, since the differences between the projects of this partners subsidiary is too large. Finally, when asked about the use of a framework for avoiding friction in internal affairs, Partner 5 responded: *“I think that such a thing would be necessary and good. And that is what I think would increase us doing business amongst each other.”*

4.4.3 The need for a digital platform for information sharing

According to the CEO, Professionals does not have a joint digital platform of any kind, like an information system, CRM-system or intranet that is shared between the subsidiaries. A few of the companies share the same CRM system, but only use it for their own customers. The subsidiaries use Trello or Slack to communicate within their own subsidiary. Professionals do however have a joint Facebook-group, but it is mostly used for non-business related matters. Five out of nine partners think that a common digital platform, like an intranet, is needed in the organisation today, especially if the organisation continues to grow at the same rate as it has been recently. One partner was opposed to the idea of platforms altogether. Three of the partners think that the organisation is not in need of a common platform yet, but probably will be in the future. Partner 9 says: *"Put it like this, if there was always up-to-date information then I think that somewhere down the line [...] it would be nice because if you need to get hold of a competence then you could easily find it, definitely."*

Partner 5 thinks that there is a real need for a joint platform that has for example standardised contract templates, on-boarding material, employee performance review material, other HR-related material, general documentation and frameworks for pricing of internal affairs and for joint purchasing of external services.

Below are a few interesting thoughts that some of the partners shared when asked about the need for a joint platform within Professionals:

"I think that it is needed. But there is also a need for well-defined ownership for who does what in this platform in that case. [...] And if an intranet is going to work, then it has to be very clear incentives to why people should use an intranet. On boarding is very important for example. But there should also be routines for an exit. What happens when people quit?" – Partner 6

"If everyone continues to grow and move apart then that need [for a joint platform] is obviously going to increase if we are to have any ambition of doing anything together." – Partner 7

"From a cross-consulting or cross-selling point of view I think that it would be very good to have that [a joint platform]. [...] But that everyone is sitting and re-inventing the wheel, and are like chasing... That is probably not very productive. So yeah, I think that there is great value with that, in that. Especially if we keep growing." – Partner 1

4.4.4 Meetings and forums for discussion

During the interviews, meetings and gatherings were discussed in different contexts. To start with, the CEO mentioned the meetings being held today as one of the most important factors for facilitating cooperation. Some of the partners also expressed that regular meetings with the other partners was a condition to improve cooperation, although positive as well as negative opinions were expressed about the way Professionals conducted meetings today. The purpose of investigating the meeting structure and the opinions about meetings was to understand in what way the subsidiaries met today and how these moments of interaction and communication could be improved.

The only joint meetings that Professionals currently has are quarterly meetings with the main focus of reporting the financial results and budgets for the past, coming and current quarter. According to the CEO, the purpose is not only to get a holistic picture of the company's financial situation but it is also to unite the subsidiaries and realise business opportunities. The CEO and the partners attend, as well as new employees so that they get to meet all the partners and to get an insight in their businesses, as mentioned earlier. As Partner 6 described the meetings: *"We [the partners] meet at most two or three times a year [...] when it is the quarterly reporting. [...] we tumble through a number of PowerPoint's, sometimes we cheer each other on [...] then we go out and eat dinner and that's that. [We] never discuss questions about strategy."*

A majority of the partners agree that the purpose of the meetings is to get an insight into the other businesses and to report the financial results. Nevertheless, none of the partners express that the

meetings enhance business opportunities or invite discussions as implied by the CEO. In the past, an effort was made to have monthly partner meetings to complement the quarterly financial reporting meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss synergies and business opportunities between the subsidiaries more thoroughly. The meetings still exist as a calendar invitation but they are not held anymore. The quarterly meetings are not either being held every quarter as described in the quote above. Partner 6 thinks that partner meetings are important for the company's collaborative ability:

"I definitely think that partner meetings are a prerequisite [for improving the collaboration], that they are in place, that we start talking to each other [...] and talk about business development. [...] It should be a forum where we create business and talk structure and culture as well." – Partner 6

In general, many partners explained that it is hard to prioritise meetings and that the purpose of them often are too vague. Many explained that the reason that the partner meetings are not held any more is a lack of incentives to attend. Partner 6 continues: *"It [the partner meeting] never happens. So, the ambition and intent exist but I do not think that [it is possible] before you start giving people the actual incentives."*

When discussing the quarterly meetings currently being held, two of the partners thought the meetings were useless: *"They [the meetings] are boring, long [...]. Yes, that is my opinion. It is a lot of reporting and very little [...] constructive dialogues."* – Partner 3.

Some have more mixed feelings. They think that the financial meetings are good but there is room for improvement. Some partners expressed that the meetings today are too long, too descriptive of existing business areas, has too much focus on numbers and that they fill no direct purpose. Others expressed an interest in these meetings since they get a holistic picture of the company. One of the partners expressed that he/she got inspired to develop a new business idea during one of the meetings. Most of the partners expressed an interest in having meetings to discuss collaborations, business opportunities and sharing of resources and knowledge. Many also expressed that they rather focus on business improvement than reporting numbers:

"Yes, I think they [the quarterly meetings] are good. [...] I think that it is interesting to see what everyone else is doing [...]. But I would like to hear more [that] someone created a business case, I think that it is fun to hear HOW they do business because I want to hear if there is something that I can apply to my own business." – Partner 5

Suggestions to improve how meetings are conducted involves shifting focus to discuss business opportunities and report the numbers more efficiently, to have themes or well thought-through discussion topics or to discuss specific business cases. In order to find incentives for the partners to attend meetings, many expressed that there needs to be a well-defined aim and structure of the meeting in order to prioritise them. Improving the current lack of sharing knowledge and information was expressed as important by some.

Lastly, another improvement mentioned by many involves the new employees and their background knowledge, as previously mentioned. As Partner 7 suggested: *"It is a really good thing that we invite the new ones [...] because it gives them another understanding. But it has become a bit problematic since everyone feels that they need to present [their business] from the beginning. [...] Maybe we should have another forum to introduce the new employees"*.

4.5 Leadership

In the following section, the presence of common vision and goals will be discussed, followed by the role of synergies to achieve these. Moreover, since many partners brought up the idea of creating a so-called 'joint service offering', these thoughts will also be presented. Lastly, the impacts of having a 'collaboration manager' responsible for coordinating the collaboration between the subsidiaries will be presented.

4.5.1 Common vision and goals for Professionals

One focus of the CEO interview was the vision and long-term goals for Professionals. First, the CEO explained that he had not had that much vision for Professionals. He stated that they needed to improve the brand of Professionals as well as the communication of a common vision to all since one wish was to formulate a common vision for all. When elaborating the answer, the CEO explained that the vision is to become an investment company that builds new companies and focuses less on the existent consulting services.

“It sounds a bit tragic when I say that I have not had that much vision. I think that it is very fun to create something new. [...] Somewhere my vision is that we are an investment company that challenges traditional industries through thinking new and refining. [...] But that issue could be different depending on who you are asking. Maybe I am a boring person since I have not found my calling in life...” – The CEO

The CEO stated that there is a risk with being dependent on revenue streams from consulting services. To survive in the long run they needed to find alternative, ‘smarter’ sources of revenue and build on their unique features that make them competitive. Therefore, the long-term goal is to find a way to systematically build companies with support from the consulting services and their revenues that could be reinvested in building new companies or subsidiaries. Today the CEO thinks that all subsidiaries have their own vision although he thinks the partners are aware of the new common vision for the whole company:

“I think, yeah that we should go from being consultants to building companies, that is something I think that everybody agrees upon. [...] We have not really communicated Professionals as a brand, we have been very poor at that. So I think that every subsidiary has its own vision. But I would really like to unite it to a common vision so that effort lies in the future, definitely.” – The CEO

4.5.2 The role of synergies to accomplish individual and common visions

All partners had their own visions for their companies, however there were some common ground between them. Four of the ten subsidiaries are already product companies, meaning that they do not have any or a very small percentage of consultancy services. The product-focused companies’ visions were focused on growing and expanding their existing products. Only two partners specifically mentioned that their vision was to build new companies and products. Meanwhile, many mentioned that they were looking for a more scalable business model and therefore wanted to abandon selling exclusively consulting services, as illustrated in the quote below:

“That is also one of those things that we should have done more of, to really define our vision. [...] We want to move away from this ‘charging by the hour’ because it is worthless. Not only because it is not scalable but also because it is boring to work that way.” – Partner 7

Many partners hesitated when asked about their vision but only Partner 7 mentioned that they did not have a well-defined vision for their subsidiary. When asked, all of the partners agreed that synergies and improved cooperation could help them achieve their vision. Some mentioned that synergies in terms of buying services from one another and sharing competencies could help them while a few mentioned sharing customers, offering a joint service offering or sharing resources. Only Partner 6 mentioned bigger business opportunities. When asked if synergies could be helpful to achieve ones vision, Partner 6 answered: *“Yes. Bigger businesses, more stable contracts. Definitely. And most of all getting introduced to new customers.”*

As mentioned earlier, the CEO thought that the partners knew what the common vision was, although he was not sure how well communicated it was. As it turns out, just over half of the partners were aware with the CEO’s vision that Professionals should focus more on building new companies than

selling consulting services. Meanwhile, some partners thought that Professionals vision was to offer a joint service offering. Three of the partners answered that they had no idea what the common vision of Professionals was even though they later on explained their own version of it. Partner 7 expressed that creating a common vision would be hard since the subsidiaries are too diverse. Partner 2 answered the question about the vision for Professionals like this: *“Oh... good question, I don’t know actually. I have not thought about it as important to me because I have my own version in my own area.”*

Many partners, including the subsidiaries that do not have consulting services, were positive towards focusing more on building companies and for Professionals to become more of an investment company. Some thought that it would make them more competitive, that it would mean that they would have to find new and improved business models and that it would be more fun to work at Professionals. Partner 6 was unsure how this would affect their business and highlighted the need to devote time for internal projects. Partner 7, who highlighted the incongruence in the new vision of building new companies with a product focus and the old vision of creating a joint service offering, was the only partner who thought that an increased focus on developing products would make the subsidiaries even more divided:

“Everyone realises that it is possible to make more money in that way [by selling products] without having to grow with more people and I believe that will make us more divided than integrated. Because when it comes to consulting, then [...] we can give better advice together. But if everyone is sitting with a product portfolio [...], it is another type of sale. It is a rather big difference to sell products and to sell services. [...] It could be harder to have a joint offering then, I think.” – Partner 7

4.5.3 Joint service offerings

When the partners were asked about how to improve cooperation or how to make more money by interacting, six out of nine mentioned joint service offerings. Joint service offerings are when the different subsidiaries package their consulting services together as one external customer offering.

