Expectations on the use of Facebook for employee engagement

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Abstract

In order to engage employees effectively, organisations need to practice two-way communication within a symmetrical worldview. This will encourage employees to feel valued, to participate in decision-making and contribute to obtaining organisational goals. Practising two-way communication will help to build stronger relationships between employees and managers, leading to increased employee engagement. Thus, the better the communication between managers and employees, the more engaged employees will be. Furthermore, the selection of communication channels can impact on the success of the message that is sent. Research has shown that if the inappropriate communication channel is selected when communicating with employees, the message might not be effectively received and understood. New technology, specifically Facebook can be introduced to provide an open and transparent channel for communication. Facebook can also facilitate two-way communication, which can lead to increased employee engagement.

The literature study conducted informed the interview schedules that were developed and used to conduct semi-structured interviews with managers and focus group interviews with employees within two organisations in the South African financial sector. This was done in order to understand their expectations regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement.

In terms of the conclusions derived from the empirical research, it seems evident that Facebook could be used as an additional internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement. Trust remains a very important factor in that managers should trust employees to use the channel in an ethical manner and employees should trust the organisation and its managers that they may voice their opinion freely, without the fear of victimisation. Facebook can be used to promote engagement on a social level to build relationships inside the organisation.

However, managers and employees can together create a contract of understanding that will form the outline for a policy that will govern the use of Facebook. The parties involved can then negotiate the terms of this contract of understanding to ensure that all expectations regarding the use Facebook are met.

Keywords

Opsomming

Ten einde verbeterde werknemerbetrokkenheid te bereik, behoort organisasies gebruik te maak van twee-rigting kommunikasie vanuit 'n simmetriese wêreldsbeskouing om met werknemers te kommunikeer. Werknemers sal meer waardevol te voel, vryliker deelneem aan besluitneming en sterker verhoudings tussen werknemers en werkgewers sal kan gevestig word. Werknemerbetrokkenheid sal dus verhoog. Verder is dit belangrik om te verstaan dat die keuse van kommunikasiekanale die effektiwiteit van die boodskap wat gestuur word beïnvloed. Navorsing toon dat die boodskap negatief beïnvloed kan word indien die verkeerde kanaal gebruik word om te kommunikeer. Nuwe tegnologie soos Facebook kan aangewend word as 'n kanaal om oop en deursigtige boodskappe te kommunikeer. Facebook kan twee-rigting kommunikasie fasiliteer, wat terselfdertyd kan lei tot verhoogde werknemerbetrokkenheid.

Die literatuurstudie is gebruik om 'n onderhoudskedule te onwikkel waar semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gevoer is met bestuurders en fokusgroeponderhoude met werknemers van twee organisasies in die finansële sektor in Suid-Afrika. Die doel van die onderhoude was om te verstaan wat die verwagtinge is van bestuurders en werknemers aangaande die gebruik van Facebook as interne kanaal om werknemerbetrokkenheid te verhoog.

In terme van die bevindinge van die empirisie navorsing, blyk dit dat bestuurders en werknemers oorhoofs saamstem dat Facebook wel gebruik kan word om werknemerbetrokkenheid binne 'n organisasie te verhoog. Vertroue tussen bestuurders en werknemers bly baie belangrik. Bestuurders moet hul werknemers kan vetrou om eties met die kanaal om te gaan. Werknemers moet ook hul bestuurders voldoende vertrou om 'n opinie te lug sonder vrees vir negatiewe gevolge. Facebook kan gebruik word om betrokkenheid op 'n sosiale vlak te verhoog en om verhoudinge te verbeter binne 'n organisasie. 'n Sosiaal interaktiewe kanaal geskoei op die funksionaliteit van Facebook kan ook binne die organisasie ontwikkel word. Hierdie sogenaamde interne Facebook word gebou binne die organisasie se intranet en sal informsie veilig en privaat hou.

Werknemers en bestuur moet wel saamwerk om 'n memorandum van ooreenkoms te skryf wat sal dien as die basiese struktuur van 'n beleid wat die gebruik van Facebook sal reguleer. So 'n memorandum van ooreenkoms sal help verseker dat aan alle partye se verwagting rakende Facebook voldoen word.

Sleutelwoorde

Sosialemedia, Facebook. persepsies, verwagtinge, werknemerbetrokkenheid, interne kommunikasie, korporatiewe kommunikasie, werkgewer-werknemer kommunikasie, werkgewer-werknemer verhoudings, interne kommunikasie kanale, aandeelhouerbestuur, nuwe tegnology, simmetriese twee-rigting kommunikasie.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction, problem statement and objectives

1.1 Introduction

Stakeholder theory claims that if an organisation aims to achieve success, stakeholder management must be a top priority and an on-going strategic process for managers (Steyn & Puth, 2000:210). Cornelissen (2004:57) states that an organisation can no longer rely on just a few stakeholders such as investors and consumers to attain its goals, but must tend to a whole range of stakeholders in order to create organisational success. If not paid attention to, these stakeholders have the power to influence the organisation negatively (Steyn & Puth, 2000:210). Grunig *et al.* (1992:19) furthermore advocate that in order to achieve excellence in managing different stakeholders, communication[1] cannot be top-down, or based on the hierarchical structure of the organisation. In the *Excellence study,* Grunig *et al.* (1992; 2002) advocates for symmetrical two-way communication (see Section 2.2.2 on the nature of communication models), which is based on empirical research, in order to understand the different stakeholders' views and needs, and to address it effectively.

Employees are vital stakeholders in any organisation and should therefore be part of an organisation's stakeholder management strategy. It is the responsibility of the CEO and senior managers to create an environment where employees are respected, their opinions are heard, and their work is recognised (Smythe, as quoted by Smith & Mounter, 2008: xi). Such actions would contribute to enhancing organisation-employee relationships and as a result improve employee engagement. When an environment is created where employees can participate and engage in organisational activities and decision-making processes, it could have a positive effect on job satisfaction levels, productivity, the culture of the organisation and as a

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[1] In this study the term *strategic communication management* refers to identifying the organisation's strategic stakeholders that develop because of the consequences the organisation and the stakeholders have on each other. Secondly, *strategic communication management* refers to the organisation using symmetrical communication programs to build and maintain strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with these strategic stakeholders (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:548). Strategically managed communication's main purpose is therefore to build relationships with the organisation's most strategic external and internal stakeholders in order to manage stakeholders' issues and organisational risks (Grunig & Repper, 1992:123). According to Grunig *et al.* (1992; 2002) strategically managed communication resulting in strong organisation-stakeholder relationships, equals *excellent communication management* that contributes to the organisation attaining its goals.

consequence the brand and public image of the organisation. Managers can, through this process, contribute to what employees think of the organisation, how they feel about the organisation and how they act or behave towards achieving organisational goals (Fullerton *et al.,* 2010:13; Hutchens, 2010:112; Cook, 2008:3; Miller & Monge, 2006:23).

As previously stated, the stakeholder theory proclaims that organisations should manage its stakeholders on an on-going basis by identifying their needs, wants and issues and then take appropriate action to address it (Steyn & Puth, 2000:210). In South Africa, as in the rest of the world, organisations have indeed recognised the importance of employees as a vital stakeholder, and their behaviour's effect on the organisation (Rizal, Nordin, Saad & Ismail, 2012:91; Anon, 2008)[2]. One of the ways in which to take care of employees as a stakeholder group is to communicate effectively with them. Organisations are therefore creating sound internal communication strategies, which will keep employees informed, facilitate participation in decision-making and as a result ensure employee satisfaction (Ken, 2010:38). The formulation of an internal communication policy is an attempt to manage and create a structure that will assist managers and employees to communicate effectively with each other in order to ensure, amongst others, mutual understanding of each other's needs and the establishment of credibility and trust (Ken, 2010:38; Rizal, Nordin, Saad & Ismail, 2012:92).

Employees, previously neglected as major stakeholders, are now being valued just as much as the customer is. Two-way communication improves worker morale and productivity, actions that will reflect in the financial bottom-line (Ehling, 1992:620). The paradigm has shifted in the workplace from coercive communication to inclusive communication (Smythe, as quoted by Smith & Mounter, 2008: xi). Inclusive communication is two-way in nature, which means that information is not just given or pushed to employees, but their feedback is regarded as essential to management (Wood, 1999:148). Employee participation is therefore needed to achieve two-way communication in an organisation. A preliminary study[3] (Anon, 2008) conducted at Momentum Life, an insurance subsidiary of the FirstRand Group, clearly indicated that managers within the organisation, ranging from the Call Centre Manager to the Head of

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[2] The stakeholder theory can be applied to all relevant stakeholders that can impact on an organisation, however, due to the scope of the research, this study will focus on employees as a vital stakeholder.

[3] As part of a project for a private company, the researcher personally interviewed employees from Momentum Life. The business venture failed and the results of the research were never published.

Sales, recognised the major value that effective internal communication management[4] can add to the financial bottom line. Although managers from Momentum acknowledge that internal communication management is important, it does not mean that internal communication management is effective and successful. Managers from Momentum stated that they often understand the importance, but lack the skills to implement effective two-way communication.

Literature adds that excellent internal communication management is crucial for the success and effectiveness of an organisation's ability to manage its employees (Byrne & LeMay, 2006:149). Employees who are motivated, hardworking and dedicated will contribute greatly to the success of any organisation (see section 2.4.3). The CEO and senior managers are responsible for creating an environment where employees are respected, their opinions are heard and their hard work is recognised (Smythe, as quoted by Smith & Mounter, 2008: xi). Two-way communication can be used to manage conflict, improve understanding, and build relationships with employees. This suggests that the managers of an organisation and its employees participate in two-way communication with each other. Two-way communication will help to improve employees' morale, which in turn will motivate employees to enhance the organisation's ability to reach its goals (Grunig & White, 1992:39). Employee dissatisfaction not only decreases productivity and increases staff turnover, but this stakeholder group has a profound influence on the culture of the organisation and also on the brand or public image of the organisation (Fullerton *et al.,* 2010:13; Hutchens, 2010:112). Satisfied, engaged employees should therefore be one of the main strategic focuses of managers.

The Institute for Employment Studies (Hayday *et al.*, 2004) defines employee engagement as "*a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee*".

According to Hayday *et al.* (2004), committed employees will perform better, which clearly makes it in the best interest of the organisation to understand to what extent employees are engaged or disengaged. Employee engagement can be viewed as two-way communication

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[4] The term public relations and communication management are used interchangeably in literature. In this study, in order to avoid confusion, the term communication management will be used throughout.

that stimulates mutual learning in the organisation (Hayday *et al.*, 2004). Engagement will therefore facilitate a process where values such as trust are strengthened and where knowledge can be shared (Mathur *et al.*, 2008:604). The process will promote enhanced learning, shared values and needs as well as the recognition of other's views as legitimate. The strongest and most important driver of engagement is the feeling of being involved and valued (Hayday *et al.*, 2004). This can be broken down into various specific areas namely:

- involvement in decision making;
- the extent to which employees feel able to voice their ideas, and managers listen to these views, and value employees' contribution;
- the opportunities employees have to develop their jobs; and
- the extent to which the organisation is concerned about the employees' health and well-being.

A study by Wyatt (as quoted by Attridge, 2009:390) shows how effective internal communication management leads to four times higher employee engagement than in organisations that communicate less effectively. Engagement can also only be effective in an environment where employees have the opportunity to speak without fear, where opinions are respected and listened to, where employees can influence decisions, where information is shared equally, where power is distributed equally among participants and where honesty is valued (Mathur *et al.*, 2008:604; Hayday *et al.,* 2004). Engagement should be modelled around two-way communication (Hayday *et al.*, 2004; AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013:43). This two-way communication can help establish connections between managers and employees, which can foster improved relationships and in turn will promote engagement.

An organisation with a symmetrical worldview (see Section 2.2.2 on organisational worldviews) will most probably practice two-way communication since they view interaction with stakeholders and the environment as vital. In such an organisation, the opportunity for employees to provide direct feedback and having the chance to voice their opinions will add to significant internal conversation and could encourage employee engagement (Crescenzo, 2010; Rasmus, 2010; AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013:43). To engage employees fully, the application of two-way communication is vital to facilitate a strong relationship between managers and employees. Boulter (2011) adds that by promoting the use of technology, internal communication could be improved. New technology can help to target messages to ensure effective engagement with employees.

Managers[5] have many traditional channels[6] through which they communicate with employees as a valued stakeholder group. According to Hamilton (2008:13), the channel that is selected will carry the message and this will have an impact on the success of the message that is sent. Traditional channels include, amongst others, face-to-face discussions, telephone calls, memos, e-mails, sms's, newsletters, magazines, radio, and television. The development of the Internet and specifically Web 2.0 technology has opened more possible internal communication channels. New developments in Web 2.0 technology have revolutionised the interactivity of the Internet, turning it into a network platform that has led to the emergence of many social media sites (see Section 3.3.1 for a differentiation between social media and social networks) such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, blogs, YouTube and Wikipedia (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:2). These developments have enabled organisations to adapt to technological changes in the environment and have allowed them to explore new forms of two-way, or interactive internal communication channels that can be used to engage employees.

Social media platforms function from the perspective of open and interactive communication networks or systems (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:2). The use of social media for internal communication can contribute to information flowing freely and more effectively in the organisation. However, open systems or channels are difficult to manage or control (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:2). For instance, Twitter, due to its rapid nature, can spread a message to hundreds of people in seconds. Such a communication network is feared by many managers because it threatens organisational privacy, security as well as organisational reputation (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:82). Although a forum on the organisational intranet might seem to be safer and more manageable, many people are already used to communication via social media.

Despite the growing number of Facebook users, organisations have been slow to adopt this new technology for internal communication purposes. According to Fraser and Dutta (2008:18), the major reason for the hesitance is the *Fear Factor* - although managers talk about information sharing and mass-collaboration strategies, they perceive (fear) that knowledge sharing equals the surrendering of power to employees. More reasons for organisations not

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[5] Managers are the representatives of the organisation and therefore, when referring to managers, the researcher in essence refers to the organisation.

[6] The term channel and medium can be used interchangeably, however, for the purpose of this study, the term channel has been used.

implementing social media to enhance internal communication are that social media might distract employees and waste time and money. Social media may open opportunities for slander, defamation and other security risks, as well as fear of the unknown, managers' conceptual resistance to new ideas, managers not trusting employees and IT departments' fear of losing their monopoly over specific functions and expertise (Crescenzo, 2010:11; Grensing-Pophal, 2010:46; Fraser & Dutta, 2008).

There are many benefits of using a communication channel, such as Facebook, that might outweigh the risk factors. Some of the many compelling reasons for organisations to use social media such as Facebook in their organisations include:

- improved employee loyalty; and
- to foster creativity (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:74-75, 157).

Internationally there are many documented case studies of organisations that have successfully adopted different types of social media, including Facebook, for internal communication management.[7] Three specific international organisations, namely Dell Computers, Davies Public Affairs and Serena Software have integrated Facebook into their internal communication strategy and use it to share, create and consume information; stimulate discussion and innovation; and to listen to employees (Analore, 2009; Ostrow, 2009).

In summary, it can be argued that if an organisation uses an additional internal communication channel such as Facebook it promotes two-way communication between managers and employees and employee engagement can be enhanced. Engaged employees and a strong relationship between managers and employees should contribute to organisational excellence.

1.2   Problem statement

Employee engagement is a vital component towards creating an excellent organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:548). However, it would seem that organisations struggle to engage its employees, which could lead to higher staff turnover and less productive workers. Social media, and more

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[7] Facebook is mostly for personal and private use, however, organisations can also create a Facebook page. The functionality on these pages differs and organisations can, for example, use the functions on the business page to monitor traffic on the page. Using 'page insights', the organisation can monitor who is connected, who responds to updates and posts and what content attracts the most attention (Facebook, 2013a).

specifically Facebook, can be used as an additional internal communication channel since it should be able to facilitate open, two-way communication that results in strong relationships between employees and managers. Engaging in two-way communication with employees and a symmetrical organisational worldview contributes to employee engagement. To engage employees fully, the application of two-way communication is vital to facilitate a strong relationship between managers and employees.

However, from a managerial viewpoint there are several obstacles in using Facebook for internal communication management, such as it being difficult to manage and posing possible security risks. Employees might also feel inhibited to express themselves freely on an open (to managers) channel such as Facebook. The reality is that people differ in their needs and preference on how to share information and how to connect with others. Therefore it remains vital to implement a mix of different communication channels that will give employees and managers a choice on how to communicative inside the organisation. It is against this background that the following general research question for this study can be formulated: *What are the expectations of managers and employees of SDT Financial Software Solutions and Hollard Insurance regarding the use of Facebook as internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?*

1.3   Specific research questions

The specific research questions of this study are:
1. What does employee engagement entail according to literature[8]?
2. According to literature, in what way can Facebook serve as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?
3. What are managers' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?
4. What are employees' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?
5. How can Facebook, as an internal communication channel, be managed to enhance employee engagement?

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[8]The literature study included academic literature as well as case studies and experiences from several organisations as documented on the internet.

1.4   Specific research objectives

This study aims to:

1. determine what employee engagement entails by conducting a literature study;
2. determine in what way Facebook can serve as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement by conducting a literature study;
3. determine managers' expectations regarding Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement by conducting semi-structured interviews;
4. determine employees' expectations regarding Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement by conducting focus group interviews;
5. determine guidelines to manage Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement by synthesising guidelines from literature as well as the results of the empirical study.

1.5   Guiding theoretical arguments

This study takes as point of departure the view that for organisations to be successful, they must effectively engage their stakeholders and more specifically, their employees. A way in which to manage employees is through employee engagement (Cook, 2008:3). According to Cook (2008:3), employee engagement entails how positively employees perceive the organisation and behave towards achieving organisational goals. In order to ensure employee engagement, it is necessary for organisations to encourage two-way communication between employees and managers. Grunig *et al.'s* (1992:18) *Excellence Study* states that two-way communication between an organisation and its employees would contribute to mutual understanding between them and result in stronger organisation-employee relationships. Strong organisation-employee relationships, built by means of two-way communication, therefore contribute to organisational excellence, assisting the organisation in obtaining its goals.

Social media, with specific reference to Facebook, can also be used for internal communication management since it facilitates two-way communication and its primary function is building and maintaining relationships. Therefore, the use of social media, such as Facebook, as an additional or supplementary internal communication channel, should assist organisations in facilitating two-way communication and strong relationships with employees.

1.6   Research approach

The research approach is explorative and qualitative. Qualitative research produces findings based on people's opinions, emotions, perceptions and experience (Hancock, 1998:2). This study aims to understand certain expectations, opinions and perceptions about Facebook as a possible internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement. Qualitative research probes deeper into a subject and can understand a participant's perceptions, opinions, beliefs and values regarding the subject through extensive exploration. A smaller sample also allows for a more focused approach that will help the researcher to *understand* expectations and perceptions rather than merely describing it (De Vos *et al.,* 2005:74). Qualitative methods are often used when a certain area or subject is new or when little previous research has been conducted on the subject (Strauss & Crobin, 1998:11). Social media is a relatively new area of communication and little research has been conducted on the topic from an internal communication and employee engagement perspective.

1.7   Research method

1.7.1   Literature study

The following databases have been consulted: Ferdinand Postma Library Catalogue; SACat; International Thesis and Dissertations; EBSCOHost: Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, Communication & Mass Media Complete; MCB Emerald; Google Scholar, J-Store; and SA ePublications. A search on NEXUS was conducted to determine whether a similar study has already been conducted. Swartz (2010) explored the effectiveness of using social media in driving employee engagement in a call centre environment. However, Swartz's (2010) study does not focus on the use of specifically Facebook as an internal communication channel, but on social media's influence on employee engagement, sense of belonging and organisational commitment. Two studies on internal communication, employee engagement and organisational success have been conducted (Esterhuyse, 2001; Mmope, 2010). These studies were used as theoretical background to the study at hand.

A literature study is planned to determine the nature and use of excellent internal communication channels and how social media, with specific reference to Facebook, can be applied as an internal communication channel to engage employees.

1.7.2 Empirical study

This study investigated the expectations of employees and managers regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement. The researcher has selected two different organisations, namely SDT Financial Software (from now on SDT) Solutions and Hollard Insurance (from now on Hollard) to use in this study. SDT Financial Software Solutions was established in 1995 to provide business application solutions for the financial services industry, with specific emphasis on life insurance, loans, health, pensions and employee benefits. In 2006, SDT was reverse listed on the JSE AltX under Silverbridge Holdings. The Hollard Insurance Group was established in 1980 and is currently the largest private-owned insurance group in South Africa. Hollard specialises in private and business insurance as well as savings and investments. Both organisations function in the financial and insurance sector. Both SDT and Hollard have access to computers and Web 2.0 technology and are large enough to necessitate strategic internal communication management. Most of the employees have access to their own computers and are able to use Internet-based technology to communicate. None of the organisations is currently using Facebook for internal communication management. However, at the time of the research, both organisations contemplated using Facebook, but had not yet researched managers' or employees' expectations and perceptions on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to engage employees. These two organisations were selected for the study because they contemplated using Facebook for internal communication, the researcher has access to them and they consented to be part of the research project.

1.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

An interviewing schedule, informed by the literature study, was used to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with approximately 10–14 different line managers from each organisation. The number depended on the availability of the managers. Participants from management were selected based on the contribution they could make towards the study. It was necessary to focus on the individuals that were responsible for not only policy decisions on internal communication, but also those who worked with employees and those who actually ran the new communication channel if the organisation would decide to employ Facebook for internal communication. The researcher thus made use of purposeful or theoretical sampling methods. Purposeful and theoretical sampling are used interchangeably in literature and refers to how the researcher selects participants according to the goals of the research (Coyne, 1997:624).

The semi-structured interviews provided a space for the researcher to probe deeper into the issue at hand in order to understand the deeper meaning of answers provided by the participant. This means that answers have been constructed to allow follow-up questions (Ross, 2008:57). The results of the semi-structured interviews will be discussed in Chapter 4.

1.7.4   Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted to understand employees' expectations regarding Facebook as a means to communicate with and engage employees. Two focus group interviews consisting of approximately 5-10 employees each were conducted at each organisation. A sample framework of all possible employees had been obtained, and each participant was randomly selected from this list until the individuals necessary for the focus groups, had agreed to take part in the research.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed according to the guiding theoretical arguments compiled in Chapter 2 and 3, which aims to answer the research questions. This analysis and consequent findings formed the basis of the report.

1.8   Chapter Outline

Chapter 1:   Introduction, problem statement and objectives
Chapter 2:   Employee engagement
Chapter 3:   The use of Facebook for internal communication
Chapter 4:   Research methodology
Chapter 5:   Data analysis
Chapter 6:   Conclusion and recommendations

CHAPTER 2

Employee engagement

2.1   Introduction

In Chapter one the general background to this study, its general research question, as well as its specific research questions and objectives were stated. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the first specific research question: *What does employee engagement entail, according to literature?*

An organisation practices strategic communication management when the communication practitioner identifies, by means of environmental scanning, the organisation's strategic stakeholders that develop because the organisation and its stakeholders' actions, views, needs, issues and risks influence each other (Grunig & Repper, 1992:123). By using two-way communication in symmetrical communication programmes strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with these strategic stakeholders can be built and maintained (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:548). The focus of this study is on the use of two-way communication, by means of Facebook, to build and maintain strong manager-employee relationships in order to enhance employee engagement. Engaged employees are the goal of internal communication management, and the progression of this chapter will clearly show how the practise of two-way communication can contribute to enhanced employee engagement.

In order to understand what employee engagement entails, it is necessary to describe the concept of organisational worldviews. Organisational worldviews relate to whether it is in an organisation's culture to communicate in a symmetrical or asymmetrical way, or put more simply, whether an organisation allows for two-way communication between the organisation and its stakeholders such as employees, or not. Thus, the organisation's worldview determines which communication model will be used to communicate with employees. The development of the communication models will then be discussed, after which a discussion on relationships as the most important outcome of strategic communication management will lead to the concept of employee engagement being explained.

After providing the theoretical background on the conditions necessary for employee engagement, Chapter three will focus on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement.

2.2   Organisational worldviews

Strategic communication management is the way in which to manage the communication process in an organisation, with the aim of improving organisation-stakeholder relationships, resulting in organisational excellence. According to Grunig and White (1992:31), one must understand the concept of an organisational worldview in order to understand the theory of excellence in communication management. A worldview is the way that individuals and/or organisations define or think about the world. A worldview therefore guides thoughts, perceptions and actions. Relating to communication management, an organisational worldview guides the way management views the role of communication management and how it should be practiced. The two general worldviews that will be discussed in the following section are the asymmetrical and symmetrical worldviews. It is important to compare the two worldviews to understand each one's influence on the practice of excellent communication management and the choice of communication model(s) (Grunig & White, 1992:36; Deatherage & Hazleton, 1998:58).

2.2.1   Asymmetrical worldview of organisational communication

An asymmetrical worldview assumes that the organisation will always know best and that its internal and external stakeholders will only benefit by following and cooperating with the organisation. This worldview may, however, push the individual communication practitioner to unethical, irresponsible and ineffective communication practices because organisations with an asymmetrical worldview believe it is ethical to control and dominate their environment (Grunig & White, 1992:43; Deatherage & Hazleton, 1998:58).

The asymmetrical worldview is characterised by the following presuppositions (Grunig & White, 1992:43):

- Internal orientation

  Members of the organisation, especially managers view the organisation only from their perspective and do not view the organisation as from the perspective of an outsider. In this

case it might indicate that managers view employees as being "outside" the management circle.

- Closed system

  Information only flows out of the management circle, but does not flow into the management circle, indicating a lack of two-way communication with employees.

- Efficiency

  Innovation comes second to efficiency and cost control. Innovative employees are therefore not encouraged and valued.

- Elitism

  The leaders of the organisation have all the wisdom. They know best and think that they have more knowledge than their employees.

- Conservatism

  Change within the organisation is not viewed in a positive light, nor are efforts to change the organisation looked upon favourably.

- Tradition

  It is vital in keeping the organisation stable and maintaining its culture.

- Central authority

  Those that have power to make decisions within the organisations are only a few individuals and employees have very little independence.

It is clear from the above presuppositions defining an asymmetrical organisational worldview, that employees' and views are not necessarily valued. In such an organisation, two-way communication is not encouraged, resulting in, amongst others, employees not being satisfied in their work environment. The asymmetrical worldview also inhibits employees' development and innovative ideas that might contribute to organisational growth. An organisation that functions according to an asymmetrical worldview is not a favourable environment for practicing two-way communication. The role of the communication practitioner is merely to disperse information in a one-way manner. Two-way communication with employees is not encouraged. The lack of two-way communication between the organisation and its employees indicates that the one-way and/or asymmetrical models of communication are most likely practiced because the organisation is not interested in feedback from employees.

2.2.2 Symmetrical worldview of organisational communication

The purpose of symmetrical two-way communication is to use research and two-way communication to manage conflict, improve understanding, and build relationships with stakeholders. According to this worldview, both the organisation and its stakeholders, in this case employees are willing to change their viewpoints or behaviour (Grunig & White, 1992:39). The symmetrical worldview is characterised by the following presuppositions (Grunig & White, 1992:43; Deatherage & Hazleton, 1998:58):

- Interdependence

  The organisation is not isolated from the environment. Taking the environment and employees' views and needs into consideration is vital for any organisation's survival.

- Open system

  Information exchanges freely between the organisation and employees and the organisation is open to other systems' influences.

- Moving equilibrium

  The organisation strives to reach equilibrium with other systems. The equilibrium changes and moves just as the environment and other systems move. Cooperation and mutual adjustment are methods used to adapt to the moving equilibrium.

- Equity

  All views and input from employees are valued, regardless of education and background. All people are respected.

- Autonomy

  Employees that are more autonomous are more satisfied and because they are given control over their own behaviour, they tend to be more innovative, constructive and self-fulfilled.

- Innovation

  Innovation and creativity are valued, rather than tradition and efficiency. This is very important for organisational survival in a changing environment.

- Decentralisation of management

  Rather than having authority centralised, managers coordinate employees and do not dictate to them. This can lead to increased employee autonomy, satisfaction and innovation, which can lead to increased levels of employee engagement.

- Responsibility

Employees should be aware of the consequences of their behaviour and its effects on others in the organisation. They should take responsibility for their behaviour and work towards eliminating negative consequences.

- Conflict resolution
Conflict resolution should take place through negotiation and communication rather than force or manipulation.

- Interest-group liberalism
Interest-group liberalism supports the idea of open negotiation with interest and pressure groups in order to promote the welfare of the organisation's stakeholders against dominant government and organisational structures.

The above presuppositions of a symmetrical organisational worldview imply that the two-way models (asymmetrical, symmetrical and mixed-motive models) are practiced because the organisation values two-way communication with and feedback from stakeholders, especially employees. Grunig and White (1992:26) add that a symmetrical organisational worldview implies that the managers of an organisation and its employees are in two-way communication with each other. The organisation can encourage this two-way communication by using different communication channels and new technological development. This can help to improve employees' morale, productivity and creativity, which in turn can motivate employees to enhance the organisation's ability to reach its goals. Both managers and employees can be persuaded to each other's viewpoint and both can change their behaviour. Instead of waging a war of power, both parties negotiate with each other to create a win-win situation for everyone, which is in line with the principles of the mixed motive communication model (Grunig & White, 1992:39; Deatherage & Hazleton, 1998:58) (see section 2.3). This will lead to increased employee engagement.

Following the discussion of the asymmetrical and symmetrical organisational worldviews, the following guiding theoretical argument is formulated:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 1
In an organisation with a symmetrical worldview that practices two-way communication, in which employees are treated equally, their opinions are respected, they have more autonomy and responsibility, and innovation is valued, employee engagement can be improved.

In conclusion, it is argued that the organisation's worldview influences the selection of communication models that are practiced and therefore influence the effectiveness of the organisation's communication management (Zhang, 2008) and therefore the four communication models will now be discussed.

2.3 Communication models

Four communication models have influenced how organisations communicate to employees. The earliest model of communication is the **publicity/press agentry model**. This model was predominantly used in the 1800's and emphasises the use of media coverage to promote an individual or organisation. The slogan attributed to PT Barnum, "*no publicity is bad publicity*" can be used to best describe this model. Publicity stunts, deception and trickery are all used to create publicity and news coverage (Grunig *et al.*, 1995:41, Seltzky & Lehman-Wilzig, 2010:244). The truth was not important when using this particular communication model.

In the early 1900's, the **public information model** was predominantly used. This model also made use of the media to generate interest in the organisation, and was based on truthful disclosure of information. Any damaging information was usually withheld from the media (Grunig *et al.,* 1995:41; Seltzky & Lehman-Wilzig, 2010:244). From an internal communication perspective, the model can be used to disseminate information to employees. Both the publicity/press agentry and the public information models are one-way in nature. The organisation communicates one-way, through the media, to the targeted stakeholders. There was no channel for feedback from stakeholders (Grunig *et al.*, 1995:41). In an organisation with an asymmetrical organisational worldview there will probably not be room for feedback from employees.

By the late 1920's, the **asymmetrical two-way model** of communication was developed. For the first time, research was used to gather information from stakeholders. However, this information was used to develop effective media strategies and to use persuasive, sometimes even manipulative techniques to convince stakeholders, such as employees, to conform to the objectives of the organisation (Grunig *et al.,* 1995:41).

The **symmetrical two-way model** developed during the 1960's and 1970's. Just like the asymmetrical model, research is applied to gather information from stakeholders. Instead of

using the information to create conformity, the symmetrical two-way model provides an opportunity for two-way communication between an organisation and its stakeholders in order to find resolutions to disputes and to negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes that requires both the organisation and its stakeholders to give and take (Grunig *et al.*, 1995:41; Marco, 2004).

Furthermore, Dozier (1992:309) is of the opinion that not only is practicing the symmetrical communication model more effective to attain organisational goals, but it is also the most ethical way in dealing with communication management. Communication management can be the area where the organisation introduces decision-making based on morale values and social responsibility, not only to external stakeholders, but also to its employees (Grunig, *et al.,* 2002:554).

The symmetrical two-way model is criticised for its idealistic approach and for not representing realistic communication management practices (Grunig & White, 1992:312). A new model was suggested that encompasses elements of both the symmetrical and asymmetrical models. The **mixed motive model** is depicted on a continuum where one extreme represents the asymmetric view that exclusively benefits the organisation and the other end represents the asymmetric view that exclusively benefits stakeholders. The midpoint represents a symmetrical view where both the organisation and its stakeholders benefit. In other words, where a win-win situation is created for both parties involved (Grunig & White, 1992:312). When the organisation communicates with its stakeholders, it aims to persuade stakeholders to move toward the organisation's position and in turn, the stakeholder aims to persuade the organisation to move toward their position. Both symmetrical and asymmetrical communication techniques, which include persuasion, are used to achieve these goals (Grunig and White, 1992:312). However, persuasion and other asymmetrical communication techniques may be practiced from a symmetrical organisational worldview (see Section 2.2.2). It is important to note that although the symmetrical two-way model and mixed-motive models of communication are seen as the ideal models to use in order to communicate effectively, all the different models are still used to communicate with stakeholders, depending on the situation[9].

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[9] Following this section, the term two-way models will be used to describe all communication that is two-way in nature, thus including both the symmetrical two-way model and the mixed-motive model.

The discussion of the five communication models in this section leads to the second guiding theoretical argument:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 2

Organisations that practise the symmetrical two-way model and/or the mixed-motive model of communication will also support and engage in two-way communication with, and listen to, their employees to determine their needs, while those that practise only the one-way and asymmetrical two-way communication models will not view two-way communication as an important part of their communication efforts.

What is important for this study is the idea that communication inside organisations should be two-way in order to foster stronger relationships between managers and employees that allows for employees' participation in decision-making processes. An organisation that ascribes to a symmetrical worldview, may promote two-way communication through excellent communication management. Without two-way communication, the possibility is higher that employees and managers will not have strong relationships and employees cannot be properly engaged. The process of relationship building will be discussed in the following section.

2.4   Relationship building

One of the fundamental goals of communication management is building relationships with stakeholders, including employees. Strong relationships with employees will increase the chance that employees will be satisfied in their jobs and they will thus be more likely to support the organisation. They will also be more likely to support the mission of the organisation (Hon & Grunig, 1999:11), because their needs are aligned to the goals of the organisation. Managers need to engage in two-way communication with employees to identify employees' needs, views and issues as part of internal environmental scanning[10]. When a strong relationship exists between the organisation and its employees, it is assumed that the communication process is two-way and both parties involved have an equal chance to send and receive information. A

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[10] Environmental scanning refers to monitoring the organisation's internal and external environment to analyse and evaluate opportunities and threats from interacting and building relationships with other organisations, groups or individuals. By means of environmental scanning communication practitioners can identify new trends and issues that might affect the organisation's strategy formulation (Steyn & Puth, 2000:158). Environmental scanning is therefore considered as a main function of excellent strategic communication management.

strong relationship therefore benefits both parties involved rather than just benefiting the organisation and its managers (Hon & Grunig, 1999:11).

As part of strategic communication management, an organisation can use several relationship cultivation strategies to manage relationships with key stakeholders such as employees (Hon & Grunig, 1999:14). Applied to *internal* relationship management, they include:

- Mutual access to information

  Managers will provide access to information and decision-making processes to employees and employees will in turn provide similar access to information to managers. In a situation where there are complaints or queries, each party will first go to the other instead of taking negative reactions to third parties.

- Positivity

  Managers and employees will do what they can to make the relationship more enjoyable for everyone.

- Openness

  Both managers and employees should openly voice their thoughts and feelings to each other.

- Assurance

  Managers and employees demonstrate to each other that the other's concerns are legitimate and the other party can then respond with an appropriate solution.

- Networking

  The organisation must build networks or form coalitions with the same groups that their stakeholders, such as employees, do. Specific examples can include unions or community groups.

- Sharing of tasks

  Managers and employees share in solving problems that the employees or the organisation as an entity faces.

If managers apply the above strategies to maintain effective relationships with employees, strong, long-term manager-employee relationships should be the result. The quality of such a relationship is determined by the presence or absence, to a certain degree, of certain outcomes of strong relationships that include (Hon & Grunig, 1999:19):

- Control mutuality

  Control mutuality refers to the degree of control parties in a relationship, such as managers and employees, has over the other. Mutual control between managers and employees

imply that both parties are equal, and that managers do not exert power to obtain only their own goals. Naudé (2001:71) states that equity in a symmetrical worldview does not mean that all employees are equal in terms of organisational hierarchy, salary, or other benefits, but that they all receive equal opportunities.

- Trust

    There are different dimensions of trust such as integrity, dependability and competence. Integrity is the belief that an organisation or managers are fair and just. Dependability is the belief that managers, as well as employees will do what they say they will do. Competence refers to the concept that managers will trust that their employees are competent in their work and therefore not micro-manage them. Employees will also trust their managers to be competent. If these aspects are in place, employees will be more willing to open themselves to the organisation.

- Commitment

    Commitment is when all parties in the relationship feels that the relationship is worth spending energy on to maintain and promote it.

- Relationship satisfaction

    A satisfactory relationship is one where the benefits of the relationship outweigh the cost thereof. It can be argued that when there are mutual control, trust and commitment in a relationship, all parties involved will be satisfied with the relationship.

The above theory on relationship building leads to the following guiding theoretical argument:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 3

Organisations' use of two-way communication will lead to mutual understanding, resulting in strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships between managers and employees. These relationships will be characterised by trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.

Strong relationships are the most important outcome of strategic communication management, as strong relationships will lead to increased trust, mutual control, commitment and relationship satisfaction between managers and employees. Understanding the needs and issues of employees goes hand in hand with the concept of employee engagement. Both relationship building and employee engagement theories are based on the principles of two-way communication. Two-way communication can ultimately lead to stronger relationships and thus

improved employee engagement. Employee engagement will be discussed in the following section.

2.5   Employee engagement theory

According to the Institute for Employment Studies (Hayday *et al.*, 2004) an engaged employee will have a positive attitude towards the organisation and they will work well with colleagues to improve performance. Engagement is a two-way process where an organisation engages purposefully with its employees and where employees choose the level that they will engage in with the organisation. Employee engagement can therefore be defined as how positively employees think and feel about the organisation, how they behave towards achieving organisational goals, and how involved, committed and passionate employees are about their work (Cook, 2008:3; Attridge, 2009:383).

According to Sloan (2009:26) and Mathur *et al.* (2008:601), employee engagement can be viewed from three different angles, namely employee engagement as a management technique, an ethical requirement, or a forum for two-way communication to facilitate mutual social learning.

Regarding employee engagement as a *management technique* is utilitarian in nature in that the reasons for engaging with employees are purely for the purpose of avoiding conflict and obtaining support for attaining the objectives of the organisation. Employees in essence pose a risk for the organisation and must be monitored and managed (Sloan, 2009:26; Mathur *et al.,* 2008:602). This refers back to the asymmetrical worldview as previously discussed in section 2.2.1 and the asymmetrical two-way communication model as discussed in section 2.3.

If employee engagement is viewed as an *ethical requirement* the idea of participation in these decision-making processes is emphasised. Participation enhances democratic governance and promotes the representation of diverse interests (Mathur *et al.*, 2008:603). Some decisions cannot take place in isolation and must be made together with others. Communication enables the sharing of information in order to facilitate the decision-making process (Steinburg, 2007:21). Participation in decision-making processes adds to a stronger organisation-employee relationship and is characteristic of an organisation with a symmetrical worldview on organisational communication (see section 2.2.2). This participation can be viewed as mutual

control, which is one of the outcomes of strong relationships (Hon & Grunig, 1999:19) (see section 2.4 on control mutuality).

Viewing employee engagement as *two-way communication* is closely linked to the above view of employee engagement as an *ethical requirement* since two-way communication is viewed as the most ethical way to engage with stakeholders, such as employees. Two-way communication[11] is also characteristic of a symmetrical organisational worldview (see section 2.2.2) where the two-way communication models (see section 2.2) are practiced to achieve the organisation's goals. Employee engagement as two-way communication stimulates mutual learning. Engagement will therefore facilitate a process where values such as trust is created and where knowledge can be shared (Mathur *et al.*, 2008:604). According to Kent and Taylor (2006:15), trust amongst managers and employees is one of the most important requirements for employee engagement. Trust is an important outcome of a strong relationship between managers and employees (see section 2.4.3). Miller (2011:170) further explains that individuals need to establish trust, intimacy and understanding in this changing world, and this can be achieved through two-way communication. The Employee Engagement Report (Blessingwhite, 2011) explored workplace attitudes amongst nearly 11 000 employees worldwide. One of the key findings shows that trusting the executive team of an organisation has a much greater impact on employee engagement levels than just trusting a direct manager. Two-way communication plays an integral part in building trust between managers and employees.

Two-way communication takes place in order to not only obtain information, but also to share information, without which organisations cannot function (Steinburg, 2007:20). Regarding two-way communication inside an organisation, Gróf (2001:195) states that strategic communication management aims to acquire information and values from the environment and transfer it to the organisation's strategy and culture. Yeomans (2008:282) concludes that a large amount of knowledge exists within organisations and much of this 'wisdom' is handed

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[11] The terms dialogue and two-way communication are often used interchangeably in literature, but for the purpose of this study, the term two-way communication will be used. Theunissen & Noordin (2012:5-13) refers to two-way communication as the need to achieve a pre-determined outcome, such as helping employees to understand the new policy on social media use in the organisation. However, dialogue is a process were all parties meet as equals, without a pre-determined goal set. For example, managers and employees come together to discuss the use of social media as an internal communication channel. True dialogue has great potential for conflict, while two-way communication strives towards mutual understanding and mutual benefits for all parties involved.

down from person to person. However, in a changing organisational environment there is a need to capture knowledge and to ensure better knowledge sharing through two-way communication (see section 2.2.2 on a symmetrical worldview). However, channels through which to share knowledge are in most cases limited to older technologies such as the telephone. Yeomans (2008:283) therefore interprets limited access to new technology through a political lens as a way in which information is controlled and organisational hierarchy is sustained (see section 2.2.1 on an asymmetrical worldview). However, in an organisation where employees trust managers and vice versa, both parties will be able to depend on each other to know that they will do what they say they will do. This will ensure that employees are more open towards managers and the sharing of information (Hon & Grunig, 1999:19) (see section 2.4 on trust as an outcome of strong relationships).

Adding to the above, Boulter (2011) states that two-way communication helps to establish connections between the different levels of employees, which will foster stronger relationships and in turn promote engagement. Two-way communication can include letting employees know how their skills and talents contribute to the organisation attaining its goals. Employees can be given feedback from customers, which in turn could improve performance. Employees can also be included in the setting of goals and targets, implying encouragement of feedback and two-way communication.