“We want to be the entrepreneur’s best friend [...]. We would also like to come in there and have a strong position that, when [a customer] have all these headaches [...] that are not related to the company’s core functions, then they should know to come to the company builders Serendipity. They have all of this, all support functions.” – Partner 1

Almost all partners who mentioned this type of offer found that a joint service offering was possible to accomplish and something they were willing to be a part of. Some expressed that in order to make it work, information about the subsidiaries as well as clarity in terms of what kind of business the other subsidiaries were interested in and how the offer should look like was key. Two partners disagreed in some way that the joint service offering could work. They both expressed that it could work for some subsidiaries to package their services but that the subsidiaries were too dispersed today to be able to create a joint offering. Partner 5 said that with his/her product oriented subsidiary, a joint service offer was not interesting. In turn, Partner 4 said that more knowledge about the other businesses would not lead to more leads or sales to other subsidiaries but was positive to offer a joint service package. Concerning which prerequisites were needed to be in place to be able to have a joint service offering, Partner 7 said:

“We don’t have any common presentation material. What is... we have a webpage that is completely dreadful and nothing like in the form of a pdf with like ‘what is our offer’. And that is probably partially because we do such different things.” – Partner 7.

Lastly, some partners mentioned that a joint service offering was something that could make them more unique and more competitive in the long run. A few partners said that they were not sure about how to create a joint service offering, but it could be something that makes them unique against competition. A few expressed that this was something that they needed to discuss in the future.

4.5.4 Adding a ‘Collaboration Manager’

During the CEO interview, the feature of having a responsible person for managing the cooperation between the subsidiaries (a Chief Operating Officer, COO, or a ‘Collaboration Manager’) came up as a solution to the current collaboration problems. This person should have a general knowledge and responsibility for the subsidiaries on a corporate level.

“In the future, we want to introduce [...] a person acting as a hub, that gets to know all the subsidiaries [...]. That person should have an overall responsibility to make sure that we do cross-selling, cross-consulting, joint ventures internally. However, that does not exist today, that is what we want to do.” - The CEO

In the past, two people except the CEO has had more formal roles as a ‘hubs’, or boundary-spanners. According to the CEO, these people have found business opportunities within and between several subsidiaries but sooner or later they have been caught up in a specific project or subsidiary. The CEO explained that these people only acted between the subsidiaries because their role stated it and that employees in general did not engage in cooperation between the subsidiaries. To have a person that has a general responsibility would lead to less friction when doing business internally in Professionals, according to the CEO. He also believes that there is a value in having a person that sees the bigger picture and could identify needs and contacts areas between the subsidiaries.

Some of the partners also expressed the need for a person that has responsibility for the overall business, as exemplified in the quote below. The partners mentioned that the responsibilities should involve questions about the office, human resources, creating collaborations that gain all parties and sharing information between subsidiaries.

“There is no one that is in charge for that issue at Professionals level. So [...] it is up to everyone individually and that is a general problem, [...] there are a lot of matters where no one is responsible for that issue. [...] There is no common budget for anything and there is no one that could address these overall issues.” – Partner 7

The same partner also expressed a disbelief regarding if this COO could actually help the subsidiaries achieve the vision, which Partner 7 again though was to form a joint service offering.

“We have been talking in two years about hiring a COO who only work with the businesses, hard to find that kind of person... when we find that kind of candidate they should meet all of us and we should present all of our very diverse businesses, then I believe that it is quite terrifying as well, just “how the hell am I going to tie together this in a suitable way? Therefore, it is, I don’t know, maybe that we have to realise [...] that you don’t have to tie together everything. Maybe it is unrealistic to try to fit together this gang with this joint service offer [...]. Maybe we have to start by picking some of the more simple ones and advance from that?” - Partner 7

5 Analysis

This section will compare and analyse the empirical findings through the lens of the existing literature presented in the literature review. It is divided into the three main influencing factors of collaboration; culture, structure and leadership.

5.1 Culture

The culture section will start with the common culture of Professionals and has then been divided into three main categories; different cultures and individualism, motivational factors and communication. It will therefore analyse the existing culture of Professionals as well as some of the strong themes from both the empirical data and literature, to give an overview of the existing problems and possible solutions on an organisational level.

5.1.1 Improving the common organisational culture

As described by Gold, Malhotra and Segars (2001), culture is an important infrastructural capability for effective knowledge management. At Professionals, the culture is highlighted as important by the CEO and mentioned in many different settings in the interviews, which indicates that they do care a lot about their common culture. One thing that most partners mentioned was that they like working at Professionals since it is a fun and inspiring environment including many different competencies and people. In addition, all partners mentioned that they do not feel that there is any competition or rivalry between their subsidiaries. Many of the partners therefore seem quite content about the culture at Professionals and that they have good relationships with one another. Good relationships with peers and managers are highlighted by Herzberg (2003) as hygiene factors for creating a motivating environment. Some partners also mentioned that one of the benefits with Professionals was a feeling of being part of something bigger, which is described by Shani et al. (2009) as a motivational factor. Additionally, Gold, Malhotra and Segars (2001) emphasise that a common vision could create a sense of connection between employees, which could help the subsidiaries to further strengthen this feeling.

In terms of conflicts and misunderstandings, the partners did not seem to experience this as a major problem even though a few mentioned the work dynamic as a problem in some collaborations. Some felt worried that an increase in collaboration could lead to more conflicts. As described by Shani et al. (2009) poor communication could lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, which stresses the importance of enhancing the communication and creating an environment with open communication. As described in more detail in the next section, different cultures could also lead to conflicts related to the work dynamics between subsidiaries. In addition, a few partners mentioned that the office administration was not optimal at their new office. Herzberg (2003) describes work conditions as a hygiene factor which, if not fulfilled, could lead to dissatisfaction and demotivation. Even if conflicts are not a great concern today, dissatisfaction could affect the collaboration and create conflicts since employees could get demotivated when simple things, like a clean kitchen, do not work and people start blaming each other or worry more about that than business related issues.

Some partners as well as the CEO highlighted the belief in freedom, personal development and self-actualisation as important cultural factors. By having a flat organisational structure and encourage individuals to act as 'company builders' and go outside of their roles give them the possibility to engage in projects according to their own interests. One partner mentioned that it was important to not have any restrictions as a prerequisite for collaboration and added that there were no such restrictions today. In accordance, Einbinder et al. (2000) highlight that too much rules and hierarchies hinders collaboration. Furthermore, Hogan and Coote (2014) state that an environment that welcomes open communication and collaboration fosters innovation. In this way, some parts of the culture at Professionals could be said to enable new business opportunities, as people express that they can ask each other for help and have good relationships with one another.

The absence of common events, gatherings and other forums for discussion could be viewed as an obstacle for improving the common culture since open communication and forums does not exist today in the organisation. This is something that Shani et al. (2009) also mention as a barrier for communication. Some partners mentioned that they wanted more common events and gatherings to discuss and get to know each other better. As one partner said, getting to know one another is important in order to facilitate interaction in the future. Gold, Malhotra and Segars (2001) state that the creation of new ideas often stems from dialogues. To increase collaboration, the organisation should develop shared values and trust which could be obtained by, for example, creating communication forums in order to network and share information (Einbinder et al., 2000). Consequently, Professionals should create more forums for interaction and enable open communication in order to be able to collaborate more. In accordance with Gold, Malhotra and Segars (2001) as well as Hogan and Coote (2014), this could also lead to the creation of innovation, knowledge sharing and new ideas as well as new business opportunities.

5.1.2 Different cultures and individualistic thinking

As some partners mentioned, the subsidiaries tend to develop their own cultures inside their own subsidiary. This was said to hinder the collaboration and some expressed that it was important to prevent that the subsidiaries' cultures became even more dispersed. Shani et al. (2009) states that different cultures could lead to ineffective and poor communication since misinterpretations could occur more frequently. In the same manner, Einbinder et al. (2000) state that it is harder to create trust and shared values when the range of professional and demographic backgrounds is greater. Therefore, in order to enable collaboration to a greater extent, Professionals could gain from focusing more on developing their common culture and values.

Many partners at Professionals mentioned that their strong focus on their own business created decentralisation and individualistic tendencies. Some expressed that this made them demotivated and unconcerned about the overall performance of Professionals. Lozano (2008) describes that individualistic behaviour inhibit collaboration, creates low moral and inefficiencies, which is in line with the findings from the interviews. Lozano (2008) further states that individualistic behaviour could create perceived short-term gains but is unsustainable in a long-term perspective. This could partly explain why the partners experience that they cannot see the long-term benefits of collaboration and therefore do not focus their efforts on collaborating more. Milestones and objectives could help the organisation to overcome this individualistic behaviour. At Professionals, there is a risk that the original setup of the organisation into decentralised self-enforced organisations creates a barrier when they want to increase the collaboration since the original setup do not match a collaborative environment.

Today, the CEO believes that every subsidiary has a clear process for introducing new employees to their subsidiaries as well as information about the other subsidiaries. The partner interviews reveal the contrary for many of the subsidiaries. All partners think that they give inadequate information about the other subsidiaries, something that Shani et al. (2009) present as a communication barrier. The interviews also reveal that the introduction of new employees differ a lot between the subsidiaries. Some also expressed that the financial reports were not a good introduction for the new employees and that they needed more background information. As described by Shani et al. (2009), culture is transmitted from one generation to another and people get socialised into a new culture from day one. Schein (2017) further explain that culture is taught to new members as a correct way to perceive, think and feel. When the introduction at Professionals is different dependent on which subsidiary the new employee starts working at, the culture consequently differs from subsidiary to subsidiary. As expressed by some partners it is up to the new employees themselves to introduce themselves to the other people in the organisation. Even though some partners mention that they do not give their new employees information about the other subsidiaries in order for them to focus on their own role, learning about the other subsidiaries is important to improve the collaboration. As Shani et al. (2009)

as well as Einbinder et al. (2000) state, to get to know each other is, as previously mentioned, a prerequisite for communication, trust and collaboration.