Hayward (2012) notes that by using two-way communication processes, every employee has the opportunity to understand and take part in creating the brand of the organisation as well as setting its goals and ambitions. A 'democratic' or two-way approach to communication management will provide a much better chance of organisational success than the conventional 'top-down' or one-way process as the high levels of participation will transfer a sense of ownership to every employee. In this case, the 'democratic' process refers to communication within a symmetrical organisational worldview, while the 'top-down' process refers to communication within an asymmetrical organisational worldview (see sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.1).

It would seem that from the above discussion that two-way communication between managers and employees is vital for establishing a strong manager-employee relationship that enhances employee engagement. In an organisational environment, employees need to cooperate through relationships with each other as well as with management to achieve organisational

goals (Steinburg, 2007:20). Welch and Jackson (2007:188) add to the above by stating that internal two-way communication aims to promote a sense of belonging amongst employees.

The strongest and most important driver of employee engagement is the feeling of being involved and valued (Hayday *et al.*, 2004). This can be broken down into various specific areas namely:

- involvement in decision making;
- the extent to which employees feel able to voice their ideas, and managers listen to these views, and value employees' contribution;
- the opportunities employees have to develop their jobs; and
- the extent to which the organisation is concerned about the employees' health and well-being.

It is clear from the above that employee engagement thrives in an organisation with a symmetrical worldview (see section 2.2.2), that engages in two-way communication with its employees.

According to Attridge (2009:384), employee engagement includes a physical, emotional and a cognitive component. The physical perspective is the extent to which an employee exerts energy when performing their job. On an emotional level, employees must feel that they, for example, put their heart into their work and that they are satisfied with their job. Lastly, from a cognitive perspective, employees have a comprehensive understanding of their job and function in the organisation (Rosso, 2010:19). According to Hayday *et al.* (2004), committed employees will perform better, which clearly makes it in the best interest of the organisation to understand to what extent employees are engaged or disengaged. If employee engagement are achieved, the following benefits will become evident:

- employee satisfaction;
- increased passion and commitment to the organisation's strategies and goals;
- improved organisational effectiveness;
- improved conflict resolution;
- improved information flow;
- a high-energy working environment;
- increased employee motivation and productivity;

- improved team work;
- increased worker morale;
- organisational growth;
- loyal employees, thus high employee retention;
- employees trusting the organisation more; and
- employees who are brand ambassadors for the organisation (Byre & LeMay, 2006:149; Bottazzo, 2005:78; Gróf, 2001:195; Welch & Jackson, 2007:188; Yeomans, 2008:283).

Thus, as stated by Hayday *et.al.* (2004), if employees are committed, the organisation will benefit, resulting in growth and improved organisational effectiveness. More important is the fact that employees will be more loyal, productive, trusting of managers and most importantly more engaged. A study by Wyatt (as quoted by Attridge, 2009:390) shows how two-way communication leads to four times higher employee engagement than in organisations that do not communicate in a two-way manner.

Employee engagement can only be achieved in an environment where employees have the opportunity to speak without fear, where opinions are respected and listened to, where employees can influence the decisions, where information is shared equally, where power is distributed equally among participants and where honesty is valued (Mathur *et al.*, 2008:604; Hayday *et al.,* 2004). This can be referred back to the symmetrical organisational worldview (see section 2.2.2). Excellent, strategically managed internal communication can lead to engaged employees. Engaged employees leads to loyal customers, which will in turn create profit (Parsley, 2005). Parsley (2005), however, clearly states that communicating is not just about providing information or telling employees what to do, but it is about two-way communication where managers truly value employees' input.

The above discussion leads to the next guiding theoretical argument:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 4
Employee engagement will be enhanced if managers and employees engage in two-way communication to build strong manager-employee relationships in order to contribute to the organisation attaining its goals.

2.6   Conclusion

Internal communication should be managed strategically to build and establish strong, mutually beneficial relationships with employees, who are vital stakeholders for the organisation.

Relationships can most effectively be built using two-way symmetrical communication, however, the worldview of the organisation will determine whether an asymmetrical or symmetrical communication model is used to communicate with employees. If an organisation has a symmetrical worldview, employees will be encouraged to participate in decision-making and contribute to obtaining organisational goals and communication will be two-way symmetrical.

Practising two-way communication will help to build stronger relationships between employees and managers, leading to increased employee engagement. Thus, the more two-way the communication between managers and employees, the stronger the relationships can become and ultimately, the more engaged employees will be.

Engaged employees will be more loyal, productive, satisfied, trustworthy, team work will improve, conflict resolution will be improve, all leading to improved organisational effectiveness.

New technology helps to target messages to ensure effective two-way communication and thus improved engagement with employees. In the next chapter social media, with specific emphasis on Facebook, will be discussed as an example of a new technological communication channel that can also be used to facilitate effective internal two-way communication, which in turn can help foster employee engagement.

CHAPTER 3

The use of Facebook for internal communication

"Facebook was not originally created to be a company. It was built to accomplish a social mission — to make the world more open and connected. At Facebook, we're inspired by technologies that have revolutionised how people spread and consume information. We often talk about inventions like the printing press and the television — by simply making communication more efficient, they led to a complete transformation of many important parts of society. They gave more people a voice. They encouraged progress. They changed the way society was organized. They brought us closer together. Today, our society has reached another tipping point. We live at a moment when the majority of people in the world have access to the Internet or mobile phones — the raw tools necessary to start sharing what they're thinking, feeling and doing with whomever they want. Facebook aspires to build the services that give people the power to share and help them once again transform many of our core institutions and industries." – Mark Zuckerberg (2012)[12], Founder of Facebook

3.1 Introduction

In the past, internal organisational information has flowed mainly through face-to-face interaction, telephone calls, memos, emails, instant messages, newsletters and organisational radio, but in recent years, technology has changed communication channels' form (Hamilton, 2008:13). Web 2.0 technology gave rise to social media such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, blogs, YouTube and Wikipedia (Fraser & Dutta, 2009:2). These new social media have also penetrated the organisation and provided communication practitioners with possible new ways in which to communicate with diverse employees inside the organisation.

As discussed in the previous chapter, employee engagement is one of the key components in creating a successful, or excellent organisation. One important aspect of creating employee engagement is by using two-way communication to build strong relationships between managers and employees. In organisations with a symmetrical organisational worldview

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[12] Due to the fact that this is a relative new field of research, not many academic sources are available.

Facebook can open new avenues towards fostering two-way communication, creativity and ensuring satisfied employees.

In this chapter, the characteristics of internal communication channels will be discussed. Thereafter the broader concept of social media and specifically Facebook will be discussed in order to provide an answer to the second specific research question: '*According to literature, in what way can Facebook serve as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?*' In the context of this study, Facebook will be viewed based on how it can be used to improve two-way communication within the organisation, which in turn should lead to increased levels of employee engagement.

3.2   Internal communication channels

Managers have many 'traditional' channels through which they communicate with employees as a valued stakeholder group. According to Hamilton (2008:13), the channel that is selected should carry the message and this will have an impact on the success of the message that is sent. Channels include, amongst others, face-to-face discussions, meetings, telephone calls, newsletters, magazines, radio, and television (Hamilton, 2008:13). In present times, communication tends to be faster and more interactive (Guffey *et al.*, 2009:14). New communication channels include text messaging, email, cell phones, intranet, videoconferencing, and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Presently, social media such as Facebook are also used as internal communication channels by organisations such as Dell Computers, Davies Public Affairs and Serena Software (see Section 3.3.4.1 for examples of organisations using Facebook as an internal communication channel).

Internal communication channels can still largely be defined using two criteria, namely oral and written communication (Guffey *et al.,* 2009:15). Oral communication is still viewed as being the most effective and 'richest'[13] form of communication to convey clear messages, whether it is face-to-face or in meetings. It is very effective to minimise misunderstandings as questions can immediately be asked when something is not understood, facial expressions can be seen and

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[13] According to Sheer (2011:83), the Media Richness Theory refers to communication that falls on a continuum between rich and lean media. Richness is based upon the availability of instant feedback, the use of multiple cues such as body language and voice inflections, the use of language to explain difficult concepts and the personal focus of the medium.

voice variations can be heard. The biggest drawback of oral communication, however, is that it produces no written record of what was said and it can be very time consuming, especially if many people need to be in a meeting together (Guffey *et al.*, 2009:15).[14]

Written communication, on the other hand, provides a written record, but it is sometimes more impersonal and immediate feedback is not always possible. Writing a message gives a person the chance to think about what must be said and then state it in a correct and organised manner. Written communication is very convenient in that it can be written and read at a time that suits both the communicator and receiver best. Written messages should also be more thought through, as they are placed on record and due to the lack of verbal and non-verbal cues, they can be misunderstood more easily (Guffey *et al.*, 2009:16; Clampitt, 2009:109). This is also the case with Facebook, which is also mostly written communication. Conversations and information posted can be re-read, especially using the new Timeline[15] format.

The following table depicts forms of internal communication channels as well as some of their advantages and drawbacks:

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[14] Communication can also be defined as controlled or uncontrolled. Uncontrolled communication refers to when the organisation loses control over how information is used and spread, for example, an organisation has no control over whether a news agency makes use of their press release or not. Controlled communication on the other hand refers to information that is, for example, published in an internal news blog or publication (Hendrix & Hayes, 2009:31).

[15] The Timeline was introduced in 2011 by Facebook and has replaced the Facebook Profile. In a Timeline the photos, videos, and posts of a user are categorised according to the period of time in which they were uploaded or created.

Table 3.1: Internal communication channels

Type	Channel	Advantage	Disadvantage
Oral	Phone call	Immediate feedback	No permanent record
	Conversation	Non-verbal cues	Expression may be careless or imprecise
	Meeting	Forceful impact Possible two-way communication	Time consuming
Written	Email	Convenient	Requires writing skill
	Report	Careful consideration	Lacks non-verbal cues
	Newsletter	Easy distribution	Impersonal
	Facebook	Possible improved two-way communication Easy distribution Convenient Easy to use	Time consuming Distracting

(Adapted from Guffey *et al.*, 2009:16, Simon, 2009*;* Crescenzo, 2010:11; Grensing-Pophal, 2010:46)

On selecting the appropriate channel to use when communicating a message, there are different factors that influence the successful conveyance of messages:

- Channel richness

  Channel richness refers to the amount of information that a channel can carry. The more information a specific channel can carry, the richer the channel is. There are normally three levels of richness namely non-verbal, verbal and paralanguage or paralinguistics. Paralanguage is vocal features that accompany speech and contribute to communication, for example vocal pitch, volume and tempo. Verbal communication is the actual words used while non-verbal cues can include facial expressions, body language, gestures, tone of voice, eye movement, as well as the use of space, time and touch. When communicating face-to-face, all three levels are present and it will increase the effectiveness of the message communicated. It is however important to note that misunderstandings are still possible using face-to-face communication as the speaker may not always express their opinion correctly, or the receiver of the message may not listen well. Memos for example, only have

the verbal level, which makes it more vulnerable for misinterpretation and communication breakdown.

- The importance of the message

When communicating very important messages it is advisable to do it face-to-face as well as in a written format, as this will decrease the risk of misinterpretation because engaging in two-way communication and feedback is possible. It is also important to keep a written record of the communication that took place.

- The needs and abilities of the receiver

Some people prefer to hear a message rather than read it and some will interpret face-to-face messages better than written ones. Furthermore, some people would prefer written message for record keeping purposes. Another important factor to consider when conveying messages, is the listening abilities of both the sender and the receiver of the message.

- The amount and speed of the feedback required

Although an email can produce a very fast response time, misinterpretation is always a possibility and therefore face-to-face communication is considered more effective.

- The necessity of a permanent record

Where record keeping is essential, the use of memos, email and other written messages are the best way to communicate, because a permanent record is always available.

- The cost of the channel

Cost is always a factor and for all organisations, time can be costly. An email could therefore be less costly than a long distance phone call or a meeting, especially if proximity is an issue.

- The formality or informality desired

It is important to choose the channel according to how formal the message will be, for example, a memo can in some instances be more formal than a face-to-face meeting.

- Mix of communication channels

Communication practitioners need to use a mix of different communication channels for internal communication to be effective, because employees differ in how they use these channels. For instance, some people prefer written messages, while others are more auditory inclined. This means that the more channels a communication practitioner uses, the more likely the message is to reach the maximum number of people, and be understood by them. However, it remains crucial that the chosen channel suits both the message and the audience. The systems theory reiterates this point by claiming that there is not just a single way in which to manage employees and there is not only a single way in

which to communicate with employees. Communication processes are influenced by managers and employees' abilities, personalities, expectations and other outside factors.

- Duel capacity of the channel

  The dual capacity model refers to a communication channel's ability to carry data or symbols. A channel's data-carrying capacity is the ability to transmit information related to tasks, while symbol-carrying capacity refers to the ability of the channel to transmit information about information, such as information on an organisation's culture (Clampitt, 2010:102; Goodman, 1998:15; Hamilton, 2008:61; Miller, 2011:245; Steinburg, 2007: 90; Wood, 1999:148).

The above factors are applicable to both traditional and social media, such as Facebook and leads to the next theoretical argument:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 5

When an organisation considers a specific internal communication channel to be used for employee engagement it should be decided which channel is the most suitable for the receiver of the message, the type (easy or difficult) of content and the nature (level of formality and urgency) of the message.

Although a mix of different communication channels are normally used to communicate with employees, this study focuses on the appropriateness of social media, specifically Facebook, for internal communication management. It is very important to understand that although Facebook will be the focus of this chapter, Facebook has never been viewed as the only or most important communication channel. By having discussed more traditional channels of communication, the researcher hopes to emphasise that Facebook must be viewed not as a substitute to any of the traditional channels, but as a supportive channel to further develop two-way communication within the organisation. In order to understand the phenomenon that is Facebook, the next section will provide a brief overview of social media in general, and then focus on Facebook.

3.3   Facebook as an internal communication channel

3.3.1   The difference between social media and social networks

Hartshorn (2010) stated that there is indeed a difference between the concepts *social media* and *social networks*. Social *media* can be defined as the different channels that are used to share or transmit messages to an audience, for example using Facebook or Twitter to send a message to a colleague. Everyone can create and share information and messages using *social media* as the vehicle to share information. *Social media* is described as applications/channels that connect users by creating personal information profiles and inviting friends or colleagues to have access to the profiles.

Social *networking* is the term used to describe the act of engaging in two-way communication. *Social networks* bring together people with common interest. *Social networking* helps build relationships and communication is two-way between, for example, employees and managers (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010:61).

Thus, *social networking* is the concept of connecting with people and *social media* is the channel through which you network or connect with others.

3.3.2   Facebook history

The first recognisable social media platform launched as early as 1997. The social media platform SixDegrees.com allowed its individual users to create profiles, list their friends and view their friends' lists. SixDegrees.com was promoted as a channel to help people connect with each other. While the site had millions of users, it was not sustainable and the site closed down in 2000. From the launch of SixDegrees.com a number of smaller community sites were launched including AsianAvenue, BlackPlanet, and MiGente (Boyd & Ellison, 2011). In 2001, a new site called Ryze.com was launched to support business networks. This was followed by sites such as Friendster and LinkedIn. A very influential site in the history of social media was launched in 2003. MySpace was created to compete with sites like Friendster, but attracted small Indie-rock bands[16] that used the site to promote their music and interact with fans.

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[16] Indie-rock is a term used to describe musicians signed to independent, smaller recording labels instead of mainstream, commercialised record labels. These musicians have typically more input in the type of music they produce, but independent labels tend to be less well funded than mainstream labels.

MySpace differentiated itself by allowing users to personalise their pages. It was however only after News Corporation bought MySpace in 2005 that it attracted media attention and became renowned (Boyd & Ellison, 2011).

Facebook was launched at the start of 2004 for a closed community of students. Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and his college roommates Eduardo Savouring, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. Initially the site was only available to Harvard students, but was soon expanded to other Ivy League institutions. Later it expanded to include students from other universities in the USA before being opened to high school students (Carlson, 2010). Mark Zuckerberg himself said that the reason for Facebook's creation was to make the world more open and connected, and to bring people closer together (Zuckerberg, 2012).

Facebook alone has reached one billion monthly active users at the end of October 2012, of which 81% is outside the USA and Canada. On average, in June 2013, there were 699 million daily active users and 819 million mobile active users. (Facebook, 2013b).[17]

It is clear that Facebook provides a channel for individuals to engage with each other. Facebook should therefore, theoretically, be an appropriate internal communication channel to engage employees.

3.3.3   Facebook and excellent communication management

Excellent strategic communication management is said to contribute to excellent or successful organisations (Grunig, 1992:15). One of the important characteristics identified that contribute to excellent communication management is two-way communication. This in essence means that the organisation should have two-way communication with its stakeholders in order to build and maintain strong, lasting and mutually beneficial organisation-stakeholder relationships. Two-way communication and a strong relationship with stakeholders such as employees ensure the organisation is achieving its goals (Grunig *et al.*, 1992; Grunig *et al.*, 2002).

In the past, organisations have been able to control internal and external information flow (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010:60). However, social media, which include Facebook, function from the perspective of open and interactive networks or systems (Fraser & Dutta, 2009:2). Systems

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[17] Active users refer to individuals who create and make use of a Facebook profile in their personal capacity.

affect each other, and when these systems or networks are open, information can flow freely. Unfortunately, open systems or networks are difficult to manage or control. Twitter and other social networks are feared by some managers because it threatens organisational privacy and security (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:82).

In spite of the above, Duhé (2007:103) notes that the speed and interactive nature of social networks such as Facebook are very useful for creating and maintaining relationships, in the workplace as well. Social networks can provide a channel where the organisation can build relationships with stakeholders, such as employees. It is also the best place to present the organisation's online business persona, achievements and expertise to both internal and external stakeholders (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009:166).

Social media such as Facebook use the concept of creating two-way communication to build relationships between individuals. Every time a person sends a personal message, posts an opinion on a forum or leaves a comment or message on Facebook, the feedback or response from others can be immediate. Others can immediately provide their opinion or comment on the post. The communicator does not have to wonder how his/her audience feels because they can instantly tell how they feel and what they think. It is the communication practitioner's task to understand the organisation's employees and to listen to their opinions. Facebook can provide communication practitioners the ability to conduct environmental scanning by listening to employees to discern perceptions about the organisation and identify possible employee issues timeously (Breakenridge, 2008:17).

Facebook offers a variety of ways in which to discover and connect with those with influence as well as with peers. It also offers different forms of collaboration through fan pages, customised applications, events and games. The organisation can create group pages in order to host two-way communication and create a space for feedback from stakeholders, including employees. This group engagement can also provide opportunities for increased interaction, direction and support to employees, thus creating a learning organisation (Solis, 2011:46). These group pages will only be accessible to employees, thus ensuring that external stakeholders cannot view what is said on the page. When a group is created on Facebook, three privacy settings can be chosen from, namely, open, closed and secret. If the secret option is chosen, only group members van view information posted on the page (Facebook, 2013c).

Facebook creates a space where the organisation can connect, share information and build relationships with its employees, without external stakeholders being able to view the conversations. By using the interactive nature of Facebook for external and internal communication, the organisation can strengthen two-way communication with employees that can enhance employee engagement. Ossiansson (2010:136) states in this regard that Facebook makes it possible to share, participate and communicate in many ways, thus developing relationships and building trust, which is the most important outcome of excellent communication management.

After the above broad discussion of ways in which Facebook can contribute to excellence in communication management, the discussion will be narrowed in the following section to focus on Facebook as an internal communication channel.

3.3.4   Facebook as an internal communication channel

3.3.4.1 Motivation for the suitability of Facebook as an internal communication channel
Yates (as quoted by PRNewswire, 2009b), a global leader in communication consulting at Watson Wyatt, says: "*Companies continue to explore using social media as the next communication frontier. Today's workers are looking for authentic, timely messages that address how business affect them personally. Social media sites connect employees in real time and to a variety of topics*".

Interestingly, the majority of participants in the below-mentioned study said that Facebook is their most valued channel in terms of organisational communication, followed by MySpace, LinkedIn and Twitter. Changes in the way we communicate are evident and according to a new study by Anderson Analytics (as quoted by O'Malley, 2009) an estimated 110 million people in the U.S.A (36% of the total population) are regular users of social media.

In a study conducted by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) (2009), 79% of participants from a worldwide sample of managers indicated that they prefer to use social media to engage employees and foster productivity inside the organisation. The study also indicated that internal office blogs are the most popular organisational social media (47%). Despite the high number of users, 46% of all organisations do not measure the impact of social media on their business. In addition, 52% of participants indicated that their

communication budgets have been cut. This implies that organisations need to become more innovative concerning more cost effective internal communication methods (IABC, 2009). A study conducted by The CMO Club and Hill and Knowlton (PRNewswire, 2009a) has shown that more than 84% of chief marketing officers allocate less than 10% of their budgets to explore social media and non-traditional communication media, with more than 55% allocating just 5% or less. Some of the reasons for this will be discussed more in-depth in section 3.2.3 on disadvantages of Facebook.

Eyrich *et al.* (2008:413) conducted a study on social media and communication technology use, finding that the most popular communication channels used by communication practitioners for internal and external communication was email (96.1%), followed by the intranet (68.2%) and blogs[18] (41.7%). Only 24% use other social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, while 18% use Wikis[19]. The communication practitioners participating in the study prefer more 'established internal communication channels like email and intranet, but they also readily use blogs and podcasts[20]. However, it was found that they are slow to introduce social media such as Facebook for internal communication because it is more complicated communication technology to manage (Eyrich *et al.*, 2008:414). In contrast, a few case studies show how international organisations, namely Telstra, Dell Computers, Davies Public Affairs and Serena Software, have successfully integrated social media, including Facebook into their internal communication strategy.