5.1.3 Motivational factors

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, motivation could be influenced by many factors. Hoogervorst, van der Flier and Koopman (2004) states that leadership affects the motivation of followers and according to Shani et al. (2009), individual motivation affects how well the communication is functioning. Only one partner mentioned the incentive to have more joint deals with the other subsidiaries in order to cooperate more. A few mentioned that selling more together could be a solution. Lozano (2008) states that creating short term gains and setting milestones could prevent individualistic thinking which could be a way for Professionals to find incentives to work together more. As already discussed, some of Herzberg's (2003) hygiene factors and motivators are fulfilled while others are not. In order to fully make sure that these factors are fulfilled and people feel motivated and satisfied, a total review of all factors could help Professionals find areas for improvement related to motivation. In accordance to Lawler's (1986) and Einbinder et al.'s (2000) thoughts on decentralised leadership and centrality, involving employees to participate with their ideas could facilitate this process of improving the motivation at Professionals. Employee participation also facilitates organisational learning, which is closely connected to effective knowledge management (Wang & Ahmed, 2003). Today, none of the interviewees at Professionals mentioned that they were involved in discussing incentives, problems or ideas, which indicates that they do not participate in these kinds of problem-solving activities for the overall organisation.

Einbinder et al. (2000) as well as Tyler (2010) also stress the importance of voluntary participation in collaboration. Tyler (2010) states that in order to improve motivation and in turn collaboration, social motivators such as attitudes, values and trust are important. In Professionals' case, the free will to enter collaboration and the right for partners' to direct their businesses in any direction they want without restrictions is something that the organisation highly values. This will be important for the CEO to keep in mind when implementing the new vision, which requires a much higher degree of collaboration than there is today. Even though the voluntary participation seems to be fulfilled today, social motivators could be fulfilled to a higher extent, which is in accordance with the previous discussion about Herzberg's (2003) motivational factors.

All other suggestions for how to obtain more cooperation between the subsidiaries involved monetary rewards or gains. Many partners also expressed that they were too focused on their own business and delivery to care about collaboration and long-term gains. The CEO also mentions that part of the culture at Professionals is to value delivery and individual contribution. In addition, some partners mentioned that they only gained rewards or recognition when their own subsidiary performed well and not when Professionals as a whole performed well. The only forum for discussion where all partners participate is the financial report meetings. This indicates that the organisation is highly focused on financial result and performance. As reviewed in the literature, monetary rewards and material self-interest, called instrumental motivators by Tyler (2010) are weaker motivators than social motivators such as attitudes, values and trust. Shani et al. (2009) as well as Herzberg (2003) also mention that monetary rewards are hygiene factors or extrinsic rewards which are less important than intrinsic rewards such as the individual's sense of accomplishment, success or self-esteem, personal growth, advancement, work itself, recognition and responsibility. Additionally, the Human Relation's view states that individuals value to feel important and be respected by others more than they value money. Risk or fear of losing profit or resources (Barson et al., 2000) as well as lack of motivation (Szulanski, 1996) also hinders effective knowledge management. Some partners mention the risk of losing profit as an obstacle for collaboration. The great focus on money in Professionals could therefore be discussed in terms of how motivating it actually is for the employees in terms of collaboration and knowledge management.

The results from the data collection conclude that all the partners would like to collaborate more but experience a lack of incentives for collaborating today. In order to create motivational factors and

reward systems in Professionals, Shani et al. (2009) propose that rewards should be perceived as valuable for the individual as well as perceived to be obtainable. Einbinder et al. (2000) further acknowledge that the strongest incentives for collaboration are when individual goals are aligned with organisational goals. According to Grayson and O'Dell (1989) the culture must have well-defined incentives for sharing knowledge, which rewards, celebrate and support individuals and groups. This concludes that the incentives and rewards for collaboration and knowledge sharing are currently too undefined or weak for the employees, partly explaining why the subsidiaries do not collaborate and interact more than they do today.

5.1.4 Improving communication systems

Many partners mentioned that the shared office space enhanced collaboration and communication as well as new ideas and spontaneous interaction. A majority mentioned that when the company is growing and the subsidiaries are not located at the same place, the interaction and communication will decrease. The literature only mentions geographical distance briefly as a barrier for collaboration and communication but are consistent in their message that distance affects collaboration negatively. For example, Shani et al. (2009) state that face-to-face communication is vital for an organisation's effectiveness while Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012) mention that co-location strongly influence the collaborative ability. Furthermore, Powell (1990) mentions common geographical and professional background as a prerequisite of having a network organisational structure that emphasises long-term collaboration between companies. Even though Professionals say that the joint office space facilitates communication and collaboration, they also state that they do not collaborate much today. How important the same location is for interaction could therefore depend on how well other communication systems work as well. According to Shani et al. (2009), other communication technologies could enhance communication if managed properly. It seems inevitable that some employees have to move out due to lack of space in the office, even though this would maybe be the best way to solve this issue. The question is however, if the joint office would be perceived to have the same significance for the employees if other communication system were in place and functioning well.

5.2 Structure

The following section will analyse structural factors of the organisation. It is divided into information, knowledge and network sharing, need of support functions, unsatisfying meetings and structure of relationships.

5.2.1 Information, knowledge and network sharing

A pattern that keeps appearing in the empirical data is the absence of important information. For example, new employees lack information about the rest of the organisation, partners wanting to make use of each other's networks but do not know what networks people have and partners wanting to have a joint service offering and help each other get new customers but do not know enough about the other subsidiaries competencies. A lack of the information needed to be able to do an assignment properly impedes communication according to Shani et al. (2009). This lack of information is of course greatly dependent on the lack of communication systems mentioned previously. One solution to the partners' issues, apart from establishing communication systems, could be to have a version of the so-called 'connectors' which Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012) mention. All or some of the partners could have a kind of connector role, since most partners seem to have large personal networks, which most of them said that they were willing to share. Another solution would be if Professionals hired a new employee to act as a connector among other things.

Many partners also expressed a desire to learn more from each other's experiences so that they could apply that knowledge to their own business. According to von Krogh (1998), one of the major barriers

for people to share their tacit knowledge is the lack of formal procedures. This indicates that formal procedures or processes are needed in order to enable knowledge sharing between individuals in Professionals, which several of the partners also highlighted. Many partners also stressed the need for clarity and formality in collaborative situations. One way of achieving this could be to have clear guidelines, information, policies and documentation processes as described by Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012). These structural tools could encourage collaboration by making it easier, faster and more frictionless by following standardised, but adjustable, templates and not having to tailor make the conditions for each new deal. By introducing uniform guidelines for conducting internal affairs for example, issues such as bargaining, conflicts and biased “best-friend-deals” can more easily be avoided.

5.2.2 Need of support functions

Ironically, both the CEO and Partner 1 mentioned that the consulting subsidiaries in Professionals are to function as support functions for start-ups, when in fact, it seems like the subsidiaries themselves are the ones in need of support before they will be able to jointly support others. Support functions such as resources, digital tools and networks are highlighted by Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012) as important for facilitating collaborative work.

A majority of the partners agreed that there is a need for a joint supportive digital platform in Professionals, and even those who did not agree that it was needed could still imagine possible areas of use of a joint platform, as long as they themselves did not have to be responsible for managing it. Many partners think that a joint digital platform could facilitate information and knowledge sharing in the organisation, and save time and effort. Indeed, the partners’ suggestions are in line with Patel, Pettitt and Wilson’s (2012) findings that collaborative technologies can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the company by coordinating and communicating information. One such digital platform or collaborative technology that could be useful for Professionals is intranets. Intranets can be used to store and spread information as well as increase communication and collaboration between scattered corporate departments according to Lai (2001), which is much needed in Professionals. However, intranets do require a certain amount of time and resources that Professionals might not be willing to invest in at this time. Other simpler document sharing tools such as Google Drive or Dropbox might be sufficient enough to start with.

According to Weiss, Anderson and Lasker (2002), effective collaborations need boundary spanning activities to function. The only boundary spanning function existing in Professionals today is that performed by the CEO himself, which is not a sustainable solution in a steadily growing company. The CEO mentioned that there have been employees who initially had boundary spanning functions, but they were later engulfed in other projects. However, the CEO is planning to hire someone (referred to as a COO or collaboration manager in the empirical evidence), who will be responsible for performing boundary-spanning functions.

Several partners mentioned a desire to outsource administrative HR-functions, such as introducing new employees and creating processes for it. A few partners also mentioned that there was a need for office administration functions. It is evident that the partners are experiencing a lack of coordinative support functions such as HR-functions, office management, IT-systems and boundary spanners in Professionals. The kind of higher organisational mechanism, mentioned by Einbinder et al. (2000), could potentially be useful for coordinating functions much like the ones mentioned above. Also here Patel, Pettitt and Wilson’s (2012) connectors could be of help to perform the boundary spanning functions needed.

5.2.3 Unsatisfying meetings

Many partners were unsatisfied with the quarterly financial meetings, which are the only meetings being held at the partner level. When the partners were asked about the purpose of these meetings,

none mentioned new business opportunities. The partners only mentioned financial and business reporting as the purpose, which most of them did not think was purpose enough for conducting such a long meeting. There is an interesting gap in the perception of these meetings between the partners and the CEO. According to the CEO, apart from financial reporting, these meetings are meant to unite the subsidiaries and to discuss new business opportunities. Streibel (2002) stresses the importance of having a clear purpose of the meeting, which the current meetings at Professionals do not seem to have.

Several partners thought that there was a bigger need for meetings that discuss new business opportunities and enable experience exchange and knowledge sharing, and that most of the financial data reported in the current meetings could be distributed more efficiently, through emails for example. This could be a good solution, since it is in line with Streibel's (2002) suggestion to only conduct meetings when there is a need for discussing and making decisions as a group. Information sharing can be done through other media such as emails or memos. Finally, Streibel (2002) argue that successfully conducted meetings can have the positive effects which the partners desire, but management must structure and prepare the meetings and set priorities and goals for the meetings in order to accomplish these benefits.

5.2.4 Structure of relationships

Today in Professionals, the subsidiaries work at an arm's length from each other. They seldom collaborate, and mostly focus on their own business. Sometimes they buy and sell services to one another, which is associated with bargaining, discussion and sometimes conflict. The goal of the CEO is that the subsidiaries in Professionals should work together to support and build new companies. This new vision requires a whole new organisational structure, from market to close-relationship network. According to Powell (1990), it is important to not have market behaviour in a network, since it will damage the relationship and create a hostile environment. This implies that it could be a problem to continue buying and selling services between the subsidiaries within Professionals, while at the same time trying to work more tightly together towards a common goal of building companies. Another issue with the arm's length internal affairs within Professionals is the incongruence between the fact that most partners want heavily discounted prices for internal services, which makes the services unprofitable to sell for the subsidiaries, since they can charge much higher prices for external customers. This seems to be the reason why internal affairs are not being conducted at a particularly high volume, because it is not enough of a win-win situation for everyone involved.

5.3 Leadership

In the following analysis section, leadership in terms of vision and decentralised leadership will be discussed.

5.3.1 Creating and communicating a clear, common vision

In terms of leadership and corporate management, the literature has mostly been focused on the importance of having a clear vision and creating long-term goals. To summarise, Gold, Malhotra and Segars (2001) state that the vision should create a well-defined purpose to achieve goals for the organisation. Further, Patel, Pettitt and Wilson (2012) explain that collaboration is to coordinate in order to communicate and achieve common goals. They also argue that collaboration is influenced by management as well as common vision and goals. The lack of a common vision could be a barrier for communication (von Krogh, 1989; Shani et al., 2009) and it is management's task to overcome barriers, create an open environment and set goals and milestones (Shani et al., 2009). Hoogervorst, van der Flier and Koopman (2004) state that relationships between leaders and followers should be directed towards a common goal in order to motivate people and create trust. Lastly, Grayson and O'Dell (1998) explain that management is key in succeeding with internal knowledge sharing. They

state that getting people to recognise long-term benefits and payoffs with knowledge sharing is one of the biggest challenges for management.

As shown above, vision and goals plays a crucial role in both collaboration and knowledge management but is also a challenge for managers and leaders. In Professionals, the lack of a well-communicated and clear vision has a confusing effect on the partners, as many express during the interviews. Even though most of the subsidiaries have created visions for their own subsidiaries individually, they do not always support or interact with an overall common vision for the organisation. Von Krogh (1989) as well as Shani et al. (2009) explain that this could create a communication barrier, which in turn could inhibit collaboration. Furthermore, when told the common vision, many partners had a positive attitude and said that they were willing to adapt to the vision. This could facilitate the transformational work that the organisation has ahead since the partners are willing to adapt and are not afraid of change. However, having common goals that the organisation strive towards and a clear vision is still of great importance in order to create value in different forms from collaboration (Gold, Malhotra & Segars, 2001; Patel, Pettitt & Wilson, 2012; Hoogervorst, van der Flier & Koopman, 2004; Grayson & O'Dell, 1998). When asked, the CEO showed that he was unsure about the common vision since he did not provide a clear, thought-through answer. This could partly depend on the fact that the vision has changed quite recently. Some of the partners also thought that the common vision was to create joint service offerings, which could be said to be the 'old vision'. There is also a contradiction, since the CEO believes that all partners are aware of the new common vision. All of these data points support the fact that Professionals do not have a clear and well-communicated vision or any common long-term goals for the whole organisation.

5.3.2 Decentralised leadership and involvement

As expressed by some partners, several management functions are missing in the overall organisation. The partners mention that there is no one in charge of general issues such as HR, office administration et cetera as well as the collaboration and overall strategic issues of Professionals. It is only the CEO that has responsibility for the overall organisation. As reviewed in the literature, management has many and diverse tasks that they need to tackle which could be a great challenge (Mintzberg, 1989; Shani et al., 2009). Management support is of great importance to obtain collaboration (Patel, Pettitt & Wilson, 2012). Mintzberg (1989) explains the risk of having all of the organisation's information embodied in only one or a few managers' minds. Even though the partners talk warmly about the CEO, his efforts become insufficient in tackling all of Professionals problems by himself. As the company grows, these issues are only going to get bigger as well. Having a person responsible for the interaction seems like a suitable idea in order to, to a higher extent, obtain a big picture perspective for Professionals. However, the question is if one person is enough to support the CEO since previous employees with overall responsibility have quickly been preoccupied in other projects or in operational work.

Today, the partners at Professionals have autonomy and freedom to do whatever they want with their own subsidiary and have no obligations or responsibilities for the organisation as a whole. The CEO can be viewed as the main connection between the subsidiaries and the CEO is the only one making decisions for the whole organisation. This is described by Shani et al. (2009) as centralised leadership, which is suitable for simple and well-defined tasks. Since the goal and vision of Professionals is to collaborate more and through collaboration create value and synergies, their problems seem to be of a more complex and undefined nature. Shani et al. (2009) describe that a decentralised leadership suits this purpose better, meaning that the partners would be more involved in the decision-making process and have more responsibility for the overall organisation as well.

As seen in the literature review, many authors mention the importance of involvement of employees in decision-making and meetings. The manager's task is to create an environment where every employee can contribute to their best ability (Shani et al., 2009). High involvement management within partner organisations is also something that Lawler (1986) and Einbinder et al. (2000) emphasise since it could lead to higher satisfaction as well as flexibility and responsiveness in collaborations.

Additionally, Schwartzman (1989) as well as Streibel (2002) argue that involvement of members before, during and after meetings could help to bring out the benefits of conducting good meetings, including problem-solving, sharing information and coordinating employees and improve teamwork. In order to solve the current problems of Professionals, the involvement of employees seems like a sustainable way to create synergies. The organisation could therefore be more responsive to employee's needs and problems. This would also support the CEO in terms of more effective and suitable decision-making.

6 Discussion

In this section, the main findings that answer the research question “*How can a complex organisation achieve synergies between subsidiaries with the focus on creating new business opportunities?*” are discussed. As described in the Method chapter, the main points of the discussion are a product of examining the analysis from a holistic perspective. Therefore, the main points of the discussion were found through grouping together the subthemes of the analysis since they are highly intertwined and affect each other. Sustainability aspects, research implications and future research as well as limitations of the study are also discussed.

6.1 Main discussion

One of the most protruding themes of the study has been the need for a clear, widespread corporate vision. Today many of the partners talk about sharing contacts and customers and offering joint service offerings to external customers. It is possible that these suggestions could be beneficial to the organisation, but for now they only cause confusion. It needs to be clear that these suggestions are not major goals of the organisation, and focus should solely be on the new vision of building companies through collaboration. Furthermore, the arm’s length market structure existing today within the organisation needs to disappear to make room for close relationships. This market behaviour causes confusion and is not compatible with the CEO’s new vision of building new companies together through close cooperation since market behaviour in a network setting can damage the relationship.

Another strong influence for achieving synergies is building a strong common culture that supports the joint vision. This will help the employees see the bigger picture and create a sense of belonging to Professionals rather than belonging to a subsidiary. Additionally, an understanding and commitment to the overall organisation will prevent the occurrence of different cultures in the subsidiaries and the individualistic thinking. In order to achieve this, employees and especially the partners need to get involved in the overall organisation, in its strategic goals, performance and decision-making processes. One way is to give the partners more decision-making power over the organisation through establishing a more decentralised leadership structure. Having common gatherings and meetings would also enhance the common culture and create more opportunities to share ideas, experiences and knowledge, which could lead to synergies and new business opportunities.

Another key factor for achieving synergies is effective knowledge management. By having processes for capturing, handling and distributing the knowledge held by individuals within the organisation and by standardising certain templates and guidelines for everyday activities, a great deal of employees time and effort can be spared and instead spent on more value adding activities such as creating new business opportunities. A supporting tool like a digital platform would facilitate the locating and distribution of these templates, guidelines and knowledge in general. Supporting roles like boundary spanners or connectors would also make the organisation more effective by enabling connection between employees in need.

If the long-term goal is to create new business opportunities where more subsidiaries collaborate, then the organisation needs to refocus from having short-term financial motivators for the employees to a more long-term perspective with incentives that are connected to the intrinsic goals of the employees. The monetary focus in Professionals leads to a focus on short-term financial performance rather than future synergies. In turn, focusing on future synergies could lead to greater financial victories in the long-term but could, in the short term, lead to financial losses due to the change. Consequently, the focus on financial performance becomes a barrier for collaboration and future synergies and creates individualistic behaviour and thinking. Even though financial result is of great importance and could be an extrinsic reward, it should be the only reward. In order to create a more sustainable focus in the long term, the organisation should establish other, stronger incentives that motivate employees to collaborate and create new business propositions. For example, if employees are motivated by the chance of starting their own company and get ownership in that company, then this should be the

rewards for creating and sharing ideas and collaborating. It should also be well communicated how these rewards could be achieved. To find these incentives and motivators for employees, the employees themselves should be involved in the process of finding strong incentives.

The last prevalent theme that has emerged as crucial for achieving synergies is the importance of efficient communication channels. As mentioned in the analysis, face-to-face communication is important to maintain, but can to some extent be replaced by efficient communication channels. Since it is inevitable for a growing company like Professionals to grow out of their offices and having to move their subsidiaries to other locations, efficient and purposeful communication systems need to be in place. Face-to-face interaction could still take place in the form of gatherings, meetings and events from time to time where the employees from different locations could meet. Furthermore, the misalignment between the CEO's and the partners' views of their current situation and the vision of Professionals could be resolved with more efficient communication channels. The establishment of efficient communication channels will improve the interaction and prevent misunderstandings, which could enhance the sharing of new ideas and problems and in turn create synergies in the organisation.

These conclusions could significantly help improve the efficiency and collaborative ability of Professionals' organisation and enable synergies to be found. However, it is important to keep in mind Einbinder et al.'s (2000) statement that bureaucratic organisations with many rules, procedures and hierarchies often become an obstacle to collaboration. Therefore, when it comes to implementing the recommendations concerning the introduction of rules and procedures such as processes, guidelines and platforms, it is recommended that Professionals does this gradually to be able to more easily control and monitor the trade-off between collaboration and bureaucracy. Gradual implementation of procedures and rules will most likely also make the change process easier on the employees who are used to working without restrictions and procedures. It is also recommended for Professionals to look into change management principles before implementing large changes in the organisation, to further facilitate the change for the employees. Finally, creating a more effective organisation could result in a sacrifice in flexibility and creativity, which could affect the innovative capacity negatively in an organisation if not managed properly.

6.2 Theoretical implications and future research

This report answers the question of how a complex organisation can achieve synergies through collaboration and explains that a common vision, culture, communication channels as well as effective knowledge management and social motivators could help an organisation to practically succeed. This report also shines a light on the importance of three building blocks when trying to achieve synergies through collaboration – culture, structure and leadership. While these subjects are broad and general in their nature, each has been divided into more concrete subcategories in order to find answers to the research question. Previous research has not focused on the notion of synergies, nor the connection between collaboration and synergies. This is, consequently, an attempt to link the two areas as well as create an understanding around the complexity of, and solutions to, these issues.

Furthermore, the findings of this report could help guide future researchers in their attempt to further investigate and add to these findings. Since this report is limited to a single case study, future research should elaborate the theory in order to yield more general results. Moreover, there is a great need for more research of companies of more complex organisational structures such as the Serendipity Group. There are many challenges with coordinating the subsidiaries of such a company that could be further investigated, such as how to create a common culture, how to best organise on boarding, how to create and achieve a common vision or which activities should be standardised between all subsidiaries. Additionally, further studies would gain from including the perspectives of more diverse people from all levels within an organisation.