- Serena Software

According to Simon (2009), an organisation called Serena Software has used Facebook as an intranet channel from 2007. Serena Software views Facebook as a user-friendly space where employees can meet, find information, and improve communication between managers and employees. Facebook is free, and in a post-recession world, this was extremely important for

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[18] The term blog, or web log, is an information or discussion site that is published on the Internet by an individual, group or even an organisation. Although historically a more informal communication channel, organisations are increasingly using blogs as a more formal way in which to communicate (Nelson, 2010).

[19] The term Wiki refers to a user-generated Internet site that any person can update or add information to, which is then peer reviewed for accuracy. A Wiki in an organisational context can be used as a knowledge management or even a note-taking tool (Cunningham, 2003).

[20] A podcast is a type of digital media used to create and then broadcast video, radio or voice recordings to subscribers. The podcast is viewed using a computer or other mobile digital device (Starak, 2005).

Serena Software. Simon (2009) reiterated that the channel is user-friendly and could be an excellent way to disseminate information and communicate to employees.

Kyle Arteaga, the Vice-president of Corporate Communications at Serena Software stated that the organisation has approximately 800 employees with an average age of 46 (Weston, 2009). Despite the older average age, the organisation implemented Facebook as their intranet, and now boasts a 95% adoption rate. According to Arteaga (Weston, 2009), "the type of people entering the workforce now, won't work hard for you if they feel you're holding back info".

One of the main issues regarding the use of Facebook to promote effective internal communication is security. Facebook cannot provide a channel where information and knowledge can be securely stored or exchanged (Simon, 2009). Serena Software overcame this problem by using the Facebook group as a front end or portal. From the Facebook group page, the secure information can then be accessed by means of a password-protected link. Another problem that Serena faced concerned the issue of private versus public identities. The employees reportedly adapted well to balancing public and private issues and self- and group regulation has spontaneously worked effectively (Arteaga, as quoted by Weston, 2009).

According to Simon (2009), Facebook can be a useful communication channel in an international communication plan. By using Facebook managers can, for example, engage with employees through enhanced communication and it can create an online community for employees working in different geographical locations.

- Dell Computers

Another organisation at the forefront of the social media revolution is Dell Computers. In 2007, Dell Computers launched a social network called EmployeeStorm, which functions much like Facebook. The aim of this internal communication channel is to create and maintain discussion among employees and to generate new ideas (Analore, 2009). Every individual, from a community of more than 80 000 employees, can take part in discussions ranging from topics such as product upgrades, innovation, organisational policy, facility improvement and benefits. "It's easier to go internal before you go external. There's less fear, and also you are engraining your culture with the culture of social media and Web 2.0 and where it's taking us and how important it is to listen" (Vida Killian, manager of the IdeaStorm channel, as quoted by Analore, 2009).

Dell Computers has successfully opened up internal conversation and on an average day, around 45% of the organisation's employees are taking part in conversations supported by IdeaStorm. Putting this percentage in perspective, some 45 000 Dell employees are registered on IdeaStorm and more than 10 000 ideas have been posted on the channel since its start in 2007 (Analore, 2009). Crucial to its success is the fact that these ideas are not just "thrown into the dark vacuum of space". Dell Computers has listened to its employees and has successfully implemented more than 200 ideas generated on IdeaStorm. Employees know that their voice matters and that they are heard (Analore, 2009).

- Davies Public Affairs

An issues management firm called Davies Public Affairs situated in the USA was struggling to engage its employees and could not successfully create a communication system where knowledge transfer could happen (Tsai, 2009:44). Employees were not satisfied with the way in which they were communicating or with the quality and detail of the information shared. Davies Public Affairs' management saw a direct loss in productivity due to the dissatisfaction of employees regarding internal communication management. As a result, Davies Public Affairs spent a few months investigating new innovative ways in which to communicate more effectively with employees. In the end they decided to implement Web 2.0 technology in the form of a social network called Socialtext (Tsai, 2009:44), which has some of the functionality of Facebook. This enabled employees to find subject experts and then work with them to find solutions to business problems, which inevitably lead to cost saving and improved performance. The payoff for Davies Public Affairs was effective facilitation of communication and knowledge transfer, collaboration between employees and subject experts, which increased efficiency and reduced costs. Use of paper was also reduced, operational and administrative tasks were simplified, areas of specialisation increased and lastly, employees could share personal and professional information (Tsai, 2009:45). This is in line with the characteristics of an organisation with a symmetrical worldview (see section 2.2.2) communicating according to the two-way models (see section 2.3).

- Telstra

Telstra, an Australian telecommunications giant, has made social media training mandatory for its employees (Ostrow, 2009). Their introductory video explains that the world of social media is rapidly expanding and that social media provides employees the opportunity to create, share and consume information. Their highly developed policy is structured around three R's –

responsibility, respect and representation (Ostrow, 2009). Although the organisation does not use Facebook specifically as part of its training programme, they do seem to understand the importance and value of equipping their employees to use social media in the workplace.

Facebook was developed as a channel to promote social interaction, but organisations such as Serena Software, have started to explore the possibility of using the world's largest social network to promote internal communication management. Wilson (2011) states that the most obvious reason why Facebook can work as an internal communication channel is that most people know about the network as well as how it works. With over nine hundred million users worldwide, many employees will be familiar with Facebook and will start off in a comfort zone when dealing with the organisational Facebook page. These employees know how the channel operates and there is no 'learning curve' that they must go through before they are able to fully use it as an internal communication channel (Harrison, as quoted by Wilson, 2011). This will certainly simplify adaptation to using Facebook as an internal communication channel.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that technical developments are starting to prepare the way for social media applications to move from static desktop computers or laptops, towards mobile devices such as the smartphone (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010:67). According to the Pew Research Centre (as quoted by Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010:67), by 2020 the mobile device will be the primary Internet connection channel for most people in the world. The movement from computer to mobile device will provide many more people access to Facebook. For example, in India, mobile phones outnumber computers by 10 to 1. The mobile device will truly democratise the Internet. It will close the gap between developed nations and emerging countries by ensuring access for millions more people (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2010:67). With the mobile device as the primary Internet connection channel for most people in the world, communication through social media such as Facebook will become easier and organisations should tap into this widely used channel to communicate with employees. Not only will Facebook become more accessible to employees as mobile technology advances, but it would also seem as if the advantages of using Facebook as an internal communication channel might outweigh the risks.

3.3.4.2 Advantages of Facebook as an internal communication channel

Some of the many compelling reasons for organisations to use Facebook as an internal communication channel include, in broad categories, improved information gathering, two-way

communication, improved trust and improved productivity. Facebook is also user-friendly. All these advantages can lead to improved two-way communication and thus improved employee engagement. These advantages of Facebook as an internal communication channel will now be discussed in more detail.

Information gathering

- Internal use of Facebook can seek and empower the expertise available in the organisation. Fraser and Dutta (2008:144) allude to the concept of '*collective intelligence'*. Collective intelligence produces optimal decisions only in organisations whose culture and environment encourage transparent and horizontal knowledge sharing and peer collaboration (see section 2.2.2 to refer to the symmetrical organisational worldview).

- Optimal decision-making and creativity that solves problems and challenges along with satisfied employees can ultimately *increase shareholder value* (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:157).

- Not only can employees use Facebook to find information, but they can also meet others in the organisation. This is important on a social level, but it is also crucial to find the relevant person who will have the information that is sought (Simon, 2009). Using Facebook for internal communication enhances collaboration between participants (Tsai, 2009:44).

- Information can be created, shared and consumed on one site (Ostrow, 2009).

- Specific audiences can be reached on specific issues (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011:11).

- Facebook can provide an excellent way in which to disseminate information and communicate with employees (Simon, 2009).

- Marc Smith, senior research sociologist at Microsoft Research said "the biggest asset of any enterprise is *what your people know*" (as quoted by Fraser & Dutta, 2008:249) as employees are empowered with relevant information. An organisational environment with open and transparent communication and knowledge sharing will indeed assist employees to 'know' because knowledge is transferred between network participants (Tsai, 2009:44) (See section 2.3 to refer to the symmetrical organisational worldview).

Two-way communication

- Facebook is a channel where employees can most likely be engaged because it is a way for managers and employees to communicate more effectively (Simon, 2009). Organisations that 'listen' to their employees and collaborate well with them, who engage employees in organisational conversation, are rewarded with *loyalty* (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:74). Improved communication leads to more open networks. Open networks foster

creativity that can solve organisational problems and challenges (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:75). In this way, Facebook can contribute to the organisation achieving its goals.

- Facebook as an internal communication channel can help to create and maintain discussion among employees to generate new ideas (Ostrow, 2009) (see section 2.3 to refer to the symmetrical organisational worldview).

- Facebook can provide a channel where individuals' voices are heard (Analore, 2009), which can improve employees' morale and willingness to participate in two-way communication.

- Employees, whose ideas are valued and listened to, will normally be *satisfied employees*. They will work harder and remain loyal to the organisation (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:157).

Trust

- Facebook as an internal communication channel can promote transparency and in the process enhance trust between managers and employees (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011:11). Trust promotes loyalty and according to Dutta and Fraser (2008:209), employees cooperate because they share a common loyalty. Trust is an indicator of a strong manager-employee relationship (see section 2.4).

User-friendly

- Facebook is a user-friendly, informal environment that many people know and understand. It will thus make it easier for employees to use the channel for internal communication (Simon, 2009), even for those who still have to learn to use it.

Productivity

- A study conducted by the University of Melbourne showed that people who surf the Internet, including using social media such as Facebook, will be more productive than those who do not (University of Melbourne, 2009). Individuals who surf within a reasonable limit of less than 20% of the day at the office, are more productive by about 9%, compared to people who do not. According to the study (University of Melbourne, 2009), short and unobtrusive breaks enables the mind to rest, leading to a higher total net concentration for a day's work, which results in increased productivity. However, browsing should be done in moderation.

Despite the above-mentioned possible advantages of using Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement, there are some risks to using Facebook that should be considered.

3.3.4.3 Risks concerning the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel

Organisations worldwide are slow in its uptake of social media, including Facebook as an internal communication channel (PRNewswire, 2009b). The risks involved in using Facebook as an internal communication channel could inhibit its use, which could have a negative impact on employee engagement. There are a few prominent reasons why organisations are slow to implement this new technology for internal communication. They include:

- Fear factor

  Fraser and Dutta (2008:18) describe the *Fear factor* as a major reason for the slow uptake of Facebook as an internal communication channel. They state that although managers talk about information sharing and mass-collaboration strategies, they perceive (fear) that knowledge sharing equals the surrendering of power. Management know that 'if you share knowledge, you surrender power' because knowledge is power. Open networks or systems are difficult to control and managers fear the loss of power due to the loss of control (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:74). Not sharing knowledge can inhibit employees' performance, creativity to solve problems as well as engagement.

- Vertical structure and gatekeepers

  According to Fraser and Dutta (2008:250), not all people in the organisation are afraid to share knowledge. A major problem lies indeed with *middle management*. The traditional, hierarchical, top-down organisation is structured in a way that manages the flow of information. Middle management's role has always been that of information gatekeeper. Web 2.0 technology that includes Facebook, tend to work best in a culture or organisational structure that is more horizontal or flat. Everyone has equal opportunity to access information. This fact however, eliminates the need for gatekeepers and thus the job of middle management. This effectively means that middle management lose their decision-making power (see section 2.3 to refer to organisational worldviews).

- Threatened by new technology

  Another obstacle is *Information and Technology departments (IT)*. The IT departments are threatened by new technology because they fear that it will break their monopoly over specific functions and expertise. Their power lies in their expert knowledge and if this knowledge is shared, they lose their power. Dutta and Fraser (2008:251) states that "no wonder IT managers have worked hard to find persuasive arguments to alarm their corporate bosses about the downside risks – productivity losses, security threats, liability issues and so forth". However, not sharing knowledge is counterproductive and does not promote employee engagement.

- Possible waste of time

  Managers view the use of Facebook and other social media as a *distraction* for employees that only waste time and therefore money (Crescenzo, 2010:11; Grensing-Pophal, 2010:46). A 2009 study conducted by Nucleus Research shows that organisations that allow their employees full access to Facebook, have a 1.5% drop in total productivity (Montemurri, 2010). However, as stated in section 3.3.4.2, a study by the University of Melbourne showed that people who surf the Internet, including using social media such as Facebook, are more productive than those who do not (University of Melbourne, 2009). This perceived disadvantage of Facebook illustrates managers' lack of trust in employees, which indicates a weak manager-employee relationship.

- Negative impact on reputation

  Using Facebook as an organisational communication channel can lead to *slander and defamation* posted that can influence negatively on the organisational brand and reputation (Grensing-Pophal, 2010:46). Fraser and Dutta (2008:85) refer to this as gossip. Managers fear negative gossip or criticism and with Facebook, the public can have access to negative comments posted on a page if security is maintained effectively. This can instantly damage the organisational brand and reputation (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:126). Interestingly, according to Dunbar (1996:173), negative gossip only accounts for roughly 5% of verbal face-to-face communication in the organisation, which could translate to a low percentage of gossip on Facebook.

- Security risks

  Managers perceive *security* to be a risk if Facebook is used as an internal communication channel because the greater public may gain access to competitive information (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:10; Grensing-Pophal, 2010:46).

- Fear of the unknown

  Fear of the unknown is another driving force that prevents the use of Facebook inside organisations. Managers may not understand how Facebook works or what advantages it holds for the organisation and will therefore resist its use (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:248).

- Conceptual resistance

  Managers may have *conceptual resistance* to Facebook (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:248). Facebook and other social media are not just a product that can be implemented within an organisation and then miraculously transform internal communication and improve knowledge sharing. The democratic and transparent nature of this communication channel will demand a new way of managing the organisation and calls for 'the end of business as

usual' (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:248). Managers can no longer be the power holders and the gatekeepers of information. They will have to relinquish control and give in to a democratic organisation were all employees could contribute directly to problem solving and knowledge sharing (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:248). This is very different from the rigid, top-down, hierarchal structure of most organisations (Crescenzo, 2010:11). Managers will no longer be able to control the flow of information and ideas and they will not own organisational knowledge any more (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:74) (see section 2.3 to refer to organisational worldviews). On the other hand, employees can thrive in such an organisation where two-way communication and learning are encouraged, and employees' opinions and needs are taken into account. Employee engagement will most probably improve as a result.

- Mistrust of employees

Managers do not always *trust* their employees. Technology is therefore not the solution, but the solution lies in how humans conduct themselves when using Facebook as internal communication channel and how ethically they will perform their functions (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:283).

Despite the personal loss of power and other 'fear factors', the fact remains that Facebook might be an excellent internal communication channel through which to find knowledge and information and if shared, can boost productivity, foster innovation and create enhanced value that can lead to increased profit (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:247). In reality, open communication and information sharing can produce the best solutions to problems while fostering employee satisfaction and shareholder value. Fraser and Dutta (2008:144) call this the 'power of collective intelligence'.

Unfortunately, the majority of organisations are hesitant about integrating Facebook into its internal communication strategy, although the possible benefits as mentioned in section 3.3.4.2 are clear (PRNewswire, 2009b). The reality is also that people differ in their needs and preference on how to share information and learn (Wood, 1999:148). Each personality and emotional opinion will influence a person's perception surrounding Facebook's ability to meet their needs.

This study does not propose that Facebook and other social media replace existing internal communication channels, but rather be seen as *supplementary* to other internal communication channels. As previously stated, different individuals use and prefer different channels to

communicate, Facebook provides a further opportunity for managers and employees to share information and knowledge, learn with and from each other, create, innovate, and interact socially (Wood, 1999:148; Clampitt, 2010:102; Ross, 2009).

The table below provides a comparison between Facebook and traditional media in terms of the factors that needs to be considered when choosing to use a specific communication channel (see section 3.2 for an in-depth analysis of the different factors).

Table 3.2: Facebook compared to traditional media

Factor	How Facebook compares
Channel richness	The language level is available using Facebook, although the use of emoticons can provide some non-verbal cues for written language. Sound clips and videos can be posted that can improve paralanguage and non-verbal cues.
Message importance	Facebook is not a face-to-face channel and the importance of the message can be lost as it is more difficult to convey emotion.
Needs and abilities of receiver	Effective use of Facebook for internal communication will depend on the receiver's ability and willingness to use Facebook as a communication channel.
Speed of feedback	Like emails, feedback on Facebook can be immediate.
Permanent record	Facebook provides a permanent record of all communication posted.
Cost	Only the cost of an Internet connection and bandwidth is necessary to run Facebook. Facebook is therefore a relative cheap communication channel.
Formality/Informality	Facebook would be a less formal channel to use for internal communication.
Channel mix	Facebook can provide an alternative channel to the traditional channels. Communication can be written, and videos and voice recordings can be used.

It would thus seem that Facebook could *theoretically* be used as an internal communication channel inside the organisation. However, despite the advantages, there remain some challenges to successfully using Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement. It is thus important to formalise some guidelines on the use of Facebook in order to ensure that the channel is used correctly and that it can ultimately contribute to excellent communication management and employee engagement in the organisation.

3.3.4.4 Guidelines for using Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement

Facebook differentiates between individual pages and business pages. Although Facebook provides guidelines on creating and maintaining an effective organisational timeline, it is more geared towards communication with external stakeholders such as clients. Facebook as an organisation does not provide any guidelines on the use of Facebook for internal communication.

The most important keys to the success of using Facebook as an internal communication channel lies in an organisation that cultivates a culture of trust, openness and preparedness to listen. Employees should be able to speak freely and candidly about issues (Analore, 2009). This can only be achieved in a culture of trust. 'Trust inspires loyalty' and trust in the organisation and its managers will create a safe space for employees to share (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:284). Facebook cannot be used as a showpiece for the organisation, but should be a channel that encourages participation and employee engagement, which in turn could strengthen and improve the organisation (Analore, 2009).

It should however be noted that before a Facebook page or a group can be created for the purpose of using it to promote internal communication and ultimately raise the level of employee engagement, the organisation should plan and set down how the organisational Facebook page should be managed and what its aims and objectives are. This implies that the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel should form part of the organisational communication strategy in order to contribute to the organisation attaining its goal to engage employees. Waters *et al.* (2009:2) identify three strategies or guidelines to build relationships by using Facebook as a communication channel, namely disclosure, usefulness and interactivity.

Firstly, the organisation should be *transparent and open* (*disclosure)* in their communication on Facebook. Organisations should generally provide a detailed description of the organisation's history, mission and vision, as well as logos and other identifiable branding. It is also a good idea to provide a list of names of the people who are responsible for maintaining the Facebook page. Specific types of information can include links to external news items that feature the organisation, photographs and videos showing activities. The discussion wall can be used to post announcements and very importantly, to answer questions from employees (Waters *et al.*,

2009:2). With open and transparent management of the organisational Facebook page, as well as open and transparent communication, employees will trust managers more and managers can create a space for two-way communication and improved interactivity. Managers and employees can also decide together which information should be communicated freely and which should be password protected. This is not part of the functionality of Facebook, but creating a firewall for a specific organisation, should be achievable. For example, if there is specific sensitive business information such as supplier product prices, it can be password protected or placed behind a secure firewall where only certain employees and managers have access to it. Mutual decision-making will contribute to increased levels of mutual control as well as trust between managers and employees (see section 2.4).

Waters *et al.* (2009:1) reiterate that relationships are the foundation of social media and it is therefore vital that managers understand employees' views and needs in order to optimise the *usefulness* of the organisational Facebook page. From a strategic communication management perspective, this implies that the communication practitioner managing the organisational Facebook page should conduct research to determine employees' needs. It is important to know who the employees are who use the page and what their needs are, what day of the week they visit the page, how often they comment and what posts they find most engaging. This information will shape the type of content that is posted on the page, for example information pertaining to the board's weekly executive meeting. Facebook has a tool that can assist the organisation to analyse traffic on the page in order to monitor activity and obtain better insight into the needs and views of employees who visit the page. In this way, the organisation can plan the content of its Facebook page more effectively and thereby increase interaction between the organisation and its employees (Facebook, 2012). It is not enough to just create a Facebook page and hope that employees will participate in discussions, but managers need to understand the employees' needs through planning and research (Waters *et al.*, 2009:1). If employees know that the organisation goes to great lengths to provide a useful organisational Facebook page, employees will perceive the organisation as being committed to the relationship with employees. A useful organisational Facebook page will also enhance relationship satisfaction since employees will believe their opinions and needs are important to the organisation (see section 2.4). A stronger, more trusting relationship between managers and employees will enhance employee engagement.

Interactivity enables two-way communication on Facebook and is therefore a very important key to developing relationships on Facebook (Waters *et al.*, 2009:3), which will ultimately lead to improved employee engagement. For example, Facebook groups can be successfully used to create interactivity (two-way communication) within the organisation (Harrill, 2011). Facebook groups are an easy way for employees with a common interest to connect. Furthermore, it is a way for managers to obtain a better understanding of what the needs and opinions of employees are. If managers understand the needs of their employees they can create features and make use of applications on Facebook that speak directly to what the employees want. Features like polls, photos, events and chats can also encourage collaboration and discussion amongst employees. Customising communication according to the needs of employees will not only increase the usefulness of the organisational Facebook page, but will also enhance mutual commitment and relationship satisfaction between managers and employees which is essential for employee engagement.

Facebook groups can unite employees in a very interactive and accessible space. Specific ways in which to promote interactivity can include a calendar of events that employees can use to indicate their participation. Most importantly is the concept of user-generated content. Content is no longer created by specific individuals or only the organisation, but all are now able to participate in the process of modifying information. For example, an employee will not just view the calendar to see what activities the organisation is hosting, but the employee can add activities to the calendar, invite others to join in the event or RSVP for the event on the calendar.