6.3 Sustainability

In this study, special consideration has been given to the sustainability factors, namely environmental, societal and economic factors. This study has explored how synergies could be achieved in order to avoid reinventing the wheel over and over. Synergies could lead to more effective knowledge management, new business opportunities and innovations as well as collaboration. In turn, it could lead to more effective allocation and sharing of tangible, intangible and human resources. When resources are used more wisely and efficiently, environmental, economic and societal factors can be improved. Additionally, this study has supported Serendipity with their ambition to foster innovation and development which could lead to advancements and benefits in society in large as well since innovations brings society and technology forward.

6.4 Limitations

In order to find a suitable scope for the master thesis, some limitations had to exist. The master thesis focuses on the internal cooperation and the possible synergy effects between the individual subsidiaries of Professionals. No consideration has been taken to possible synergy effects within a subsidiary or with external companies or organisations. Furthermore, the study only considers subsidiaries within Professionals, therefore the results do not represent the state of the entire Serendipity Group. The subsidiaries cannot be viewed as completely independent from one another or representative for their industries. Moreover, the study focuses on creating new business opportunities, revenue streams and competitive advantage. Consequently, some synergy effects such as cost savings, risk reduction and other possible synergy effects have not been the focus of this report.

7 Conclusions

As described in the empirical data, the organisation of Professionals has been growing in such a pace that some essential factors for running a successful company, and not just a start-up, has been neglected. Currently, the organisation is rather disorganised, without any common connection points in terms of gatherings, meetings, communication systems or available information about the other subsidiaries projects or competencies. Even though all interviewees in the study expressed a desire to collaborate more and create more business opportunities together, they were all confused about where to start or even what goal they were aiming towards.

This study has answered the research question *“How can a complex organisation achieve synergies between subsidiaries with a focus on creating new business opportunities?”*. The study has resulted in five key factors that are essential for achieving synergy and thereby new business opportunities. The first is the importance of establishing a well-defined and widespread company vision. In this case, the organisation is trying to achieve contradictory goals, which only leads to confusion and demotivation. The second finding is having a strong common company culture. When involving employees in the overall organisation, you can create a big picture perspective that improves the collaborative ability. Third, effective knowledge management can enable value creation of the collaboration. Distributing and sharing knowledge more efficiently could open up for new business opportunities and save a lot of time and effort. The fourth finding is having strong social motivators that relate to the intrinsic goals of the individual. The organisation should therefore try to find stronger, self-fulfilling incentives for collaboration instead of only focusing on monetary rewards and financial results. The fifth and final factor is having efficient communication channels. When the company grows, there is a great need to find structure and effectiveness in the communication in order to be able to collaborate and create synergies together.

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Appendices

Appendix A - The CEO Interview Guide

The interaction today

We have understood that you want to increase the interaction between the subsidiaries. What is being done today to facilitate the interaction between the subsidiaries?

What advantages do you think you could get with better interaction between the subsidiaries?

What disadvantages, if any, do you think could occur if the interaction was increased?

What obstacles or challenges do you think there exist for interaction between the subsidiaries?

How do you think that you could overcome these obstacles?

What do you think made the [Subsidiary X] project so successful?

How do you define synergies in this context?

What is the primary goal with achieving synergies within Professionals?

If an opportunity to achieve synergies would arise, a new business opportunity for example, what happens then? How do you proceed?

Goals

Where do you see the company in three years?

How could synergies between the subsidiaries help you get there?

What is the vision of Professionals?

Available information

When you introduce a new employee to one of the subsidiaries, what information does this individual get about the other subsidiaries within Professionals and the possibilities for interaction between them?

Who is responsible for giving the new employee the right information and introduction?

Are there any guidelines for what information all employees should have access to?

How do you today get access to information concerning which clients or products the other subsidiaries are working with?

Without mentioning any names, would you say that there are certain people who are more prone to interact than others?

Closure

Could you give us an example each of one successful and one less successful time when the subsidiaries have collaborated that you have experienced?

Who should we talk to next?

Appendix B - Partner interview guide first draft

Background

How long have you been working at Professionals?

What is your role/responsibility at the company?

The interaction today

What does it mean for you to be a part of Professionals compared to if you had been an independent company?

Do you think that there should be more interaction between the subsidiaries? Why?

What prerequisites do you think are necessary to achieve well-functioning interaction between the subsidiaries?

What obstacles or challenges do you think there exist for interaction?

How do you think that you could overcome these obstacles?

What advantages do you think you could get with better interaction between the subsidiaries?

What disadvantages, if any, do you think could occur if the interaction was increased?

Do you think that a framework/template/model for how interaction should work between the subsidiaries could facilitate your situation?

Culture and competition

What are the biggest differences between selling and buying services internally vs externally?

What do you think about working at a common office with the rest of Professionals?

Do you ever feel that there is any competition or rivalry between the subsidiaries?

Goals

What is the vision of your company?

Could synergies between the subsidiaries help you get there?

What is the vision of Professionals?

We have understood from Kamjar that Professionals are moving from being a consulting firm towards being more of a company building investment company. What does this mean for your company?

Available information

What do you think of the quarterly meetings?

When you introduce a new employee to one of the subsidiaries, what information does this individual get about the other subsidiaries within Professionals and the possibilities for interaction between them?

Is it always clear to you where to turn to find information about what resources and knowledge exist within the company?

Do you think that there is a need to have a common platform within Professionals where you can share resources, knowledge and experiences?

Closure

Could you give us an example each of one successful and one less successful time when the subsidiaries have collaborated that you have experienced?

Is there anything we have missed or something that you would like to add?

Appendix C - Partner interview guide second draft

Background

How long have you been working at Professionals?

What is your role/responsibility at the company?

What does your company do?

The interaction today

What does it mean for you to be a part of Professionals compared to if you had been an independent company?

Do you think that there should be more interaction between the subsidiaries? Why?

What prerequisites do you think are necessary to achieve well-functioning interaction between the subsidiaries?

What obstacles or challenges do you think there exist for interaction between the subsidiaries?

How do you think that you could overcome these obstacles?

What advantages do you think you could achieve with better interaction between the subsidiaries?

What disadvantages, if any, do you think could occur if the interaction was increased?

Do you think that a framework/template/model for how interaction should work between the subsidiaries could facilitate the interaction?

Culture and competition

Does your company sell services both internally and externally?

What are the biggest differences between selling and buying services internally vs externally?

What do you think about working at a common office with the rest of Professionals?

Do you ever feel that there is any competition or rivalry between the subsidiaries?

Goals

What is the vision of your company?

Could synergies between the subsidiaries help you get there?

What is the vision of Professionals?

We have understood from Kamjar that Professionals are moving from being a consulting firm towards being more of a company building investment company. What does this mean for your company?

Available information

What do you think of the quarterly meetings?

When you introduce a new employee to one of the subsidiaries, what information does this individual get about the other subsidiaries within Professionals and the possibilities for interaction between them?

Is it always clear to you where to turn to find information about what resources and knowledge exist within the company?

Do you think that there is a need to have a common platform within Professionals where you can share resources, knowledge and experiences?

Are there any risks in sharing information with everyone within Professionals?

Closure

Could you give us an example each of one successful and one less successful time when the subsidiaries have collaborated that you have experienced?

Is there anything we have missed or something that you would like to add?

Appendix D - Interview quotes in the original language (Swedish)

Thoughts about synergies

The benefits of being a part of Serendipity and Professionals

"[En] anledning har varit just att kunna lyfta blicken, som [...] få in [Partner X] i teamet, [vi] börja tänka på en digital, skalbar affärsmodell. [...] Vi hade inte kunnat köpa [företag X] så vi hade inte kunnat digitaliseras." - Partner 6

"Här har du liksom en så extremt varierande miljö där [...] alla är liksom sjukt duktiga inom sitt område och som verkligen [...] brinner för sitt område. Och att jobba i en miljö där du har massa olika typer av kompetenser, [...] det är helt fantastiskt, och också känna att vi skulle kunna göra lite vad som helst." - Partner 1

"Vi får ju ett helt annat tyngd i möten och sånt när vi säger att vi kommer från Serendipity. Vi är inte två pizzabagare som liksom vill [göra affärer]." - Partner 4

"Vi är mycket närmre klienter och att vi förstår mer vad det är vi gör egentligen och därför så blir det ju bättre produkter också liksom och vi kan historiken och så man förstår hur det här passar in i andra grejer." - Partner 7

Shared resources, competencies and contacts

"Till exempel då så skulle jag gärna vilja ha mycket mycket mer digital närvaro. [...] Och där tror jag att vi skulle kunna dela på vissa kostnadsposter då. [...] jag tror överlag att man skulle kunna göra eventuellt några former av inköp om man samlar oss lite mer och berättar vad är det som vi ska köpa in framöver. [...] Och kanske även då ibland så kan vi kanske hålla event tillsammans och sådana saker där vi behöver nå ut mot kanske liknande kundkategori." - Partner 5

"Det finns väldigt bra erfarenhetsutbyte att få egentligen i sfären. Det är vi också lite dåliga på, att ge de här utbytina. [...] Ta [Partner X] och [deras dotterbolag] och han ska berätta om hur de jobbar med digital marknadsföring där och mailsekvenser, ja men då, då är det väldigt väldigt bra för Professionals att få det för då kan man se att ja men du har åtta andra dotterbolag som kan ta del av den, av det erfarenhetsutbytet. Samt att då [Partner X] får, det kan ju bara vara någon tusenlapp, några tusen spänn i Facebook-advertising under en vecka." - Partner 5

"För mig skulle det vara viktigt att få tydlighet i vad de andra vill med sina respektive delar. För nu så här att, jag har inget emot att kasta massor av kunder till [Sub X], men jag vet inte ens om dom vill ha dom. [...] Så att, jag tror att överlag en större förståelse för vilken typ av affärer dom olika områdena vill ha, där börjar vi närma oss nånting." - Partner 6

"Men om man har lite bättre koll hur alla, vilka folk känner och vilka dom har kunder hos, då kanske man inte behöver börja med att ringa nån växel [...] utan då kanske man direkt kan gå till CFO:n eller COO:n som dom redan har kontakt med." - Partner 4

"Stockholm är väldigt litet, och jag tror att det skulle vara väldigt bra att fatta hur mycket kontakter vi sitter på liksom, här internt. Och det kanske låter som jag har världens kontaktnätverk, men jag tror att alla härinne har världens kontaktnätverk. Och framförallt är det så här att, vi har [Kund X] som kund. Någon annan vill ha [Kund X] som kund. Den kopplingen finns inte alls idag. Och det är fan underkänt, för att det är inte proffsig." - Partner 6