The organisational Facebook page can be used to foster interaction between managers and employees, which in turn will lead to improved employee engagement. However, at the core of the organisation should be a culture of trust, transparency and personal responsibility in all activities. Trust is one of the outcomes of strong relationships (see section 2.4), and in the case of using Facebook as an internal communication channel, it seems very important to continually strengthen trust between employees and managers. Without these values imbedded in the nature of how managers and employees communicate, two-way communication cannot be open and the organisational Facebook page cannot function. Social media and specifically Facebook are changing the way in which organisations work, by offering a new way to engage with employees. It is this new way of communication that will build stronger, more successful internal relationships between managers and employees. Facebook

can therefore be a channel that can help build trust in an organisation that struggles with trusting internal relationships. Furthermore, engaging in two-way communication will lead to increased levels of relationship satisfaction since mutual understanding between managers and employees will be enhanced. Understanding each other's needs and viewpoints fosters stronger, mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation, managers and employees.

The above discussion on strategies or guidelines to build relationships between managers and employees by using Facebook as an internal communication channel to engage employees, leads to the next guiding theoretical argument:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 6

If an organisation intends to use Facebook as a two-way internal communication channel to engage employees, it should:

- ensure that communication is transparent and open;
- ensure that the Facebook page is useful and relevant; and
- ensure that the Facebook page is interactive to facilitate two-way communication with employees.

3.4   Conclusion

The selection of communication channels will influence the success of the message that is sent (Hamilton, 2008:13) and thus when selecting the appropriate channel, there are a number of factors that need to be considered. This include the richness of the channel, the importance of the message, the needs and abilities of the receiver, the amount and speed of the feedback that is required, the importance of keeping a record, the cost of using the channel and the level of formality that is required. It is concluded that if an inappropriate communication channel is selected when communicating with employees, the message might not be effectively received and understood. Miscommunication will then be prevalent, which will result in an ineffective organisation and impaired manager-employee relationships.

It is important to reiterate that by increasing the effectiveness of internal communication management, as other empirical findings indicate, the success of employee engagement should also increase. As previously stated by Wood (1999:148) and Clampitt (2010:102), communication practitioners use a mix of different internal communication channels to ensure a

greater success rate at engaging employees. Thus, new technology, and specifically Facebook could be introduced to provide an open and transparent channel for communication. Facebook can improve two-way communication, which can lead to increased employee engagement. Also, employee engagement is based on building and maintaining relationships, which is another component that Facebook can address because it encourages interaction.

Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, said Facebook was created to make the world more open and connected. In this case, internal communication can be more open and connected. If managed correctly, Facebook can help managers and employees to communicate more interactively with each other. Employees who are listened to, will be more satisfied, work harder and be more loyal as stated by Fraser and Dutta (2008:157). Unfortunately, fear of new technology and surrendering power can be seen as the two most important obstacles standing in the way of Facebook being used more actively for communication inside organisations. Some also view Facebook as a distraction for employees, while the issue of security risks always seems to be top of mind (Crescenzo, 2010:11; Fraser & Dutta, 2008:74). These risks can, however, be managed by creating guidelines on the use of Facebook for internal communication. This must include guidelines on acceptable usage, employee and organisational responsibility, policy on confidentiality as well as slander and defamation. There must also be guidelines on training and education surrounding the use of Facebook.

In conclusion, Facebook, due to its accessibility, functionality and transparency can provide a useful internal communication channel to foster manager-employee relationships, promote two-way communication and enhance employee engagement.

This chapter, and the previous chapter, explained the theoretical foundations of the research at hand. In Chapter 2 the concept of employee engagement was explained and in this chapter the nature and possibilities of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement was discussed. In the next chapter, the research methodology used to conduct the empirical research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

Research Methodology

4.1   Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an explanation of the research approach and methods used in this study. In Chapter one, a brief overview of the research questions and objectives were provided and this chapter will describe the method of sampling, data collection procedure and analysis of the data.

The literature research from the previous chapters provides the background from which the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were conducted. This chapter will therefore indicate how the theory informed the questions posed in the semi-structured and focus groups interviews, followed by chapter 5 in which the results of the empirical research will be discussed.

4.2   Research approach

4.2.1   Qualitative research

There are two different approaches to research, namely qualitative and quantitative research. These approaches differ from each other and it is necessary to understand each approach in order for the researcher to choose the most appropriate strategy for the research.

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:75) quantitative research is conducted systematically and in a standardised manner. The research design is also standardised as per a fixed procedure. This procedure can be replicated. The quantitative approach aims to test predictive and cause-and-effect hypotheses and is suitable for phenomena that are conceptually and theoretically well defined and developed. On the other hand, the qualitative approach differs in that it is suitable for researching phenomena that is new and relatively unknown. A researcher following the qualitative approach therefore seeks to explore an unknown phenomenon. Furthermore, the purpose of qualitative research is to formulate detailed descriptions of a social reality.

Some of the disadvantages of using a qualitative research approach include the fact that a researcher conducting qualitative research makes use of subjective assessments when

collecting data. It also allows for a limited generalisation to the general population (Boxill *et al.*, 1997:46).

The researcher has chosen to use a qualitative research approach in this study, the reason being that the phenomenon of social media as an additional two-way channel for internal communication is relatively new, specifically when used in the context of internal organisational communication. No previous research has been conducted in South Africa to determine employee and manager expectations regarding the use of Facebook for internal communication. This study therefore aims to explore manager and employee expectations regarding the use of Facebook as internal communication channel. As this is a relatively new field, the qualitative research design provides a flexible approach to data collection. However, this means that the design cannot be exactly replicated and the findings cannot be generalised (De Vos *et. al.,* 2005:75).

Validity and reliability in research remains an important factor. Validity can be defined as the degree to which the research tools (interview schedules) measure what it set out to measure. Reliability refers to the degree in which the research tool produces consistent results. Thus, both validity and reliability refers to degree of errors that can exist within the research tool (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:28-29; Du Plooy, 2002: 131). The validity and reliability of a study can be enhanced by increasing the chances that the study can be replicated. Seale (1999:141) states that replication will be more likely if a report is produced stipulating in detail the social context in which the study took place and the participants who participated in the study. The methodology used in doing the research should also be provided in detail. Therefore, the following section will discuss in detail the research methods used in this study.

4.3   Research methods

4.3.1   Semi-structured interviews

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:287), conducting an interview is the principal way to collect data for a qualitative study. The interview is not a one-sided approach to collecting data, but is a discussion where two individuals create shared meaning.

Semi-structured interviews differ from structured interviews in that semi-structured interviews not only have a standard set of questions, but also allow the interviewer to ask additional

follow-up questions to explore interesting or unexpected answers. However, this advantage is countered by the disadvantage that the unstructured questions are sometimes difficult to interpret and interviewer bias increases. Due to the interviewer's freedom to choose which answers to probe further and how to probe, the interviewer may affect what participants say in response to standard questions (Mitchell & Jolley, 2009:277).

In a semi-structured interview, the aim is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions, beliefs and understanding of the specific topic. A set of questions, informed by relevant literature, are formulated before the interview to serve as a guideline during the interview. Semi-structured interviews are more open and flexible in nature and this leaves room for more detail and a natural progression to relevant and often important discussions (De Vos *et al.,* 2005:296; Du Plooy, 2002:159). The semi-structured interview is more of a conversation where the interviewer provides general directions for the course of the conversation, but will pursue specific topics that are raised by the participant with follow-up questions. The interview is flexible and previous questions and subsequent answers can inform the questions that follow (Babbie, 2010:321). The majority of questions asked are usually open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions are useful as it provides participants the opportunity to answer in any way they want, without prompting or leading an answer (Du Plooy, 2002:158). The major reason for conducting semi-structured one-on-one interviews instead of only conducting structured interviews with participants is to obtain the participant's point of view as well as their deeper understanding of their opinions (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:290). It is, however, possible to structure the question incorrectly, which can cause confusion. Problems that may occur with questions include asking double-barrelled questions, using loaded language, leading the participant, asking a question with only one logical answer, asking a vague or incomplete question and asking a too complex question (Du Plooy, 2002:160).

Because this study is explorative in nature it was more appropriate to conduct semi-structured interviews as to be able to probe deeper into participants' opinions about Facebook as a channel for internal communication to enhance employee engagement.

4.3.2   Focus group interviews

Interviews as a qualitative data collection method can also take on the form of a focus group interview. Focus groups can be seen as group interviews (De Vos *et al.,* 2005:299). Participants in the focus group interview are selected because they have something in common related to the topic of the study. The focus group can be used to validate certain ideas that have developed by means of a literature review or one-on-one interviews. Participants are encouraged to provide their views and a multitude of opinions can therefore be gathered in a short period of time.

Focus group interviews create an environment where group dynamics can possibly bring forward topics and issues not anticipated by the researcher and that might not have surfaced during one-on-one interviews (Babbie, 2010:323; De Vos *et al.,* 2005:286). Focus group interviews are also valuable when researchers need multiple viewpoints in a shorter period of time than it would take to conduct individual interviews. Furthermore, it is a very powerful tool to investigate complex behaviour because the participants must interact in order to understand each other. People also tend to feel more empowered and supported in a group setting and therefore self-disclosure tends to be more likely in a focus group interview than in an one-on-one interview situation (De Vos *et al.,* 2005:301).

De Vos *et al.* (2005:301) notes that focus group interviews should be used when the researcher:
- is looking for a wide range of ideas or feelings regarding a subject;
- wants to understand differences between groups;
- aims to discover things that will influence opinion and behaviour;
- wants to conduct a pilot study to test ideas,
- needs information to help understand quantitative research better; and
- needs to capture comments or language used by the participants.

It is vital to note that different factors can influence a focus group interview and could possibly affect the validity and reliability of the data that is captured. Firstly, social factors can influence the participants, such as the presence or absence of colleagues, the lack of anonymity and the fact that participants could want to impress the facilitator or even colleagues. Secondly, errors regarding compliance can occur. This means that participants could agree to another participant's opinion, regardless of the content of that opinion. Lastly, an error can occur due to

deviation. This means that a participant could provide unusual or atypical responses (Du Plooy, 2002:203).

Despite the danger of possible errors, the researcher can adopt specific control procedures to counter the above-mentioned errors. Firstly, it is vital to create good rapport with the participants. Time must be spent to become acquainted with the participants and to reduce anxiety regarding the focus group interview. It is also very effective to clearly state the objective of the focus group interview (Du Plooy, 2002:204). During the focus group interviews for the study at hand, the researcher explained the aim of the interview, and assured the participants that there are no incorrect answers. The researcher emphasised that the participants' *own* view on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel are very important and that their privacy will be protected.

It is again important to note that the literature study conducted in chapter 2 and 3 plays a vital role in informing the research design and ultimately the questions of the interview schedule.

4.4 Research design

The relation between the research questions, the guiding theoretical arguments, and the research methods used in this study is indicated in Table 4.1. The guiding theoretical arguments are repeated in Table 4.2 for easy reference.

Table 4.1: Research questions

Research questions
1. What does employee engagement entail according to literature? **(Guiding Theoretical Arguments 1 to 3)**
2. According to literature, in what way could Facebook serve as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement? **(Guiding Theoretical Arguments 4 to 6)**
3. What are managers' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement? **(All 6 Guiding Theoretical Arguments were used to assess the data collected from the interviews)**
4. What are employees' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement? **(All 6 Guiding Theoretical Arguments were used to assess the data collected from the interviews)**
5. How could Facebook, as an internal communication channel, be managed to enhance employee engagement? **(All 6 Guiding Theoretical Arguments were used to assess the data collected from the interviews)**

Table 4.2: Guiding Theoretical Arguments

Guiding Theoretical Argument 1 In an organisation with a symmetrical worldview that practices two-way communication, in which employees are treated equally, their opinions are respected, they have more autonomy and responsibility, and innovation is valued, employee engagement can be improved.
Guiding Theoretical Argument 2 Organisations that practise the symmetrical two-way model and/or the mixed-motive model of communication will also support and engage in two-way communication with, and listen to, their employees to determine their needs, while those that practise only the one-way and asymmetrical two-way communication models will not view two-way communication as an important part of their communication efforts.
Guiding Theoretical Argument 3 Organisations' use of two-way communication will lead to mutual understanding, resulting in strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships between managers and employees. These relationships will be characterised by trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.
Guiding Theoretical Argument 4 Employee engagement will be enhanced if managers and employees engage in two-way communication to build strong manager-employee relationships in order to contribute to the organisation attaining its goals.
Guiding Theoretical Argument 5 When an organisation considers a specific internal communication channel to be used for employee engagement it should be decided which channel is the most suitable for the receiver of the message, the type (easy or difficult) of content and the nature (level of formality and urgency) of the message.
Theoretical Argument 6 If an organisation intends to use Facebook as a two-way internal communication channel to engage employees, it should: • ensure that communication is transparent and open; • ensure that the Facebook page is useful; and • ensure that the Facebook page is interactive to facilitate two-way communication with employees.

4.4.1 Population

A research population is a large number of individuals or objects that are the main focus of the proposed research and they usually have some characteristics in common (Babbie, 2011:214).

Two different small to medium organisations, namely SDT Financial Software Solutions and Hollard Insurance participated in the study (see section 1.1). There are two populations used in this study. The first population consists of employees working at the two participating organisations. The second population is the managers of these organisations. The reason for seeking the opinions of managers is to understand their expectations of the use of social media, specifically Facebook, as internal communication channel to engage employees. Employees' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel is also crucial as their perspective would indicate if managers' expectations on the subject correspond with their (employees') expectations.

4.4.2 Sampling

When conducting research it is often impossible to include all individuals from the population. It is therefore necessary to make use of sampling methods in order to obtain a suitable number of participants. The sample is therefore a subset of the population. The sample should be representative of the total population in order to generalise the findings of the research back to the population (Babbie, 2011:220).

However, due to the explorative nature of this particular study the *manager* population was sampled using the non-probability, judgmental sampling method. This method does not use a random selection process and the findings cannot be generalised to the wider population. The participants are chosen based on accessibility and because they can make a specific contribution to the research. The participants chosen are, according to the researcher, more fit to partake in the study than other individuals are and they are therefore purposefully chosen (Babbie, 2011: 207). The researcher approached a top level manager from each of the two organisations, and with their insight into how the business functions, key managers were selected and approached to participate in the study. Managers from different departments such as IT, Communication, Sales, Marketing and from different business units within the organisation were approached. A business unit can be described as a type of 'department' within the organisation that focuses on a specific product, such as Short Term Insurance.

This research study aims to explore expectations, perceptions and opinions of managers regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel, and therefore it is more important to interview participants that influence communication policy, work directly with staff and is responsible for the technical development and maintenance of new communication channels. In the first organisation, Hollard Insurance, a total number of fourteen managers were sampled to conduct interviews with. In the second organisation, SDT, a total of nine managers were sampled to conduct interviews with. The amount of managers differed depending on their availability and the contribution they could make to the study. As SDT is a smaller organisation than Hollard, there were fewer managers in the organisation and therefore fewer managers available that could contribute to the study. From the onset of the study the researcher did not decide on a specific number of interviews to be conducted. Interviews continued until the researcher was sure that a saturation point had been reached in each of the organisations. The saturation point in both organisations was reached when participants no longer contributed new information or opinions to the discussion and they started to express the same opinions as previously heard in other interviews.

In terms of the employees, a systematic random sampling method was used in order to identify employees to partake in the study. Using the systematic random sampling method means that the process is very simple and it allows the researcher to add some degree of structure or system to a random process. This systematic method also allows for the population to be more evenly sampled instead of running the risk of obtaining a clustered[21] sample (Babbie, 2011:231). Using this method, the researcher had firstly obtained a sample framework from the HR department of the two participating organisations containing the names of the employees in the specific organisation, excluding managers. The researcher then randomly selected the first name from the sample framework. Then, each fourth name from the sample framework was selected. The selected individuals were invited to partake in focus group interviews. However, participation was voluntary and therefore many individuals that were invited chose to decline. If a selected individual declined the invitation, the researcher continued using the sample framework and selected the next name. This method continued until the full number of participants for the focus group interviews was achieved. The aim was to secure nine participants per focus group.

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[21] It is a random sampling method where the population is divided into groups called strata and the population is then selected from the strata (Babbie, 2011:231).

In each of the organisations, two focus group interviews were conducted. However, the number of participants varied greatly, as some of the participants who accepted the invitation, simply did not attend the session. In Hollard, the first focus group interview was conducted with nine participants, while the second focus group was conducted with only six participants. In SDT, the first focus group was conducted with four participants, while the second focus group was conducted with seven participants.

4.4.3   Data collection

As already discussed above, this study has used two specific methods of qualitative data collection, namely semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews.

Both the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were recorded using a high quality digital recorder. The reason for the recording was to ensure that no information is lost and that the researcher could transcribe the discussion and refer back to specific information if needed. The data was then transcribed in order to make it more accessible for the researcher and to ensure that the results were reported accurately. The semi-structured interview duration was on average approximately 40 minutes, while the focus group interviews lasted on average about 1:15 hours.

Before each semi-structured and focus group interview, the participants were informed of the confidential nature of the conversation and they were asked permission to record the session. None of the participants objected and all participants in the semi-structured as well as the focus group interviews signed an agreement permitting the recording of the conversation.

4.4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

An interview schedule, informed by the theory derived from the literature study, was used to conduct semi-structured interviews with managers from each organisation.

The interview schedule was organised into three sections. The first section looked broadly at the participant's use of different communication channels. This was done to obtain a better understanding of how the participants currently communicate within the organisation. The researcher decided to start the interview with this section as the information provided was more general and broad, which helped the researcher to establish rapport with the participant and to

help the participant get comfortable with the interview process. The second section explored the participant's opinion on what employee engagement is and how it functions within their organisation. The third section then further explored the participant's expectations, perceptions and opinions on the use of Facebook for internal communication management. It further investigates their thoughts on how this could contribute to improved employee engagement within the organisation.

The reason for the three sections was to ensure that the interview followed a logical and structured path. The idea was to firstly establish if the participants made use of communication channels that would afford employees the opportunity for feedback and two-way communication. With that in mind, it was easier to move to the concept of employee engagement and the fact that two-way communication can improve engagement levels. Lastly, it was important to understand the participant's use of Facebook and their expectation regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel.

The table below shows the interview schedule for the semi-structured interviews:

Table 4.3: Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews

Participants' own use of internal communication (managers)
1. What channels do you use to communicate with others inside the organisation? Motivate (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
2. What type of messages is communicated through which channel? Why? (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
3. How often do you use each of the channels? (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
4. To whom do you communicate using which specific channels, in other words, do you use different channels to communicate with different people? (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
Employee engagement
5. What do you understand by the term 'employee engagement'? (Refer to section 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 4)
6. Does your organisation use two-way communication to build a relationship with employees? How? Why? (Refer to section 2.4 and 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Arguments 3 and 4)
7. How does your organisation encourage communication, participation in decision-making processes and feedback from employees? (Refer to section 2.4 and 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Arguments 3 and 4)
8. What do you think the advantages are of engaging employees through two-way communication? (Refer to section 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 4)
9. Do you think that certain communication channels, such as e-mail or social media such as Facebook, can assist managers in building strong relationships with employees? Motivate (Refer to section 3.3)
Participants' own use of Facebook
10. Do you know what Facebook is and how it works? Explain. (Refer to section 3.3)
11. Do you make use of Facebook in your personal capacity? (Refer to section 3.3)
12. If yes....How/for what purpose do you use Facebook; if not, why not? (Refer to section 3.3)
Participants' expectations of using Facebook for internal communication
13. Do you think Facebook could potentially be used as a channel for internal communication? Motivate. (Refer to section 3.3.4)

14. If yes, for what type of content and nature of the message would it be suitable? (Refer to content that is easy of difficult to understand, and the urgency and level of formality of the message) (Refer to section 3.3.4 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)

15. Do you think there are risks/disadvantages to using Facebook for internal communication? Motivate. (Refer to section 3.3.4)

16. Do you think these risks/disadvantages can be managed? Motivate. (Refer to section 3.3.4)

17. Do you think the use of Facebook can improve engagement with your employees? If yes, how? If not, why not? (Refer to Guiding Theoretical Argument 6)

4.4.3.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted to understand employee's expectations and perceptions regarding the use of Facebook for internal communication and employee engagement. A total of four focus group interviews were conducted. Again, an interview schedule was used to provide some structure to the group discussions. As with the semi-structured interviews, the focus group interview schedule was organised into three sections. The first section looked broadly at the group's general communication channel use in order to obtain a better understanding of participants' communication patterns. The second section explored the group's opinion on what employee engagement is and how it functions within their organisation. The third section explored the group's expectations, perceptions and opinions on the use of Facebook for internal communication, as well as how they thought this could contribute to improved employee engagement within the organisation.

Again, as with the interviews, the three sections gave the interview some structure and a logical flow, from more straight forward questions on the participants' use of communication channels inside the organisation to more complex questions on the concept of employee engagement. Lastly, it was important to understand the employees' use of Facebook and their expectation regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel.