Cooperation

"Vi har så extremt mycket kunder. Vi har jättemycket kunder. Inom alla olika segment. [...] Men där kan vi, skulle vi verkligen mer kunna gynnas av att släppa in varandra mer, och har smartare erbjudanden för kunderna." – Partner 1

"Jag tror Kamjar vill, och även andra, att man hittar, alltså är redan [Sub X] kund hos ett bolag, eller dom har [Kund X] som kund, då kan man liksom haka på flera av tjänsterna som vi har inom Serendipity." – Partner 4

"Jag tror att det kan leda till större affärer. För mig liksom är det också ett mysterium att vi inte har kollat på ramavtal och upphandlingar o sånt." – Partner 6

"Det handlar egentligen om att kunna ta stora uppdrag tillsammans liksom, eller gå ihop och bygga bolag tillsammans med andra inom Serendipity." – Partner 8

"Egentligen, det finns en förutsättning bara, och det handlar bara om att det måste finnas incitament [...] Om det finns en affär, då är det klart man ska samarbeta. [...] Men här finns det liksom "a men samarbeta mer", "a men varför?" Vad finns det för affär? Kommer vi tjäna mer pengar? Kommer vi kunna växa? Om svaret inte är ja på båda dom två så är det ingen som kommer samarbeta." – Partner 8

"Jag bryr mig där jag tjänar pengar, om jag ska vara riktigt krass. Om jag ska lägga mina 8-10 timmar per dag, så kommer jag lägga dem där jag tjänar pengar." – Partner 6

"Prestige, uppdrag, mer stickiness hos kunderna, pengar i slutändan hehe, alltså, såna incitament tror jag." – Partner 1

"Alltså allt som kan göra att vi kan sälja mer, ta mer lönsamma affärer, ehm tycker jag är bra." – Partner 6

"Men om vi däremot hittar en typaffär där så många som möjligt kan vara med på, det här är en typisk Professionalsaffär, då tror jag att det är mer intressant att man tar möten för att hitta nästa Professionalsaffär, när man vet vad man är ute efter." – Partner 4

"Jag tror att ena förutsättningen [...] det här att det inte finns några spärrar tror jag. [...] Att man tittar på winwin-scenarion hela tiden som gör att man inte hämmar något annat bolag på något sätt och att man kan utnyttja varandras kompetens väldigt bra. [...] Det har ju en del med individer att göra, att individerna är liksom både väldigt öppna och har tillit." – Partner 9

"Ska man hitta samarbeten så måste det vara win-win för båda, att båda ska tjäna på det. Annars så gör vi en tjänst till nåt annat ben eller tvärtom, och då tycker jag inte att incitamenten är tillräckligt bra." – Partner 3

Jag tror vi måste ha lite, alltså om vi har ett ramverk för vad man behöver titta på, till exempel [...] "varför anställer vi inte någon ihop och delar på den resursen?" [...] och sedan att man har... kanske träffas då en gång i månaden och diskuterar då". – Partner 5

"Och det kanske bottnade lite i den grejen att de kanske inte helt plötsligt vill slänga in oss i att vi ska börja prata med deras kund. Så jag tror att det är lite att man inte riktigt vågar heller släppa in varandra fullt ut. Och då blir det inte intressant för den som får stå utanför [...] det måste finnas liksom en kontinuitet i det och en vettig process så att man vet att det funkar. För att jag skulle inte heller vara bekväm med att såhär, vem som helst på [Sub X] börjar ringa till våra kunder och prata om Serendipity Professionals". – Partner 7

"Vi har ju liksom inget gemensamt presentationsmaterial liksom. Vad är... vi har ju en hemsida som är helt bedrövligt och ingenting liksom i form av en pdf med såhär "vad är vårt erbjudande". Och det är väl också lite för att vi gör ju så pass olika grejer." – Partner 7

"En sak kan ju vara bara att få personerna att lära känna varann mer genom att ha oftare samlingar på något sätt. För ofta kan ju det vara så att information kommer genom att två personer bara sitter och snackar. [...] Om det nu är att det finns en AW vissa tider [...] eller frukost vissa dagar. [...] För den tröskeln är mycket, mycket högre när man inte har suttit och snackat om bara något allmänt. [...] Typ den grejen, att se till att alla, framförallt när man är ny, oavsett vilken nivå man jobbar på eller vad man ska säga, eller vilken roll man har, så att man alltid får gå runt och hälsa på alla och få ett intro liksom" – Partner 2

"Dom andra Professionalsbolagen ska ha lite bättre koll kanske på vad vi gör eller vad vi letar efter, för dom är ute och träffar bolagen hela tiden liksom. Eh, att det kan finnas möjligheter för... a, dom har lite andra ögon och öron på sig när dom är ute, och inte bara säljer [deras produkter] eller nåt annat." – Partner 3

"Alla är så extremt tända på sin egen affär, så man ser, jag tror alla är fostrade i liksom den här 'Kamjars miljö' att alla ska ha, alla ska skapa värde. Alla är här liksom för att tjäna pengar mer eller mindre. Och, man tappar ibland, man krigar så mycket för sin egen affär och blir så extremt operativ i sitt, och liksom många fastnar också i leverans. Många utav dom som leder bolagen är också extremt operativa i sina egna projekt. [...] vi hinner aldrig öppna blicken eller höja blicken och tänka kring att "a men det här vore en jävligt grym affär både för mig och [Partner X]" eh, för att just nu tänker jag bara på mig själv och [mitt dotterbolag], och liksom äts upp av det." – Partner 1

"Och problemet med det där är väl att alla liksom områdesansvariga är ju väldigt väldigt inblandade i liksom sin egen leverans. Folk är ju inte såhär chefer och verksamhetsansvariga som bara såhär ska tänka på hur ska vi utveckla det här. Utan man är den som är bäst i sitt team på att faktiskt leverera och behöver vara väldigt inne i det. Så egentligen skulle alla behöva avsätta 30% av sin tid till att bara såhär "okej, nu ska jag inte knacka avtal eller intervjua kandidater eller vad det nu är jag har, utan jag ska bara jobba med verksamhetsutveckling". [...] "jaha, nu är det något sånt här partnarmöte, jag hinner inte det eller jag fick en fråga från en kund om vi kunde ta ett möte och då kommer jag alltid prioritera det istället". – Partner 7

"Nej, vare sig hinder eller utmaningar." – Partner 8

"Säg till exempel [Sub X] om två år, massa andra personer som inte haft någon interaktion, fysisk interaktion med [Sub Y]. [...] Då blir inte det här utbytet lika naturligt. Det kan jag nästan vara säker på." – Partner 9

"Alla har saker att göra hela tiden också så att man kan inte hålla på att avbryta alla med att såhär, man ska lägga tid på varann hela tiden eller att man vill... att man måste samla alla." – Partner 2

"Då blir det att jag måste lägga bort fokus från mitt eget. Asså jag tjänar ju mest pengar på att tjäna pengar till mitt egna bolag." – Partner 4

"Nä men att vi får ett lönsamhetstapp för att folk springer runt och vill fika med varandra" – Partner 6

"Det är om det kräver mer tid och sånt, det tar bort fokus från ens core business. Nä annars ser jag inga nackdelar" – Partner 4

"Nej, det har jag svårt att se vad det skulle vara... [...] Om vi kanske går ihop och så get vi ett fast pris ut mot kund, hur ska vi sen splitta det? Det kommer ju bli fler sådana diskussioner kanske. Och blir det fel någon gång och man tappar en kund då har man ju liksom bara sig själv att skylla men att

det kan bli... [Sub X] skulle ju inte bli supernöjda om man började blanda in oss och så brände vi på något sätt deras kund. Men det känns ändå som en ganska liten risk då.” - Partner 7

“Sen så har vi egentligen gjort flera case där det är mer konsultlösningsscase. [...]. Där har det stora problemet varit att man som vänner blir kund och leverantör. [...] Det finns en synergieffekt att det är någon som tjänar pengar direkt och någon som betalar för det, så riskbilden är väl inte densamma. Däremot så tror jag inte att man har samma professionalitet just för att det är in-house. Man slappnar av lite från båda hållen. [...] [Men om] det finns ett tydligt ramverk för hur det ska gå till, och om alla gör en sign-off på det, då undviker man mycket av dem konflikterna för grundidén är ju bra.” – CEO

“Det är svårt att ta betalt internt. Det blir lätt att man gör gratisjobb.” - Partner 4

“Inte mindre lyckat i form av resultat skulle jag vilja säga. Det skulle jag inte påstå. Men sedan har ju inte alltid arbetsdynamiken varit perfekt [...]. Då vill man nästan inte samarbeta vidare sen. [...] Där kanske man inte är så duktig internt på att du vet, skriva på saker för det känns inte som att det behövs liksom. [...] det har lett till att mina anställda kommer och säger till mig att ”vi vill inte jobba med den personen”. Då är det ju bara ett rött streck direkt liksom tyvärr.” – Partner 9

“Många vill nästan inte ta emot interna beställningar för att de känner att [...] då kommer folk vilja prut.. nä men prispressa [...]. Sker det internt så är det lätt att det blir friktioner. Vilket det har lett till några gånger. Så att där måste det också vara, just tydlighet i de avtalen som görs sinsemellan.” – Partner 5

Culture

“Vi vill bygga upp en kultur där du jobbar här som en jurist, men du är inte en jurist, du är en bolagsbyggare. Sen så gör du det du tycker är kul och det du är duktig på. Och den är jättesvår att genomföra, för det är lite ”fluff-fluff” [...]. Men om du bygger upp en kultur som belönar leverans och värde oberoende av vad som står på ditt anställningsavtal, då får man en miljö där man hittar samarbeten tillsammans internt för att man gillar varandra som personer. Inte för att jag kanske är en duktig jurist utan för att man hittar andra sätt att förädla sin kompetens på.” – CEO

“Jobbar man med drivna människor som man tycker är duktiga då måste man ge dem [...] verktygen så att de kan lyckas och en del då är att låta dem ta besluten. Det är liksom den viktigaste, viktigaste grejen.” - Partner 9

“Jag tror att vi gläds extremt mycket utav varandras framgång. Eller jag gör det, [jag] tycker det är skitkul när det går bra för dem andra och jag blir mer stolt” - Partner 1

“Alla vill att det ska gå bra. Så det är en del av energin när man kommer in här, att jag känner en positiv press i att ta mig framåt och att folk kommer tycka att det är roligt om [mitt bolag] kommer bli skitstort.” - Partner 2

Sharing a joint office space

“Fram tills idag [...] har vi alltid suttit tillsammans, [...] vilket jag tycker är superkul. [...] Det är en kompott av olika kompetenser som blandas med varandra, och då föds idéer också. [...] Att man har närhet till varandra är [en] satsning eller strategi som vi gärna vill hålla kvar”. - CEO

“Nu sitter vi på olika lokaler också. Längre fram kommer det antagligen bli tre olika lokaler. Det är inte hållbart ur ett bolagsbyggarperspektiv långsiktigt.” - Partner 6

“Det är framförallt ett team som är mer än bara jag och det är väl kanske egentligen den största delen att man ser att det händer mer grejer omkring [...]. Dels är det en energi [...] att det händer saker i rummet och [dels är det att det] kommer affärer och det sker möten [och så vidare].” - Partner 2

Decentralisation and individualism at Professionals

“Det är ett oerhört decentraliserat bolag” – Partner 6

“Om man verkligen vill prata partnerskap på riktigt [...] då tittar man på hur [...] hela businessen går. Och sen så är man ansvarig för sitt område [...]. Så får dom en stor del av sitt resultat från dom olika practise areas som de är ansvariga för men de får också en klump [...] för att hela bolaget går bra. [...] Det finns inte idag. Och en sån sak skulle till exempel göra att man [...] blir mer långsiktig i sitt tänk och det finns också ett större incitament till att vara partner. [...] Idag är det så där ”jag skulle kunna göra det men, vad spelar det för roll?”. ” – Partner 6

“Jag gör egentligen inte så mycket i Professionals som helhet [som partner]. [...] Vi [har] inte så himla mycket kontakt med de andra Professionals benen och deras kunder och sådär.” – Partner 3

“Saken är den att det är svårt att på något sätt definiera samarbete [...] för alla gör sina egna grejer. [...] Det skulle vara lättare om man gick ihop kanske och paketerade en tjänst tillsammans exempelvis.” – Partner 9

Introduction of new employees at Professionals

“Men info om resten av bolagen och möjligheter till interaktion, den tror jag är rätt sparsam. [...] jag vill att den människan ska fokusera på sin affär och bli bäst på den. [...] jag tror inte riktigt, återigen, att det finns incitamentet för [Person X] på [Sub X] att dra in en [Sub Y] affär. [...] Finns den [incitamentet] så är vi får dåliga för att veta det exakta behovet för den. [...] det måste komma lite mer tydlighet i de här sakerna.” – Partner 5

“För [...] är du ny och har inte hälsat på en person första dagen [...] då blir tröskeln för att sedan börja snacka med varandra väldigt mycket högre.” – Partner 2

“Dom nyanställda har sagt att det varit väldigt lärorikt och väldigt nyttigt för dom. Eh... så jag ser också ett värde i att ta med nyanställda. [Men] är det bara ’hard facts’ kring siffror [...] då behöver dom ha haft en introduktion kring helheten, kring Professionals, innan för att dom då ska förstå siffror[na].” – Partner 1

“[Det] låter taskigt men det är ganska omständligt att sitta [...] i en timme och berätta vad vi sysslar med.” – Partner 4

Structure

Lack of information

“Nä det finns väldigt lite informationsutbyte där faktiskt. Den är noll, den är nästan obefintlig.– Partner 9

“Det är liksom dumt att det sitter massa erfarenhet i vissa personers huvud och det inte finns på pränt någonstans så att någon annan kan avropa det.” – Partner 5

“Det är ju ingen som från liksom [Sub X] som har frågat mig om en kundkontakt nånsin. Ehm, det är ingen från [Sub Y] som frågat mig ”känner du till några bolag?”. Em, för det finns liksom aldrig den typen av forum. [...] Så att, ett gemensamt forum, CRM-verktyg och så vidare, det tror jag på.” – Partner 6

“Det finns liksom ingen information i liksom lagret ovanför för det händer ingenting i lagret ovanför. Det är [CEO] som sitter där liksom och han fattar inte så många beslut om någon ny inriktning på något eller sådär. Så att folk får inte så mycket information och kanske inte känner att de behöver så mycket information liksom utifrån och in i sina verksamheter.” – Partner 7

The need for standardised frameworks

"Just när det gäller sådana saker som starta bolag och vem som ska bli delägare och partner eller så, så kan det nog finnas någon sorts grundram, men det går inte att specificera helt och hållet tror jag."
– Partner 2

"Jag tror att en sådan grej skulle vara nödvändig och bra. Och det är det som jag tror skulle öka alltså att man gör affärer sinsemellan." – Partner 5

The need for a digital platform for information sharing

"Säg såhär, om det alltid fanns up to date information så tror jag någon gång down the line [...] hade det varit bra för om man behöver få tag på en kompetens så kan man liksom lätt hitta det, absolut."
Partner 9

"Ja jag tror att det behövs. Men det behövs också tydliga ägare för vem som gör vad i den här plattformen i så fall. [...] Och ska man få till ett intranät så måste det finnas tydliga tydliga incitament till varför man ska använda ett intranät. Ehm, on-boarding är väldigt viktigt till exempel. Men det borde också finnas rutiner för en exit. Vad händer när folk slutar?" – Partner 6

"Om alla fortsätter växa och flytta isär så kommer det ju öka såklart det behovet om vi ska ha någon ambition om att göra något gemensamt." – Partner 7

"Ur ett cross-consulting, eller cross-selling synpunkt så tror jag att det skulle vara väldigt bra att ha det. [...] Men att alla sitter och uppfinner hjulet på nytt, och liksom jagar. Ehm, det kanske inte uppfyller jättemycket funktion liksom. Så ja, jag tror att det finns ett väldigt stort värde med det, i det. Speciellt om vi växer som du säger." – Partner 1

Meetings and forums for discussion

"Vi [partnersen] träffas på sin höjd två till tre gånger per år [...] när det är kvartalsrapportering. [...] då vi ramlar igenom ett antal power points, ibland ropas lite glada hejarop [...] sen så går vi ut och käkar en middag och that's that. Tas aldrig upp strategifrågor." – Partner 6

"Jag tror definitivt partnermöten är en grundförutsättning [för att öka interaktionen], att dom kommer på plats, att vi börjar prata med varandra [...] och snacka liksom affärsutveckling [...]. Det ska vara ett forum där vi skapar affärer och pratar struktur, och kultur också." – Partner 6

"Det [Partnermötena] händer aldrig. Så att, ambitionen och tanken finns där men jag tror inte att [det är möjligt] förrän man börjar ge folk de faktiska incitamenten." – Partner 6

"De [mötena] är tråkiga, långa [...]. Ja, det tycker jag. Det är väldigt mycket rapportering och väldigt lite [...] konstruktiva dialoger." – Partner 3

"Jo, jag tycker de [kvartalsmötena] är bra. [...] Jag tycker det är intressant att se vad alla andra gör [...]. Jag skulle vilja höra mer [om att] någon tog fram ett business case, jag tycker det är kul att höra om HUR man gör affärerna för jag vill gärna höra om det är någonting som jag själv kan applicera på min verksamhet." – Partner 5

"Det är en jättebra grej att vi tar med de nya [...] för att det ger dem en annan insikt. Men där har det också blivit lite dumt för då blir det som att alla känner att de behöver presentera [sin verksamhet] från grunden, sin verksamhet för de nyanställda. [...] Vi kanske skulle ha ett annat forum för introduktion av nyanställda." – Partner 7

Leadership

Common vision and goals for Professionals

“Det låter lite tragiskt när jag säger att jag har inte haft så mycket vision. Jag eh, jag tycker att det är jättekul att skapa något nytt, [...] och det nästan min vision av att, vi är en investmentverksamhet som utmanar traditionella branscher eh, genom att tänka nytt och förädla. [...] Men den frågeställningen kan nog vara olika beroende på vem man frågar. Och jag kanske är lite tråkig som person för det för jag har inte hittat mitt kall i livet.” - CEO

“Jag tror att [...] att vi ska gå från att vara konsult till att bygga bolag, det tror jag att alla är införstådda på. [...] Vi har inte riktigt kommunicerat Professions som ett varumärke, vi har varit väldigt dåliga på det. Så att jag tror att respektive bolag har sin egen vision. Men jag skulle jättegärna vilja förena det till en gemensam vision. Eh, så det arbetet ligger framför oss, definitivt.” - CEO

The role of synergies to accomplish individual and common visions

“Det här är ju också en sådan här grej som vi verkligen borde ha gjort mer, alltså verkligen definiera vår vision. [...] Och vi vill komma bort från det här med att ta betalt per timme, för det är värdelöst. Inte bara för att det inte är skalbart utan också för att det är tråkigt att jobba så [...].” - Partner 7

“Ja. Större affärer, stabilare kontrakt. Definitivt. Och framförallt kundängingar.” - Partner 6

“Oj... Bra fråga, jag vet inte faktiskt. Eh... Jag har inte tänkt på det som att det är så viktigt för mig heller för att jag har min egna version av min del liksom.” - Partner 2

“Alla liksom inser det att det går ju att tjäna mer pengar så utan att behöva växa med mer folk. Och det kommer väl tror jag göra att vi blir mer uppdelade snarare än mer integrerade. För när det handlar om rådgivning så [...] kan vi ge bättre råd tillsammans. Men om alla sitter med någon slags produktportfölj [...] det är ju en annan typ av försäljning. Det är ju en ganska stor skillnad på att sälja produkter och att sälja tjänster liksom. [...] Det kan nog vara svårare att få ett gemensamt erbjudande tror jag då.” - Partner 7

Joint service offerings

“Vi vill vara entreprenörens bästa vän. [...] Där skulle vi också vilja komma in och kunna ta en given plats att, när [en kund] har dom här huvudvärksområdena [...] som inte är bolagets kärnverksamhet, då ska dom veta ja men vi kommer till bolagsbyggarna Serendipity. Där finns allt det här, alla liksom stödfunktioner.” - Partner 1

Adding a 'Collaboration Manager'

“Det som vi då vill föra in framåt är [...] en person som är spindeln i nätet, som lär känna respektive verksamhet [...]. Den personen ska ha ett övergripande ansvar för att se till att vi gör cross-selling, cross-consulting, joint-ventures internt. Men det finns inte på plats ännu idag, det är det som vi vill göra.” - CEO

“Det ju ingen som äger frågan på Professionalsnivå. Så [...] det är lite upp till var och en och det är ju lite övergripande problem, [...] det är ganska många saker där ingen liksom äger frågan. [...] Det finns liksom inte någon gemensam budget för något och det finns ingen som kan ta tag i de här övergripande sakerna.” - Partner 7