The table below shows the discussion guide for the focus groups:

Table 4.4: Interview schedule for focus groups

Participants' own use of internal communication (employees)
1. What channels do you use to communicate with others inside the organisation? Motivate (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
2. What type of messages is communicated through which channel? Why? (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
3. How often do you use each of the channels? (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
4. To whom do you communicate using which channels, in other words, do you use different channels to communicate with different people? (Refer to section 3.2 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)
Employee engagement
5. What do you understand by the term 'employee engagement'? (Refer to section 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 4)
6. Does your organisation use two-way communication to build a relationship with employees? How? Why? (Refer to section 2.4 and 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Arguments 3 and 4)
7. How does your organisation encourage communication, participation in decision-making processes and feedback from employees? (Refer to section 2.4 and 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Arguments 3 and 4)
8. What do you think the advantages are of engaging employees through two-way communication? (Refer to section 2.5 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 4)
9. Do you think that certain communication channels, such as e-mail or social media such as Facebook, could assist managers in building strong relationships with employees? Motivate. (Refer to section 3.3)
Participants' own use of Facebook
10. Do you know what Facebook is and how it works? Explain. (Refer to section 3.3)
11. Do you make use of Facebook in your personal capacity? (Refer to section 3.3)
12. If yes....How/for what purpose do you use Facebook? (Refer to section 3.3)
Participants' expectations of using Facebook for internal communication
13. Do you think Facebook could potentially be used as a channel for internal communication? (Refer to section 3.3.4)
14. If yes, for what type of content and nature of the message would it be suitable? (Refer to

content that is easy of difficult to understand, and the urgency and level of formality of the message) (Refer to section 3.3.4 and Guiding Theoretical Argument 5)

15. Do you think there are risks/disadvantages to using Facebook for internal communication? Motivate. (Refer to section 3.3.4)

16. Do you think these risks/disadvantages can be managed? Motivate. (Refer to section 3.3.4)

4.4.4   Data analysis and reporting

According to Babbie (2008:124), qualitative research analysis refers to the non-numerical interpretation of information in order to identify patterns in the data.

The researcher proceeded to study the transcripts of the semi-structured and focus group interviews in order to find and identify any patterns that emerged from the data. The data was organised into themes related to the objectives of this study. The themes were used to analyse and organise the data and were taken from the three sections of the discussion guide, namely, general use of communication channels, employee engagement and the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel. The reporting of the data was then also organised using the three themes.

4.5   Problems experienced during the interviews and focus group interviews

Regarding the semi-structured interviews, no problems were encountered. The participants were chosen based on their availability and all were prepared to answer all questions. The interviews were semi-structured and therefore the researcher could explain directly to the participant any question or concept that was not clear.

During the focus group interviews, the researcher encountered a specific problem only once. One of the organisations was conducting their own research on the use of social media for internal communication and brand building. The researcher was forced to allow a line manager from the communication department to sit in on the focus group interviews as the organisation were also interested in the participants' opinions. The researcher had to accept the arrangement and it was not allowed to arrange another focus group interview at this organisation. The manager frequently interrupted the researcher with her own questions, which sidetracked the discussion. None of the participants in the interview worked under or with the

manager as the participants in that group came from business units and not the central office. Thus, the only effect of the manager in the focus group was that the group discussion took much longer than anticipated. All questions as well as follow-up questions informed by the discussion guide was covered in the focus group.

4.6   Conclusion

As this is an explorative research study, the use of semi-structured and focus group interviews provided the researcher with more in-depth data that could help explore manager and employee expectations regarding the use of Facebook for internal communication in these two organisations.

The questions for the interviews and focus group interviews were asked in more user-friendly language to enhance understanding. Although theoretical jargon was not used in the phrasing of the questions, it was possible for the researcher to make certain assessments and conclusions related to the theory based on given answers. For example, one participant made the following statement, which gave the researcher a clear indication that he ascribed to a symmetrical worldview:

> *"By constantly communicating, but communicating in a two-way fashion. So it's not just about throwing information at your employees and then expecting them to become engaged, it's about having conversations."*

Although interviewer bias and participant errors are possible using semi-structured and focus group interviews, the advantages are numerous. As follow-up questions could have been asked in both the interview situation and focus group interviews, the researcher could explore interesting answers or statements and thereby obtain a much more in-depth understanding of the participant's expectations, opinions or beliefs. The openness and flexibility that both these methods created room for important discussion that could enrich the data.

In the next chapter, the data that was collected using the above-mentioned research methods will be discussed and the results analysed.

CHAPTER 5

Data analysis

5.1   Introduction

Following on the empirical research where interviews with managers as well as focus group interviews with employees were conducted, this chapter will provide a description of the results. In this chapter, the expectations and perceptions of managers as well as that of employees regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement are explored. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to provide answers to research questions 3 and 4: *What are managers' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?* and *What are employees' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?*

The semi-structured and focus group interviews were conducted in two organisations, namely SDT and Hollard Insurance. Through analysis of the interviews it became clear that there is a strong similarity between expectations of employees and managers on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to engage employees across both organisations. It was therefore deemed suitable to combine the organisations' results into only two categories namely expectations of managers and expectations of employees, irrespective of the organisation they belong to.

This chapter is therefore structured according to these two main categories, **managers' expectations** regarding Facebook as a communication channel to enhance employee engagement and **employees' expectations** regarding Facebook as a communication channel to enhance employee engagement. The themes provide more structure to the reporting of the data and they were chosen in line with the discussion guide. The themes are participants' general use of communication channels, their concept of employee engagement, and the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel.

Firstly, in both main categories information regarding the *participants' use of internal communication channels* were analysed in order to understand if the current channels used are typical of a symmetrical or asymmetrical worldview as well as suitable for the receiver of the

message, the type of content and the nature of the message as expressed in Guiding Theoretical Argument 5. Furthermore, the *participants' use of internal communication channels* indicate whether managers already encourage two-way communication with employees. Secondly, data is reported in both main categories regarding how *participants defined employee engagement* and the role of two-way communication to enhance employee engagement. In the last theme in each of the main categories the results of *participants' expectations regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communion channel to enhance employee engagement* will be discussed. In Chapter three, Facebook is put forward *theoretically* as a communication channel to promote two-way communication in order to build and maintain relationships, which will ultimately lead to employee engagement. The empirical data is therefore compared to the literature as discussed in Chapter two and three, in order to determine whether the expectations of managers and employees corresponds with literature as well as with the findings and experiences of the international organisations using Facebook for internal communication.

5.2   Managers' expectations regarding Facebook as a communication channel to enhance employee engagement

5.2.1   Managers' use of internal communication channels (Interview questions 1-4)

All managers interviewed from both SDT and Hollard made extensive use of group meetings to make decisions, share information, debate certain issues, contact individuals and to integrate opinions. Integrating opinions means that a meeting must be held so that managers can 'get everyone on the same page', or to make sure everyone has the same understanding of a certain issue.

One participant commented that a meeting is scheduled, depending on the importance of the issue that needs to be discussed. Therefore, the more important the issue, the greater the need for a group meeting. Employees and managers need to understand each other and holding a meeting is very effective to achieve this.

> "*Jy het nodig om mense te kry om te integreer en dis nodig om te sien dat almal op dieselfde vlak van verstaan is, omdat alle mense nie dieselfde is nie*".

Theory has shown that the two-way communication models provide an opportunity for two-way communication between an organisation and its stakeholders in order to negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes (Grunig *et al.*, 1995:41). This need for two-way communication is clear in the interviews held with managers of both organisations as managers view two-way communication important to obtain buy-in from employees as well as integration of information.

Secondly, all participants from both organisations make use of email to communicate internally. Email is used to send data, do quick updates, record data or information and to help the individual employee keep track of decisions made. Interestingly, one participant noted that most of the time they will follow up an email with a telephone call or face-to-face meeting, especially if it is urgent.

> *"Meeste van die tyd is dit nodig om dit op te volg om net die dringendheid daarvan uiteen te sit. Sê hierdie is dringend, ek het vinnig 'n antwoord nodig, want al sit jy dit in 'n email, mense lees dit nie… mense sit nie soveel dringendheid aan 'n email as aan 'n oproep nie. Maar die kombinasie is vir my goed."*

All participants make use of telephone calls to communicate internally. Some also use SMS (Short Message System) or BBM (Blackberry Messenger) to communicate with each other and with employees in order to follow up on information discussed in a meeting.

Face-to-face talks are also viewed by 20 of the 23 participants as being very important. This communication channel is used to follow up on decisions made and information shared. One participant commented that in a personal face-to-face talk, it is easier for people to be truthful because it is more difficult to lie. In a larger meeting, persons would not necessarily share their views, as they might not want to show the group that they do not know or understand the issue under discussion. Those persons might want to safeguard their perceived reputation relating to their peers, managers or subordinates. Another participant commented that it is better to see the person face-to-face, as this will enhance mutual understanding by taking in both verbal and non-verbal cues.

> *"I think it's better to have the personal conversation and see the reaction to make sure the right message is getting across".*

In terms of more recent electronic media, SDT makes use of Office Communicator. This is a channel targeted at organisational environments that allows for Instant Messaging and Video Conferencing. Office Communicator is used extensively in the specific organisation, especially amongst senior managers. This communication channel is used when quick decisions need to be made in an environment where not all the parties involved are on the same site. Senior managers also use this channel to conduct top level de-briefing meetings where time cannot be wasted. Skype is another new technology that two participants from SDT use to communicate inside their organisation. One participant commented that with Skype you can conduct a silent conversation (typing a message), which is especially handy in an open plan environment.

When asked if they as managers are of the opinion that more technology-driven communication channels could be used to promote interaction between themselves and employees, one participant stated that by using technology, information can be assimilated faster and it is easier to find the right person to talk to. The information can then always be consolidated using a face-to-face meeting. Another participant added to this by stating that although face-to-face communication is time consuming, in their organisation it remains the most powerful way in which to engage employees.

Other channels used to communicate less urgent information with employees include poster campaigns, events and newsletters.

In conclusion, when looking at the different communication channels that managers use, the symmetrical worldview (see section 2.2.2) seems to be followed, as managers seek to understand and know the opinions of their employees. If an organisation functions according to a symmetrical worldview, communication between managers and employees will be more open and two-way in nature, which will influence the levels of employee engagement positively. Furthermore, the managers of both organisations tend to use a mix of communication channels. They tend to communicate face-to-face or in group meetings if the message is important and immediate feedback is necessary. Email, which provides a permanent record of communication and enables speedy feedback, is also favoured as an internal communication channel.

5.2.2 Managers' perception of employee engagement and the role of two-way communication (Interview questions 5-9)

5.2.2.1 Managers' perception of employee engagement

One participant defined employee engagement as:

> *"It is the extent to which an individual feels committed to the organisation, to their job, to their boss and the level to which they feel their role has meaning."*

The concept of being emotionally involved in their organisation was one of the key aspects of how most managers defined employee engagement, and as such, they agreed with the above definition. One participant stated that employees must "*feel connected*", they must have an "*emotional attachment*" and they want an organisation that "*cares*" for them.

One manager also emphasised the importance of "*aligning personal and organisational values and culture".* The manager continued by stating that when the values and culture of the organisation and its employees are aligned, employees will understand their contribution to the success of the organisation and will also be more mentally involved in the processes. Furthermore, engaged employees will feel that their work is meaningful, which in turn will connect them emotionally to the organisation. Ultimately, their commitment to the organisation will increase.

> *"One of the key things around engagement is that people need to feel that they have a sense of purpose and that they contribute, that they have a sense of contribution to the success of the company and that the work they do is meaningful."*

During the interviews with the managers, the interviewer also aimed to understand not only managers' perception of what employee engagement entails, but also what managers' perceptions are on how employee engagement can be achieved within the organisation. The most frequent answer to this question was reported as being the use of two-way communication. All managers understood that information cannot just be pushed to employees, but employees need to be able to provide feedback regarding issues. Most participants said that they need to be accessible to employees in order to debate with them, and listen to them. Managers must therefore be able and willing to *listen* to employees.

"By constantly communicating, but communicating in a two-way fashion. So it's not just about throwing information at your employees and then expecting them to become engaged, it's about having conversations."

5.2.2.2 Managers' perception on how employee engagement can be achieved

All managers seem to understand the importance of two-way communication and listening to the employee's needs and viewpoints. This indicates that the two organisations participating in the study show characteristics of a symmetrical worldview where two-way communication with employees is valued (see section 2.2.2). It was however important for this study to further explore how two-way communication can be promoted to enhance employee engagement. In other words, which communication channels can be used to encourage two-way communication between managers and employees? One participant firmly stated that all channels of communication that the organisation has, should be used as different people prefer different channels and react differently to communication.

- *"Because if we use all the channels that are available for you to communicate you will at least hit the body of people, either the body of people that you want to communicate to or the bigger audience there."*
- *"Look, I think you need to use every method of communication at your disposal because different people have different preferences and react to communications in different ways. So you need to talk to them. You need to send out formal communications in the form of emails. You need to have simple things like posters, and events. You also need to create an environment that allows people to communicate. So it really is about understanding what it is that people need and then adapting the communication to that. Not everybody wants to read and not everybody wants to sit in a forum and hear other people talk or have something to say themselves."*
- *"For me it means talking to the employee, but not just talking to them, also understanding what their needs are and making sure you communicate with them in the best method that they prefer. Obviously, you have to remember that people have different preferences for communication. So for me, the engagement is the quality of words, because you are not only telling them how to do things, you are also listening to how and what they want to be communicated with."*

The participant furthermore noted that choosing an appropriate communication channel is about understanding what it is that employees want and then using the communication channels to suit employees' needs. The participant said that it includes adapting communication strategies and being innovative in the way that communication takes place. The same participant immediately gave examples of how technology could be used to communicate in a two-way manner, which included creating forums for employees to communicate openly, quickly and safely.

There also seems to be a general trend in managers' perceptions regarding the importance of engagement on a more informal and personal level. One participant stated that the organisation is also a community that interacts socially. Managers need to obtain feedback from employees to see "*if they are happy*". This can be just an informal conversation or get-together, or even a social function. More emphasis should be placed on informal interaction, rather than just formal engagement. Formal engagement may be more structured work related conversations, while informal conversations should take place not because there is a specific reason, but because managers want employees to feel part of a team.

- *"I think the preferred [communication channel] is the one-on-one or, but maybe not always in a structured set up meeting, but more informal. Having a cup of coffee or having a chat doesn't have to be as formal."*
- *"There's the other informal level to get feedback on other people's stances to see if they are happy that things are working for them and whether they are comfortable."*
- *"They need to make time to do that, engagement, on a more regular basis and more informal. I think there is too much emphasis on ... formal engagement."*
- *"Say you want to create a Hollard soccer team, once you understand what people's interests and hobbies are, because of the profile they have created, you can start linking people who have similar interests. Same thing with studies or same thing with the type of work that you do. You may want to connect with people who are also interested in communication, so if you know and understand what that is and how you set your profile up, you can actually start linking with those people. Because you understand the concept of Facebook, you can actually start driving better business discussions."*
- *"It's nice to have that interaction with your colleagues and know that you're still alive and still exist."*

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5.2.2.3 Managers' perception of the advantages of employee engagement

All managers felt that when employees are engaged, they are more productive, motivated and more inclined to stay with the organisation. Engaged employees will be more committed to the organisation and will give more of themselves to achieve organisational goals. Engaged employees will also be more creative and innovative in tackling issues in their work. Employees will also better understand their role and the impact their work has on the organisation. When they feel valued, they will contribute more to the organisation. One participant added to this by stating that, not only do engaged employees work harder, but are also more willing to help or assist other employees with questions or queries.

- *"People are also inclined to stay longer [at the organisation]."*
- *"The advantages ... are that you have people who are more connected to what you are trying to do as an organisation. So you don't get people who come in and from eight to five sit down and do the bare minimum. They are more likely to be responsive to what you are trying to do and [be] more creative, more innovative, you know. There is definitely a correlation between employee engagement and the level of commitment that you get from people. I think there is also then the understanding that the organisation is committed to me as a person. I'm more inclined to give exactly the same level of commitment back."*
- *"Socially interactive met mekaar. Dit is engagement. Jy gee om oor wat die ander ou kan doen en nie kan doen nie. Dit lyk half asof die wat nie socially engaged is nie op die margin is en hy voel hoe beweeg daai ou verder van hom af weg."*

Two participants specifically added that they communicate to build relationships, as it is necessary to have a healthy relationship between managers and employees. They noted that building strong relationships is important to improve employee engagement. One participant made an interesting analogy to demonstrate that when there is a stronger relationship, often the communication between the two parties will be better. The participant made the comment that when a group of people come together to hold Bible study, they do not know each other and will not share their deeper feelings and thoughts. Before that deeper level could be reached, the group first eats together or stand around the braai and talk about themselves, their children and their families. When they have connected on a social level, it will be much easier to connect on a deeper level. According to the participant, this may also be true for a work relationship. If employees and managers could connect more socially, they may be more

inclined to trust each other, share more information and communicate more effectively. It is clear that managers acknowledge that strong relationships are the result of communicating with each other to get to know and trust each other.

- *Then people get to understand each other's issues much better. I can easily read your tone, or just hear your tone and see your body language. It just helps people to understand each other and the issue being discussed much better."*
- "*For my role to be successful, I need people to trust [me] and you build trust through face to face [communication and interaction]."*
- *We have established that in order to build relationships, you need the face to face component and then all the other stuff can come in."*
- "*That won't build the relationship (Facebook), you need to build the relationship and then use the platform to do whatever you need to.*

With reference to the above, all the interviewed managers agree that two-way communication builds trusting relationships, and as one manager clearly stated: *"For my role to be successful, I need people to trust me".* When there is trust, employees can walk in the corridors and have conversations where they know they can be honest about their opinions and feelings, without there being negative repercussions:

> *"Daar moet 'n groot mate van trust wees sodat ek kan sê wat ek wil. Sodat ek in die gange kan sê wat ek wil sonder dat daar implikasies is."*

Thus, it seems clear that most managers understood the importance of using two-way communication to promote strong relationships with their employees. Trust is vital for the relationship to function effectively and according to the interviewed managers trust can possibly be established through regular social interaction between managers and employees.

5.2.3 Managers' expectations on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel (Interview questions 10-17)

5.2.3.1 Managers' personal use of Facebook

"It's like you are from the dark ages if you are not on there".

Eighteen of the twenty-three managers interviewed for this study confirmed that, in their personal capacity, they are registered users of Facebook. It must however be said that not all who are registered are regular users of the channel. Five participants do not have a Facebook profile and four participants do have a profile, but are not active users of Facebook.

The group of participants that did not regularly use Facebook stated time, or lack thereof, as one of the main reasons for not using Facebook. Two participants specifically stated that keeping their personal life private was very important to them and they did not want to share their personal lives with colleagues. The last major reason that was mentioned pertained to the issue of their preference of communication channels. One participant stated that there is no reason for him to communicate using Facebook. Another participant commented that he does not move in a circle of friends that use Facebook to communicate and therefore has no need for it.

All participants registered on Facebook indicated that when they use Facebook for social purposes it is to connect with family and friends. One participant clearly stated that Facebook is the social channel, while LinkedIn is used for business purposes.

5.2.3.2 Managers' expectations of the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel

It was clear that participants, who used Facebook for personal purposes, realised how Facebook could be used for business purposes as well. For example, one participant stated that she is in the marketing department and therefore must use Facebook in order *"to stay on top of the latest developments regarding marketing trends"*. Facebook can be a communication channel where skills and interests can be identified because people may share more about themselves. This can assist the organisation engaging with employees, according to another participant. The participant added that Facebook as an internal communication channel will

also allow people to be more interactive and create strong networks that could promote innovation. These comments are characteristic of an organisation with a symmetrical worldview, striving towards enhancing two-way communication between all employees in order to establish strong relationships and attain organisational excellence.

The ease and speed with which networking can take place, will also assist managers and employees to keep their profiles on Facebook updated. Another participant added to the concept of quick and timely messages that could be sent and received. Messages or information that is sent or received through Facebook can be done in potential real-time and very quickly. One participant noted that Facebook will not necessarily be used to communicate organisational strategy, but short, less complicated messages can be transmitted through this channel.

Furthermore, one of the participants believes that Facebook can be used to keep employees and managers updated on the progress of projects or inform employees of upcoming events. Facebook can also be used for conducting quick polls, employee job satisfaction surveys or obtaining essential feedback from employees on "*what is working and what isn't working*" in the organisation, indicating an intuitive sense of the importance of environmental scanning.

Participants also elaborated on what makes Facebook such an appealing channel. Facebook has made it easy to connect with friends and colleagues because it promotes interaction through bite size messages sent in real time. One participant commented that the design of Facebook promotes interaction and sharing. This participant views current communication such as email is very *"flat, un-dynamic and one-way",* whereas Facebook "*promotes interaction*".

- *"Even though it's behind a computer it's conversational, it feels like you, well you are talking to someone. It feels like you are talking to someone at the other end as opposed to giving a lecture about it"*
- *"The sense I get is that there's a lot more freedom in the way in which people communicate from behind a computer. Some things you wouldn't actually tell your whole network, if you were in a room full of people would you actually share all of that with them? Whereas, you are doing it online… So ja, in some ways it inhibits and in other ways it allows you freedom."*

Lastly, a young, active user of most social media and new technology based communication channels commented that, because of Facebook's accessibility, one could think of something important, and immediately post a note or make a comment. This participant did not feel that there are too many communication channels through which to communicate internally and the choice is only about convenience. According to the participant it does not take time or mental capacity to choose a channel, because all the different channels are instantly available.

> *"So wat ook al convenient is op die oomblik is wat ek gebruik en al die mediums wat lê voor my, ek kan by elkeen net gaan sien of daar iets is of nie. Dit vat nie tyd of mental capacity vir jou om dit te doen nie. Jy kan net sien jy het n message of jy het nie 'n message nie. Dis nie n gekompliseerde ding nie."*

5.2.3.3 Managers' expectations on the risks involved in using Facebook to communicate inside the organisation

Although there seems to be a positive response to the idea of using Facebook to communicate inside the organisation, there are also many challenges opposing such a communication channel. The first major reason managers stated for not using Facebook in an organisational environment pertains to the idea of keeping one's private life and work/professional life separate. Almost half of the participants do not want to share personal, private information with colleagues or other staff at work. One participant explained by stating that when information is not recorded, people seem to be happy to mix their personal life with their professional life. For example, many people who work together are actually friends and Friday socials are very popular. However, when that information is recorded, for example on Facebook, people are more reluctant to share their opinion, according to the participant.