“Vi har ju pratat i två år om att anställa någon COO som bara ska jobba med verksamheterna, svårt att hitta någon sådan... när vi hittar en sådan kandidat ska liksom de träffa alla oss och vi ska berätta om alla våra jätteolika verksamheter så tror jag att det är ganska avskräckande också, bara ”hur fan ska jag liksom försöka sy ihop det här på något vettigt sätt?”. Så att det är, jag vet inte, kanske att vi

liksom att man måste inse [...] att man kanske inte behöver få ihop alla. Det kanske är orealistiskt att försöka få ihop det här gänget med det här gemensamma erbjudandet [...]. Vi kanske ska börja plocka någon av de enkla och jobba vidare på de.” – Partner 7

Appendix E - Summaries of each interview

The CEO

The CEO states that today the organisation works with facilitating the interaction through the quarterly meetings, the joint office space and creating a 'company building' culture as well as having events now and then for both internal and external people. The benefits of collaborating more could be first and foremost a financial gain but also new business opportunities, profit to shareholders and the development of new business models. The competence in-house could also be used more efficiently to create cheaper and better outputs. Disadvantages could be that conflicts may occur when expectations are not aligned and that the balance between risk and reward jeopardise the existing businesses. There is a need to develop a framework for how the collaborations should be conducted. The primary goal with collaboration is for everyone to make more money than they do today as well as having more fun. How ideas are transformed into new business opportunities are not a concern since this process is very familiar to Professionals. The vision of Professionals is that the organisation should become an investment company but the vision differs depending on whom you are asking. They do not treat Professionals as a brand. The introduction of new employees is handled by the different subsidiaries since they know best how to introduce the new employees. When the CEO introduces people to the company, he believes that the best thing is to let them be and let them make mistakes. In that way they learn more. Some people have been hired with a more boundary-spanning role, but sooner or later they have been occupied with different projects.

Partner 1

Partner 1 strongly believes in more collaboration since this could improve their business opportunities. Partner 1 wants Serendipity to focus more on finding a joint service offering in order to sell more together to one external client. The partners' focus on their own operative business is also highlighted and is expressed to be a problem since the partners do not have the ability to see the big picture of the organisation. There is no common material that is shared between the subsidiaries. Partner 1 express that the culture of Serendipity and the joint office space is one of the biggest advantages with the company. On the other hand, the move to the new office has been chaotic in terms of office administration. In terms of the vision, Partner 1 wants to create more new businesses and definitely thinks that synergies could help them reach their goals. The quarterly meetings are good since they create an understanding of the overall performance but lately they have been too informative and not concrete. Partner 1 highlights the importance for Professionals to exploit their unique features in order to maintain competitive advantage.

Partner 2

Partner 2 has a background in entrepreneurship and digitised business models. During the interview, many interesting thoughts involving the social gatherings and introduction of new employees were discussed. One example was that Partner 2 highlighted the importance of getting introduced and getting to know everyone at the office early on since it could otherwise create barriers for interaction in the future. Partner 2 was positive to the common vision and to increase interaction in order to achieve synergies. The only negative aspect of increasing interaction is how to allocate time to it. It was not always clear where to find information. Partner 2 also highlighted the positive atmosphere at the office, that there was no competition between the companies and the benefits of being part of a bigger organisation. Partner 2 did not know that much about what the other subsidiaries did and had experienced that the subsidiaries operationally were divided into 'silos'. To have common guidelines, frameworks or a platform was desirable. Partner 2 had not made any deals or internal business yet, but was maybe about to in the future.

Partner 3

Partner 3 does not experience much contact with the other partners or subsidiaries since his/her subsidiary does not do many internal collaborations or business deals. There should be more

collaboration but during Partner 3's time at Professionals, they have talked a lot about it but there are no actions. One prerequisite for collaboration is to be located in the same office since the communication increases. Financial incentives, business value and creating win-win situations could also improve collaboration. To have frameworks is something that Partner 3 is unsure about since it could be hard to find one that works for all the different subsidiaries. There is no competition or rivalry between the subsidiaries and there are no conflicts that they have not been able to solve. Partner 3 is positive to the new common vision of Professionals and think that improved collaboration and synergies can help his/her subsidiary reach its goals. The quarterly meetings are not good since there is not enough discussion about new business opportunities et cetera. One advantage is the feeling of being part of a bigger company. The introduction of new employees is not something that Partner 3 prioritises and do not give the new employees any information about the other subsidiaries. Partner 3 explains that there are no obligations or role descriptions of being a partner at Serendipity, the only responsibility as a partner is to be the CEO of one's own subsidiary.

Partner 4

Partner 4 described that the benefits of being at Serendipity is that it is easy to ask for help, that there is a great amount of contacts and competences and that it gives them more credit when talking to external customers. One disadvantage is that the communication does not always work. The partners are too focused on their own subsidiaries, which hinders collaboration. It is hard to find the right incentives and get the time to focus on bigger, strategic issues. Partner 4 express that it has to be simple and clear how the subsidiaries should collaborate and they have to get together more, for example in meetings, workshops and other discussion forums. It could be possible to have a framework for how collaborations should work at Professionals even though the businesses are very scattered. Most contact areas between the subsidiaries turn up out of coincidence. Partner 4 thinks that the culture at Serendipity is great, but regret that some key employees will have to move out of the joint office. There is no feeling of any rivalry between the subsidiaries, mainly because their business areas are very different. Partner 4 has no idea what the common vision is but guesses that they are going to sell less consulting services. Synergies can absolutely help his/her subsidiary reach their own vision and goals. Partner 4 does not approve of the quarterly meetings since they are boring. They have no introduction of new employees and thinks that a common introduction and a platform for HR issues could be useful.

Partner 5

Partner 5 thinks that the subsidiaries at Professionals could collaborate more, especially concerning the sharing of contacts, resources and helping each other with the digital marketing. They should also host more events together. There is a need to have a framework and have more gatherings, meetings and discussions in order to make the collaboration work. What hinders collaboration is that everyone is too focused on their own business area and that there are no clear incentives for collaborating. There are no common frameworks today but there is a need for frameworks when subsidiaries are going to start new companies together. Partner 5 thinks that Professionals have a good culture and a motivating environment for performance. There is no one in charge of certain questions, which is sometimes problematic. Partner 5 is aware of the new common vision but does not think that it affects his/her subsidiary. The quarterly meetings are good in terms of understanding how everyone is running their finance but Partner 5 requests more 'themed meetings' where they can discuss specific topics with a clear purpose. It is a problem for the employees to find information they need.

Partner 6

One of the benefits of being part of Professionals is according to Partner 6 to be part of something bigger than the own subsidiary. It is easier to attract good candidates and exploit the different competencies. Professionals could improve the collaboration through using each other's contacts more as well as create more business opportunities together and in that way make more money. One possibility is to have incentives that you get shares or ownership in the new businesses. It has to be more clarity regarding what it means to be a partner at Professionals and what responsibilities the partners have. There is a need to create forums for discussions and create a common culture since every subsidiary today create their own identity. There is a lot of problems regarding the office

administration right now. When collaborating more, there is a risk to lose profit and the purpose should be to create more value and more money. Clarity in terms of frameworks and processes is of great importance, according to Partner 6. Furthermore, the interaction is independent of the location of the employees. Partner 6 expresses that creating synergies and collaboration could help his/her subsidiary reach its goals through bigger business deals and more stability. The new vision is aligned with Partner 6's own intentions for the future. The quarterly meetings are not well functioning since the company is very decentralised. They never discuss strategy at these meetings, which is problematic. Partner 6 has a very extensive onboarding process but the new employees do not have the possibility to get introduced to other employees at Professionals since there is no need for them to get to know each other today. Partner 6 thinks that every employee should get the same introduction in order to prevent segregation and different cultures. It is essential to have someone in charge of different activities in the overall organisation, for example who should be responsible for platforms, HR related questions and other support functions.

Partner 7

Partner 7 is positive to collaborating more but the challenge is that everyone is too focused on their own business area. Another challenge is that the partners are chosen on the basis that they are the best 'deliverers' within their subsidiary, which means that they are very focused on making their own subsidiary a success. Professionals need to improve their meetings, discussions and incentive structures since the benefits of collaborations are not clear today. Generally, there is a need for more structure, frameworks, platform and principles. According to Partner 7, the joint office space creates a pulse and energy that is very stimulating. There are no big conflicts today but more collaboration could lead to friction since the businesses are very different. Partner 7 talks a lot about the incongruence between the old vision of having a joint service offering and the new vision of building new companies with more of a product focus. He/she thinks that the subsidiaries will get more segregated if they are to switch and focus more on creating product portfolios instead. The meetings moreover should be more focused on what the other subsidiaries actually do than just reporting numbers. They should have another introduction of the new employees where they get more background information before attending the quarterly meetings. That no one is responsible for overall issues is a general problem in many areas. There is no common budget either.

Partner 8

Partner 8 express that as long as they can make more money, collaborations should occur more frequently. For example, the subsidiaries could find bigger business opportunities and could build more companies together. The only prerequisite for collaborating more is to have strong incentives. If there is a business opportunity, Partner 8 do not see any reasons why they should not collaborate more. Professionals have a great network and different competencies, which they should use more efficiently. It is very beneficial to be able to ask the other subsidiaries for help. Partner 8 has never bought or sold any services internally, but has experienced working with other subsidiaries with new business opportunities. There are no obstacles or disadvantages with increasing the interaction. Synergies and collaborations could help Partner 8's subsidiary to reach his/her vision since the different competences could be exploit. The culture at Professionals gives Partner 8 energy and he/she has many friends in the organisation. The focus on the own business area and that almost every lead and business opportunity occur spontaneously is problematic for increasing the interaction. A platform could be needed if the company grows very much, but there is no need for it, on a professional level, today.

Partner 9

Partner 9 expressed that one benefit with being part of Professionals is that there are no restrictions. This means that there is a great freedom to develop the subsidiary in any desired direction. Collaborations are always good but the challenge for the subsidiaries is to be able to get a more strategic overall focus since everyone is very busy. It is essential to create win-win situations in order for collaboration to work. The employees have to have the all the tools they need in order to collaborate. The conflicts that have occurred have always been solvable. The culture contains a great dynamic and there is no competition between the companies. Partner 9 states that there could be a

possibility that increased collaboration could help the subsidiary to reach its goals. When talking about the new common vision, Partner 9 express that they are independent from the rest of the organisation and that they will only follow the new vision if it is in line with their own ambitions. The meetings at Professionals do not fulfil any purpose and they are long and boring. There is a need for a more holistic thinking in the organisation and the meetings should have the purpose of discussing more business opportunities. Partner 9 expresses that their on boarding of new employees are inadequate. There is no need for a common platform today personally, but new employees could benefit from having one.