The above issue seems to go hand in hand with the issue of trust in the organisation. Recording information or making comments using Facebook means that the organisation or managers cannot control the output and what people are saying. Employees should be able to trust managers not to use the information against them. One participant stated that this has to do with the culture of the organisation. There needs to be an open culture where employees trust managers and will make comments or share information more freely. However, the comments and communication should be in line with the cultural norms and values of the organisation.

> *"You can't go on little witch hunts because Joe Soap has spoken badly about his manager. You have to accept that that may happen. You have to accept that the CEO may be criticized and you know, you may have a whole conversation about something that the CEO has done that the rest of us are not happy about. To me ... that requires maturity. There are conditions around how you conduct that conversation."*

The third issue regarding the use of Facebook is the impact of spending time on Facebook on productivity. Most of the interviewed managers fear that if employees had full access[22] to Facebook, they will spend too much time on it and this may affect their productivity negatively. One participant added that the solution to the time/productivity issue lies in the fact that you cannot control employees' time, but should control their output, which can be monitored by the direct superior or by Key Performance Indicators, which most organisations already use to assess employees' performance. The participant added that an employee has as much time to spend on Facebook as they have time to stand by the coffee machine talking to a colleague, or make a personal phone call, or have a quick conversation in the corridor. The participant questions a constructive conversation as being labelled a waste of time. Another participant added that self-regulation would also be important:

> *"I guess there is a bit of self-regulation in there as well. If you are on the network, then presumably your boss and people would be on there too, so you will be pretty daft if you are on there all the time and not delivering your work."*

Three participants also emphasised the idea that Facebook as an internal communication channel should not be policed or overly managed by the organisation. It should not feel like a '*telephone tab'*. Employees should not fear being retrenched for a comment they made. It should be a place where they can freely complain about things or voice their fears. This however means that all users should be responsible and have the emotional intelligence to understand how this openness will affect others. Employees should think about what they say.

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[22] All participants had computers to access Facebook, however, both the organisations blocked the use of Facebook by employees during working hours.

"There has to be preparedness not to control it, because by its nature its open. People express their opinions, there's no judging, you know. I think within an organisation it would work if the organisation is ready to allow it to take its own form."

The fourth issue concerns the challenge of enough bandwidth to support extensive use of Facebook. Only one participant in an IT department mentioned that limited bandwidth could be an obstacle to using Facebook inside the organisation. This is interesting as many of the participants work for an IT solutions organisation. Their silence on the matter does however not mean that they are not concerned.

The fifth issue relates to privacy and security as a challenge to using Facebook for internal communication. One participant clearly stated that Facebook is built in an open source code, which means that hacking is easy. This could be a threat if confidential business issues are discussed. Another participant added to this by stating that Facebook is more of a public forum, which would provide an awkward environment to communicate around business issues.

Lastly, participants discussed extensively the problem of how to motivate both managers and employees to use Facebook as an internal communication channel. These participants questioned the value that Facebook as an internal communication channel, will add to business and to the individual. The participants agreed there would be a group of people who are intimidated by technology and will need to be coached and catered for, but for those who are comfortable with technology, the issue of relevancy is a major factor. Many participants stated that content that is relevant to them and employees will be the key to pull both managers and employees to engage through this channel. Comments regarding relevance included:

- *"I would only go on there if it's relevant, if stuff is meaningful to me."*
- *"If it's not relevant for me I am not interested."*
- *"Not relevant or add value to my life, I am not interested."*
- *"Relevant stuff to make me to go there, otherwise I am not interested in it."*
- *"If it is not relevant it wouldn't work."*
- *"Yes, we do have time for useful information."*
- *"People make time for what's important."*

- *"One of the things we do understand is that no matter what tools you give to people, if it doesn't benefit them, or if it doesn't have relevance for them in their ... daily lives, they're not going to use it. So we can build the fanciest platform in the world, if we don't make it valuable for people, they won't use it. So it's about understanding all those different layers, and then being able to give people the right layer that they then need to tap into."*

Participants went even further and suggested a solution on how to ensure that communication is kept relevant. All participants felt that in terms of information sharing, relevant topics or discussions could be sent directly to a specific individual. The person can scan through a list of discussions or articles and select that which they find relevant to their specific needs. These discussions or information can then be sent directly to them or through an update email, not unlike that which is currently in use by Facebook. The organisation can also do internal research by looking at how people use the Internet or an existing intranet. For example, Google can observe a person's Internet surfing habits, and according to the frequency of sites visited and time spent on sites, it will tailor make specific Google advertisements that will speak to that persons' interests. Using the same methods, the organisation can send employees communication that will be relevant to them, according to their Internet usage habits.

Two participants also said that by segmenting the audience, communication could be much more specific. For example, younger employees working in the Call Centre work with clients and have specific sales targets. If the organisation understands them and their needs, it can communicate what is topical and relevant to their needs.

Furthermore, a participant stated that the communication stream would be less formal. It will allow employees to create their own business profiles. Having this information, it can link employees to other employees as well as to managers with similar interests. Groups can also be created that have a specific focus, whether it is formal or for informal purposes. This will help personalise the channel, which seems to be very important to the participants.

> "*Once you understand what people's interests and hobbies are, because of the profile they have created, you can start linking people who have similar interests."*

Most participants further stated that it would however be very important that employees are active on Facebook as an internal communication channel. Employees and management should actively post and respond to comments. It will be useless if an employee posts a question, but it takes five days for anyone to respond. Furthermore, content should be easily accessible and quick to read. Again, at least five participants talked about the notion of subscribing to conversations or information. The employee or manager can thus choose what information or conversations he/she wants to be notified on[23]. This will keep the organisational Facebook page relevant and the person will not be overwhelmed with hundreds of emails that notify them of posts on Facebook.

5.2.3.4 Managers' expectations on Facebook's contribution towards improved employee engagement

Due to the fact that employees will talk about the things that are on their minds, managers can see and know what employees are talking about and what their issues are. One participant stated that it can therefore be a kind of '*engagement meter'* that managers can check to ascertain employees' issues and what issues management are unaware of. Employees will also have the opportunity to ask questions in an unintimidating environment. All this will encourage two-way communication, which in turn encourages trust and relationship building. There should thus never be just one way communication used on the internal Facebook page, according to another participant.

One participant stated that using Facebook as a two-way internal communication channel can enhance engagement and bring employees and managers closer together, but it can, however, not replace other communication channels. This channel cannot be a substitute for existing internal communication channels, but it can have a supportive role. This opinion is in line with literature that states that a mix of communication channels should be used to communicate with a diverse stakeholder group (see section 3.2). Another participant said that some employees will never '*get it'*. The participant further stated that it is important to remember that

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[23] Employees and management should choose the topics that they would want to read about or if a discussion is held on that topic, they should receive a notification via email to inform them of the post/discussion. They will then be able to choose what information they receive and in which conversations they participate in. This will help to decrease information overload.

not all employees will use the Facebook page. Some will not be comfortable with the channel and serious change management will need to precede the implementation of such a channel.

In conclusion, most participants were conditionally positive about the concept of using Facebook as an internal communication channel. Participants felt that it would be a quick and easy way to share information. However, a level of trust between managers and employees will be necessary for the internal Facebook page to be successful. Managers need to trust employees to remain within the guidelines and policies pertaining to the use of Facebook and employees should trust managers not to 'police' the channel. Facebook may encourage two-way communication between managers and employees, which could increase levels of employee engagement.

It is however important to understand the other side of the coin, namely employees' expectations regarding the use of Facebook.

5.3   Employees' expectations regarding Facebook as a communication channel to enhance employee engagement

5.3.1   Employees' use of internal communication channels (Interview questions 1-4)
Most participants stated that their time is extensively filled with meetings in order to receive information, make decisions and provide input. Employees indicated that they make use of email to communicate inside the organisation, as well as phone calls and instant messages (sms), or bbm (blackberry message).

All the participants indicated strongly that the channel they use would depend on the importance of the message. They also found it crucial to follow up on important issues with a phone call, or they would walk over to the person and have a quick, face-to-face discussion. One participant said, in all seriousness, that some of the most important discussions he has heard, or been a part of, had been outside on the "cigarette stoep". The participant elaborated that when a meeting is organised, some people will be afraid to disagree or state their opinion because of the '*political game*', indicating a fear of being victimised. Talking to superiors or in a large group may be difficult for others. However, when the discussion takes place outside, it is usually a smaller group and people are more willing to state their opinion. The discussion is more informal and employees and managers know each other better. The participants from

one of the focus groups agreed that when you take employees out of the formal environment, they are more in their comfort zone and have freedom to talk openly. These statements are in line with the managers' view, that when people get to know each other in a more informal setting, they tend to trust each other more and therefore communicate easier with each other.

It thus seems that employees find it very important to state their opinion, although fear of being victimised might be a barrier to the flow of two-way communication, especially between managers and employees.

5.3.2 Employees' perception of employee engagement and the role of two-way communication (Interview questions 5-9)

5.3.2.1 Employees' perceptions on employee engagement

In defining the concept of employee engagement, employees from all the focus groups made reference to the idea of working in a team to reach the organisation's vision or achieving organisational goals. This implies that the interviewed employees are of the opinion that they are involved in the actual work, but also in the functioning of a team. Some participants noted that strong relationships between peers, as well as with managers, are key to successfully functioning in a team. One participant stated that when an employee is engaged, one understands what is required and does one's best, not only for personal gain, but also for the brand and values of the organisation.

- *"Engage people to actually understand and do the best not only from a CV point of view ... for their next job or whatever, but for the brand for the company and the values that the company stands for."*
- *"Everybody works together to achieve a certain goal."*
- *"Being involved around what is happening within Hollard, being passionate about partnership. It's all about relationship."*

5.3.2.2 Employees' perception on how employee engagement can be achieved

In order to feel connected and have a sense of belonging in the organisation, all the interviewees emphasised the need for feedback on job performance as well as praise and

acknowledgment when they do perform well. The participants noted that managers should therefore be in tune with what their employees are feeling and thinking.

- *"So management must understand what people go through on a daily basis, which I think is very difficult."*
- *"It might ideally be praise and acknowledged on the effort that you do personally."*

Employees may feel that if they are engaged, they may work harder to achieve organisational goals, as well as for personal gain. The participants accentuated that according to them, engagement entails that employees must feel connected to each other and to the organisation and this can be achieved by managers providing them feedback on work performance. Most of the interviewees equated feedback from managers to two-way communication, and for them two-way communication is key to improving engagement amongst employees.

5.3.3 Employees' expectations on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel (interview question 10-16)

5.3.3.1 Organisational use of Facebook

"So we need some kind of a channel that can make connections, which we don't have."

It became clear in all the focus group interviews that employees may have a need to connect with each other and with managers. The reason for connecting remains in most cases a need to find information. Information can vary, from finding the application form to take leave or to engage with other business units to share and receive valuable business intelligence.

Participants from one focus group speculated on what type of information would be shared through a channel such as Facebook. They agreed that almost anything can be placed on Facebook, but by understanding the interests of the employees, managers will be able to focus the information. This means that very specific information regarding the organisation and what employees need in order to do their jobs can be shared. The interviewed employees are indirectly indicating that their use of the organisational Facebook page depends on whether managers know and understand their needs. This is confirming the importance of environmental scanning and two-way communication.

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All the participants agreed that any interaction on a social level (more informal) would probably be popular and would attract greater interest from employees. Furthermore, one participant stated that by making the channel a '*social thing'*, employees would use it more often, which will help them to learn how to use the channel much faster. They will then use the channel much more readily. This opinion differs from that of some managers that do not want to share their personal lives with colleagues. When employees do not know each other on a more personal level, they will be more reluctant to ask each other important work-related questions to obtain vital information. If they know each other socially, it will be easier to approach others to ask questions and find the information that is needed. These opinions correspond with those of some of the interviewed managers (see section 5.2.3) who believe that if people know each other socially, it would enhance two-way internal communication.

> *"This social interaction will create the momentum from where business can be communicated."*

Trust also seemed to be very important when using a channel such as Facebook. Employee participants emphasised their need to trust that managers will not dismiss them, or that there would not be severe repercussions if a statement is made or an opinion is posted that might differ from managers' view. Participants from one focus group agreed that using a channel such as Facebook can help create better social interaction, and this in turn can increase the levels of trust between managers and employees, as well as between employees as peers. If trust is established between employees and managers, two-way communication will improve and employee engagement can be enhanced. This view corresponds with the interviewed managers' belief that a trusting relationship with employees will enhance internal two-way communication.

Positive responses on using Facebook for internal communication included that such a channel would connect employees and it would be easy to form links between employees and managers working on similar projects in the workplace. A connection is needed between people working in different business units, which will help them share information and as a result improve performance. This may also decrease the incidence of duplication of information, for example in solving a business problem.

It was also noted that because of the nature of Facebook, when a question is asked or a statement is made, an employee could proofread what they have written before it is sent. The participants said by proofreading their postings they could make sure that they '*sound intelligent'*. This is not something that can be done in a meeting with, for example, senior managers.

5.3.3.2 Employees' expectations on the risks involved in using Facebook to communicate inside the organisation

The participants from two focus groups specifically stated that it would be crucial for senior managers to support Facebook as an internal communication channel. Managers will need to endorse and use the organisational Facebook page and be an example to employees. The participants were of the opinion that the communication process should start at top level and then it will filter down to the lower level employees.

> *"You need to know the CEO is doing the same thing and then I think everybody knows, ok [we can also use the organisational Facebook page]".*

Furthermore, a process of managing change would be needed as employees would need to know and understand how Facebook as internal communication channel will work and how it will be managed. One participant stated that the process of using the new channel could become part of employees' Key Performance Indicators, which directly affects bonus payments. Use of the channel will then be a non-negotiable.

Not all the participants were positive about the idea of using Facebook to communicate inside the organisation. During one of the larger focus group interviews, the participants were very negative about the concept.

- *"I don't think Facebook can actually work for a business organisation internally"*
- *"I don't think Facebook as present."*

One participant stated that the main problem would be to motivate employees to use the channel. The more employees are active on the channel, the more others will also use it. However, if there is not enough interest employees will not make use of it. Employees will also

need to be regular users. For example, if an employee posts a question and many other people are regular users and willing to respond, Facebook as internal communication channel may possibly be successful. However, if no one responds to the question, that employee will most probably cease to post questions and therefore eventually stop using the channel. In this regard, one of the participants noted:

"The more people will use it, the more others will use it".

Another major challenge pointed out regarding the use of Facebook for internal communication, is the fact that some employees may not be very '*technologically inclined'.* Some employees will automatically be resistant due to the nature of the channel and the technology that they do not understand. A completely new system will need to be learned and this will take time.

Lastly, the issue of time was discussed. Most participants did not think that they had the time in their already full workday to read and respond to posts. According to these participants, they struggle just to get through all the work related e-mails each day and cannot see the need for another channel to communicate. This implies that the Facebook page needs to be useful for employees to motivate them to spend time on the page and engage in conversation.

In summary, the participants believe that employees would use Facebook as an internal communication channel to find information, but also to promote social interaction in order to build stronger relationships. If relationships are improved, employee engagement should improve. The interviewed employees agreed that a higher level of social interaction would attract more interest to the discussions. Also, if employees know each other on a more personal level, they might engage more with each other to find information and solve problems. Employees also focused on the fact that trust between managers and employees is an important issue when considering Facebook as an internal communication channel. Employees must know that they can openly state their opinion, without negative consequences from managers. It was emphasised that two-way communication between managers and employees can help build relationships and increase levels of trust.

5.4   Conclusion

This chapter focused on reporting the results of the study that was conducted by interviewing managers from two different organisations as well as focus group interviews conducted with employees from those same organisations. This was done in order to obtain their expectations on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement.

Managers commented that their use of communication channels would depend on the importance of the information to be communicated. For example, a meeting will be scheduled if the issue is very important. They also tend to follow up with either e-mails or phone calls if the information contained in the e-mail is important and urgent. Employees agreed that their choice of communication channel would also depend on the importance of the message. Furthermore, participants from the focus groups agreed that talking to superiors in large, formal groups can be difficult and intimidating and when they are taken to a more informal environment, for example the "smokers' stoep", they are more in their comfort zone and will talk more freely. Interacting on a more informal level on Facebook could also improve relationships between employees and managers.

Employee engagement was defined by managers as the extent to which employees are emotionally involved in their organisation. Employees must "*feel connected*", they must have an "*emotional attachment*" to the organisation. It is also important that employees align their personal goals with that of the goals, values and culture of the organisation. Manager participants stated that if employees were engaged, they would be more productive, motivated and committed to stay longer with the organisation. Employees will be more creative and innovative, and they will understand their role better and will give more of themselves because they feel valued.

In terms of perceptions on the term employee engagement, the employee participants referred to working in a team in order to achieve the goals of the organisation. Employees view feedback on job performance as well as appropriate acknowledgment when they perform well as important steps to improve employee engagement.

On the issue of how to achieve employee engagement, managers understand that information cannot just be pushed, but employees need to be able to provide feedback regarding issues.

The manager participants noted that managers should be accessible and employees should know that managers would listen to their needs. Most manager participants understood the importance of two-way communication, or listening to and providing employees an equal chance to voice their opinion. Managers noted that it is important to understand the needs of employees and using communication channels to suit employees' needs. There also seems to be a trend in managers' expectations regarding the importance of engagement on a more informal and personal level. Both manager and employee participants said that interaction should be more informal in order to build relationships between employees and managers to improve employee engagement.

Trust remains a very important issue and employees feel that they must be able to trust that managers will allow them to state their opinion or comments without negative consequences. Improved social interaction can help increase the levels of trust between managers and employees. If a trusting manager-employee relationship is established, communication-surrounding business should improve. Trust was also an important issue that was mentioned by quite a few managers, for example, one manager said, *"For my role to be successful, I need people to trust me"*. Managers also emphasised that postings on the organisational Facebook page should not be 'policed', indicating a willingness to allow employees to express their views, needs and questions freely on the page. Managers referred to employees being responsible regarding the type of information posted on the organisational Facebook page as well as applying self-regulation regarding the amount of time spent on Facebook. Both employees and managers feel that a trusting relationship will enable them to communicate on Facebook as an internal communication channel in an open, two-way manner that can result in strong relationships between all parties involved. Employees will then feel that they can be honest about their opinions and feelings, without there being negative repercussions. Improved relationships and improved levels of trust can increase employee engagement.

Furthermore, managers had mostly positive expectations regarding the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel. There was however, some negative expectations to using Facebook as an internal communication channel and many challenges will need to be faced before it could be implemented successfully. Due to Facebook being an external application, privacy and security might be a problem. A few of the interviewed managers feel very reluctant to share personal, private information with colleagues or other staff at work. They also fear that if there is full access to Facebook, employees will spend too much time on it and this may

affect productivity negatively. Employees however felt that they would not necessarily have time during their busy day to respond to posts, as they barely get through all their work as it is. Furthermore, employees felt that the main problem would be to motivate colleagues to use the channel. If there is not enough interest in the channel, it would not be used.

Lastly, it is important that Facebook as an internal communication channel does not substitute other communication channels, but that it plays a supportive role. Most of the participants, including managers and employees were of the opinion that a social media channel can bring employees and managers closer together, but it cannot replace other communication media and interpersonal channels.

Managers and employees understand that a wide variety of communication channels are needed to create an environment where trust between managers and employees can be cultivated in order to build stronger relationships. Stronger relationships can lead to improved employee engagement. Both managers and employees agree that getting to know one other on a more personal level might lead to greater freedom to approach others for information and to learn from others. Most employees and managers viewed Facebook as a communication channel that could potentially create a space where employees and managers can interact more socially, share information and build relationships, which could lead to improved employee engagement.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion and recommendations

6.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, the results of the empirical research were discussed. This chapter will focus on the findings of the empirical research and its link to the literature review as discussed in Chapters two and three. A short synopsis of the study will be presented followed by how the research results are linked to the study's research questions, objectives and the guiding theoretical arguments outlined previously. The chapter will be concluded by recommending guidelines for managing Facebook as an internal communication channel and its role in improving employee engagement in the two participating organisations. Lastly, the study's limitations as well as suggestions for further research will be discussed.

6.2   Addressing the research objectives of the study

The research questions guided the study throughout and the discussion in the next section will show how the research objectives, guiding theoretical arguments and empirical findings pertain to each other.

6.2.1   Employee engagement

Research question 1: What does employee engagement entail according to literature?
It is important to understand that an organisation should communicate in a two-way manner in order to engage with of one of its most important stakeholders, namely its employees. The essence of this statement is captured in the discussion on organisational worldviews, and the influence of these two opposite worldviews on the choice of communication model used inside the organisation, as well as on the choice of an internal communication channels to engage with employees.

According to Grunig and White (1992:43), characteristics of an asymmetrical worldview include the fact that the organisation may be a closed system and efficiency becomes more important than innovation. Such an organisation may have a conservative culture with a fear of change as well as a structure where authority is centralised. Organisations with an asymmetrical organisational worldview do not view communication as a strategic management task, nor are they in general willing to engage in two-way communication with

stakeholders such as employees. In contrast to this worldview stands the symmetrical worldview of organisational communication. The symmetrical worldview is characterised by an open system where information is freely exchanged, the organisation is not isolated from its environment and innovation and creativity are valued. According to literature, an organisation with a symmetrical organisational worldview will be more likely to practice the two-way communication models (symmetrical and/or mixed motive models) (Grunig *et al.*, 1992:2002). Such an organisation would also value their employees and strive towards engaging employees. According to the *Excellence Study* (Grunig *et al.*, 1992; 2002), an organisation with a symmetrical worldview would be open to new ideas, such as using Facebook for internal communication to engage employees.

This leads to the first guiding theoretical argument:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 1

In an organisation with a symmetrical worldview that practices two-way communication, in which employees are treated equally, their opinions are respected, they have more autonomy and responsibility, and innovation is valued, employee engagement can be improved.

In order to explain what employee engagement entails, it is necessary to discuss the nature of the different communication models and the development of communication models. Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four models, namely the press agentry/publicity model, public information model, asymmetrical and symmetrical two-way models, as stages in the development of communication management (see section 2.3).

Important for the study at hand is the nature of the two-way models, which refer to the asymmetrical, symmetrical and mixed motive communication models. If communication practitioners use only the asymmetrical two-way model, they use research to gather information from employees in order to develop effective media strategies to influence employees to conform to the objectives of the organisation (Grunig *et al.,* 1995:41).

By the end of the 20th century the symmetrical two-way communication model was developed. Through symmetrical two-way communication with employees, the organisation can manage conflict and negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes to issues facing the organisation and its stakeholders. In this case, research is used to create mutual understanding and both the organisation and its stakeholders are prepared to consider each

other's positions (Grunig *et al.*, 1995:41). Although the symmetrical two-way model is considered to be the most ethical and normative model, it was criticised for its idealistic approach to communication and relationship management because communication practitioners are expected to balance the needs and interests of both the organisation and its stakeholders (Grunig & White, 1992:45-46). According to the symmetrical two-way communication model, both the organisation and its stakeholders should be treated as equals, and this may lead to communication practitioners experiencing a conflict of interests. A further point of criticism is that persuasion, inherent to asymmetrical communication, is not necessarily unethical or ineffective when applied within a symmetrical worldview (Grunig & Grunig, 1992:310).

The mixed motive model was developed to provide a more realistic view of present communication management practices. According to the mixed motive model, both the asymmetrical and symmetrical two-way communication models can be used to communicate with stakeholders, depending on the context. If the asymmetrical two-way model is used within a symmetrical organisational worldview, the persuasive aspects of the model is rendered more ethical. Since the mixed motive model is based on the principle of two-way communication, both the organisation and its employees concede some of their demands or preferences (Grunig & White, 1992:46), in order to reach a win-win situation. Two-way communication allows the mixed-motive model to fit into the symmetrical organisational worldview and therefore practicing the mixed motive model qualifies as excellent communication (Grunig & White, 1992:48). Strategic communication management according to the mixed motive model should therefore lead to a win-win situation for both the organisation and its employees. Based on this, the following guiding theoretical argument was derived:

> **Guiding Theoretical Argument 2**
>
> Organisations that practise the symmetrical two-way model and/or the mixed-motive model of communication will also support and engage in two-way communication with, and listen to, their employees to determine their needs, while those that practise only the one-way and asymmetrical two-way communication models will not view two-way communication as an important part of their communication efforts.

Thus, communication based on the symmetrical two-way and/or mixed motive models is ideal, but organisations will only choose to communicate using these models if they subscribe to a symmetrical organisational worldview (see section 2.2.2).

The most important outcome of strategic communication management is strong manager-stakeholder relationships (see section 2.4). Strong relationships between managers and employees will foster an environment where participation from employees is valued. Not only will employees be more satisfied with their jobs, but also motivation and productivity will be increased. Furthermore, employees will be more likely to support the mission of the organisation (Grunig & Hon, 1999:11). Grunig and Hon (1999:14) provided key strategies that could be implemented to strengthen relationships with employees. They include access to information and decision-making processes and creating a positive and open working environment where issues are accepted to be legitimate and where appropriate solutions are found together. If these strategies are implemented, strong manager-employee relationships characterised by the outcomes of strong relationships namely trust, mutual control, commitment and relationship satisfaction are the result (Grunig & Hon, 1999:19). Strong manager-employee relationships should lead to improved levels of employee engagement. Employee engagement is defined as how positively employees think, feel and behave towards the organisation, as well as how involved and valued employees feel (Cook, 2008:3; Attridge, 2009:383; Hayday *et al.*, 2004). According to the Institute for Employment Studies (Hayday *et al.*, 2004) engagement is a two-way process that assists the employee to become aware of the business context and how they work with colleagues in order to improve their performance. Two-way communication can improve employees' levels of engagement to the organisation. Hayward (2012) continues by stating that there are many benefits to engaging employees including an increase in passion and commitment towards the goals and strategies of the organisation, an increase in productivity and trust in each other as well as in managers and the organisation, an increase in worker morale, organisational growth and loyal employees.

Based on the above discussion, the next guiding theoretical arguments were derived:

Guiding Theoretical Argument 3

Organisations' use of two-way communication will lead to mutual understanding, resulting in strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships between managers and employees. These relationships will be characterised by trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction.

Guiding Theoretical Argument 4

Employee engagement will be enhanced if managers and employees engage in two-way communication to build strong manager-employee relationships in order to contribute to the organisation attaining its goals.

In order to promote two-way communication with the purpose of achieving improved employee engagement, managers must select the most appropriate communication channels that would facilitate two-way communication between managers and employees.

Traditional oral and written communication has been used in the past to communicate inside organisations (see section 3.2). These channels include newsletters, magazines, radio and face-to-face discussion whether it is one-on-one or in meetings. Technological developments have in recent times provided organisations with a whole new host of channels for internal communication, including sms, and social media such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook.

Using a mix of different communication channels inside the organisation remains of importance and there are many factors that contribute to the choice of which channels to use effectively. When choosing the appropriate channel to communicate with, Hamilton (2008:14) states that there are seven factors to consider. They include the importance of the message, the needs and abilities of the receiver, the amount and speed of feedback required, the necessity for a permanent record, channel richness, the cost of the channel, the level of formality required and using a variety of different communication channels (see section 3.2).

This lead to the following guiding theoretical argument:

> **Guiding Theoretical Argument 5**
>
> When an organisation considers a specific internal communication channel to be used for employee engagement it should be decided which channel is the most suitable for the receiver of the message, the type (easy or difficult) of content and the nature (level of formality and urgency) of the message.

The choice of the most appropriate selection of internal communication channels will be influenced by the organisational worldview and the communication models that are implemented in the organisation. For example, an organisation with a symmetrical worldview will tend to follow the symmetrical two-way and/or mixed motive models of communication and will therefore choose a channel based on its ability to facilitate two-way communication between managers and employees. In this study it is argued that Facebook can serve as an additional two-way internal communication channel that can facilitate two-way discussions between managers and employees in order to improve employee engagement.

6.2.2   Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement

With the development of new technology, new communication channels such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube and Wikipedia have provided communication practitioners with new and interactive channels to choose from (Fraser & Dutta, 2009:2). Facebook in particular has opened new doors through which to foster creativity and produce open and transparent communication (see Section 3.3.3 and 3.3.4). Facebook is a user-friendly communication channel that employees can use to find information and where they can engage with managers and colleagues, thus creating improved communication (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011:4; Simon, 2009). It is from this viewpoint that the next research question is derived:

Research question 2: According to literature, in what way can Facebook serve as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?

In recent time, due to the development of Web 2.0 technology, the interactivity of the Internet has increased. Social media such as Facebook are no longer confined to personal and private use, but organisations such as Dell Computers, Davies Public Affairs and Serena Software are using them as internal communication channels (see section 3.3.4.1).

Compared to other traditional internal communication channels, Facebook is a relatively rich channel as it is possible to post sound and video clips as well as emoticons to promote non-

verbal cues. Facebook is also a potential timely channel of communication and due to its written nature, information will be on permanent record. Facebook may be less formal than more traditional communication channels. Due to Facebook not being a face-to-face channel, it is however possible that the importance of a message could be lost. Note should however be taken of the fact that by using more explicit language, it can be communicated that a message on Facebook is important. For example, by stating, '*the following information is very IMPORTANT*', readers may clearly see that the information they are about to read needs urgent attention. It is also vital to note that a channel such as email can also be less formal in nature and can potentially also be timely. Again, Facebook cannot substitute existing channels of communication, but provides employees and managers with another way to communicate according to what is most convenient for them.

Facebook as an internal communication channel can improve two-way communication - it is convenient and easy to use and it functions from an open and interactive perspective. On the other hand, the use of Facebook can also be time consuming and distracting (Guffey *et al.*, 2009:16, Simon, 2009*;* Crescenzo, 2010:11; Grensing-Pophal, 2010:46). Despite this, Facebook can be useful in creating and maintaining good relationships within the organisation (Duhé, 2007:103).

There are very specific advantages to using Facebook as an internal communication channel, such as it being an interactive channel where employees can engage with managers and colleagues (Simon, 2009). The open and transparent environment that Facebook creates ensures that a level of trust is developed between managers and employees. Fraser and Dutta (2008:144) furthermore state that Facebook can join the expertise in an organisation through knowledge sharing. Individual voices can be heard and creativity and innovation can be encouraged (Analore, 2009) (see Section 3.2.3).

It is necessary that two-way communication using Facebook should be managed strategically in order to contribute to the organisation attaining its goal of employee engagement. Waters *et al.* (2009:1-3) recommends that when an organisation chooses to use Facebook as an internal communication channel, it should always communicate in an open or transparent way. By communicating in such a way, trust could develop between employees and managers (as representatives of the organisation). Furthermore, the organisational Facebook page should be as interactive as possible to ensure two-way communication between managers and employees. This implies that both managers and employees should be committed to using Facebook to enhance relationships with and learn from each other. Two-way communication can heighten relationship satisfaction in this case.

Lastly, engaging in two-way communication, the organisational Facebook page can be used for environmental scanning, which is a strategic communication management function. By engaging in two-way communication, managers would be able to identify the needs and views of employees, enabling them to ensure that the information and activities on the organisational Facebook page are useful for both employees and managers. Relationship satisfaction will be enhanced since employees would be assured that management are interested in their views and want to address their needs. Two way communication between managers and employees could lead to a satisfying relationship, which in turn would lead to enhanced employee engagement.

This lead to the following theoretical argument:

Theoretical Argument 6

If an organisation intends to use Facebook as a two-way internal communication channel to engage employees, it should:

- ensure that communication is transparent and open;
- ensure that the Facebook page is useful; and
- ensure that the Facebook page is interactive to facilitate two-way communication with employees.

6.2.3   Expectations on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement

After determining the key principles of two-way communication, the nature of relationship building, the prerequisites for employee engagement, as well as the characteristics of Facebook and its possible applicability as an internal communication channel, an empirical study of what managers and employees expect of Facebook as an internal communication channel, was conducted. This addresses the third and fourth research questions:

Research question 3: What are managers' expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?

Research question 4: What are employee's expectations of Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement?

- **Use of internal communication channels**

Using the interview schedules (see section 4.4.3.1), managers and employees were first asked to indicate what internal communication channels they use to communicate in the organisation. Face-to-face interpersonal and group meetings were extensively used by both managers and employees to communicate internally. It also became evident that all participants (managers and employees) used email to communicate internally. It was noted that many of the manager and employee participants stated that the more important the issue, the greater the need for a group meeting or face-to-face communication becomes. Literature agrees in that when a message is important, it is advisable to use face-to-face interaction to communicate the message, as well as a written channel, such as e-mail, to make sure that there is a record of the message. Although not mentioned by the participants, literature also notes other factors that will influence the choice of communication channel. Participants may not realise it, but in an organisation the choice of an internal communication channel is influenced by the cost of the channel, the speed with which feedback is required, the formality or informality of the message, the ability of the receiver and the channel richness (or the amount of information that the channel can carry). Using e-mail in an organisation may be an inexpensive way to communicate to a large number of employees. It implies that a record of the conversation will be saved and timely feedback is possible. This is also true for the use of Facebook. Facebook is inexpensive, conversations are recorded and immediate feedback is possible.

It seems from the interviews and focus group interviews that the participants do not expect Facebook to add anything more as an internal communication channel than for example e-mail, but it must be noted that literature asks for the use of a wide mix of communication channels in order to satisfy the needs and preferences of individuals. Therefore, adding Facebook as a channel to a mix of already existing internal communication channels may just provide some employees a more preferable way to communicate with managers and peers.

Employees added to this discussion by stating that in a meeting some employees might be afraid to disagree or give an opinion because of the "political game". On the other hand, if a

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discussion takes place in a more informal environment such as the "smokers' stoep" or even Facebook, employees could be more open to state their opinion. The question remains whether it has to do with the formality of the situation, or because it is easier to speak openly to colleagues if the manager is not around. Again, some managers may also be more open and approachable than others because of a better relationship between an employee and his/her manager.

On the use of new electronic media, SDT managers and employees use Office Communicator extensively to communicate internally. Due to the nature of their business, managers and employees are not always on the same site and therefore the communication channel provides them the opportunity to communicate effectively over distance. Skype is also used to communicate internally. With Skype, managers and employees can conduct a silent conversation by typing messages, which is very convenient in an open plan environment. E-mail can be used in this respect as well.

- **Employee engagement**

In terms of defining the concept of employee engagement and the role of two-way communication, managers and employees across the board seemed to have had at least a basic grasp of what the concept entails. The emotional component of feeling connected to and being emotionally involved with the organisation was emphasised.

It was clear throughout the interviews that managers said that they understood the importance of two-way communication in the process of employee engagement. It was emphasised that managers should listen and be accessible to employees. According to the interviewed employees, they have a need to state their opinion openly and want to be heard by managers. However, their fear of voicing their opinion may present a barrier to two-way communication between them and managers. Furthermore, they want to feel connected to the organisation and that they belong there. They also stated that they wanted feedback on their performance from managers, as well as acknowledgement and praise when they performed well. From this feedback, it would seem that although managers feel that they communicate effectively, employees might have a greater need for two-way communication.

Managers believe that engaged employees will be more productive and motivated, and staff turnover will decrease. Employee creativity and innovation will also be boosted. The employee participants view employee engagement as vital to ensure that employees can work in a team to achieve the organisation's goals. As employees, they feel that if they were

engaged with the organisation, they would understand what is required of them and could work harder to promote the brand and values of the organisation.

According to the literature there seems to be three different angles to employee engagement, which would also influence the communication model used to communicate with employees. Firstly, employee engagement as a *management technique* is utilitarian in nature because managers engage employees to avoid conflict and to obtain support for achieving the organisation's objectives. Although two-way communication would be employed to facilitate this process, it might be more asymmetrical in nature. The manager might feel that he/she is creating an adequate environment for two-way communication, but employees may feel that the little feedback that they can give to their managers is not satisfying their need to be listened to and be engaged. Secondly, employee engagement as an *ethical requirement* means that participation, not only from managers, but also from employees in decision-making processes is important. In addition, this can improve the manager-employee relationship. Thus, the communication model used in this instance tends to be more symmetrical in nature. On this point it must however be noted that not all decisions that are made can include employees and therefore there will always be some level of asymmetrical communication within any organisation. Thirdly, employee engagement viewed as *two-way communication* corresponds closely with the concept of an *ethical requirement* as previously mentioned. In this case, it would be most likely that the two-way communication models will be applied within a symmetrical worldview.   The objective of communication would be to enhance mutual understanding between employees and managers in order to build a mutually beneficial relationship.   From literature's perspective, two-way communication will enforce trust between managers and employees, which will in turn lead to improved engagement.

It seemed within both organisations that managers felt that they understood the importance of two-way communication in order to engage with their employees, and that they were creating a suitable environment for two-way communication to take place. However, from the responses of the interviewed employees, it seems that there were still barriers that prevented truly effective two-way communication to engage employees. It would thus seem that managers use employee engagement as a *management technique*, thinking that they are communicating in an effective two-way manner, possibly with the goal of avoiding conflict and obtaining support for achieving organisational goals. This effectively means that employees are not always truly provided an opportunity to communicate effectively and openly with managers and thus they are not always fully engaged employees.

Furthermore, managers and employees felt that it is important to engage not only on a formal level, but also on an informal, more social level. Managers felt that if employees can connect on a social level, they might trust each other as well as their managers more and share information more easily, thus communicating more effectively. Managers therefore believe that social or more informal interaction will help build relationships between managers and employees as well as between employees themselves. The managers noted that strong relationships build trust between participants. Employees expressed a need to engage with others, be it managers or other employees, primarily to find information. However, interacting socially also remains another primary interest amongst employees. Employee participants stated that if more socially orientated activities were presented on Facebook, it would be used more often. Social interaction can help employees to get to know one another better on a personal level, which will make it easier to approach one another to find information. However, some managers did not feel comfortable with sharing their private lives on Facebook with any colleagues.

Furthermore, managers also stated that they understood the impact of using the correct communication channels in order to facilitate two-way communication between them and employees. Managers stated that employees use and react in different ways to communication and not to limit communication to only one channel such as Facebook. It is therefore necessary to adapt strategies and be innovative in the choice of two-way internal communication channels. Technologically more advanced channels of communication, such as Facebook, might assist managers to assimilate information much quicker, although it cannot replace face-to-face meetings. This corresponds with literature that asks for a mix of different communication channels as different individuals have different needs. Again, it would seem that managers understand the theory behind how to communicate effectively, but there remains a gap between their understanding and the practical application thereof.

- **Facebook as an internal communication channel**

In terms of the use of Facebook inside the organisation, managers stated that Facebook could be a channel where skills and interest can be identified because people tend to share more about themselves on Facebook. Managers were of the opinion that since most employees are already active on Facebook in a personal capacity they can use Facebook as a channel to share information regarding business. Simply stated, the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel might help managers to improve two-way communication and engage with employees. The managers stated that the interaction Facebook will create, as well as the speed with which networking can take place, is very powerful. Employees agreed that Facebook used as an internal communication channel could increase

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connectivity with others in the organisation and it would make it easier to establish a firmer link between themselves and managers. Employees noted that employees working in different business units could be connected with each other, which would decrease duplication of information and ideas.

Three of the four employee focus groups emphasised that when Facebook is used as a channel to communicate internally, trust between employees and managers becomes very important. It is vital that employees can trust managers that when they do voice their opinion there will not be negative repercussions for them. Participants from one focus group interview did however agree that Facebook could improve social interaction, which may increase levels of trust between employees and managers. Some employee participants thought it crucial that managers support the channel and by using it, because use will filter down to the lower level employees. If managers endorse the channel, it would set an example for employees. This might refer back to the issue of trust and commitment between managers and employees. If employees can see that managers are committed to using Facebook as a two-way internal communication channel, they might be more willing to engage in conversation on the organisational Facebook page. As the conversation develops on the new Facebook page, employees will observe the nature of communication and start trusting that management is committed to employee engagement. The same applies to the use of other two-way internal communication channels such as face-to-face communication, meetings and e-mail.

Literature showed that the use of symmetrical two-way communication could lead to improved relationships between managers and employees. Strong manager-employee relationships are characterised by the outcomes of strong relationships including trust, mutual control, commitment and relationship satisfaction. Improved relationships could then lead to improved employee engagement. However, it became clear from the interviews and focus group interviews that both managers and employees seem to want to build a strong relationship informally, and from that strong relationship, internal two-way communication might improve, resulting in improved employee engagement. This is in contrast with literature that states that two-way communication leads to strong relationships. The question then arises, which component comes first regarding internal communication and employee engagement: does a strong relationship lead to improved two-way communication as the empirical research suggests, or does two-way communication lead to improved relationships and employee engagement, as literature suggests?

Literature suggests that Facebook is a user-friendly, open and interactive communication channel that can be used to find information and where two-way communication can take place between managers and employees. The open and transparent nature of Facebook could improve levels of trust between managers and employees; it could assist with knowledge sharing and promote creativity and innovation. Waters *et al.* (2009:1-30) reiterates that if communication on Facebook is open and transparent, its content is useful and relevant, and it is interactive to ensure two-way communication, the organisational Facebook page should increase the level of satisfaction within the manager-employee relationship. It seems evident from the semi-structured interviews with managers that they expect that Facebook could be used as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement. Managers thought that Facebook could possibly create a space where employees can talk about the things that are important to them. Managers could consequently have a better understanding of the issues that employees are dealing with. Understanding employees' needs and issues can assist managers to create a useful and relevant organisational Facebook page for employees. Two-way communication on the organisational Facebook page can then be used as a kind of 'engagement barometer' to determine the level of employee engagement. They are convinced that Facebook's interactive nature will stimulate two-way communication between managers and employees, as well as between all employees. However, the interviewed employees emphasised that they need to be able to communicate openly on the organisational Facebook page, without fear of being victimised by management. Therefore, strong, trusting relationships need to be established between managers and employees for the organisational Facebook page to succeed. The interactive nature of Facebook can contribute to relationship building since the channel facilitates two-way communication.

Despite the positive expectations regarding the use of Facebook to promote employee engagement, employees and managers agreed that there remain many challenges. Managers were very concerned about keeping their personal lives separate. They insist that personal information needs to be kept private. Interestingly, one employee noted that when information is recorded, people are more reluctant to share information. However, when information is not recorded such as at a social function, they are more inclined to share information. This seems to be an issue of trust in the relationship between managers and employees. The culture of the organisations should be promoting trust in the relationship between employees and managers, so that people may feel free to make comments and share opinions. These comments and opinions should however always be in line with the norms and values of the organisation. This could however lead to a barrier that prevents some employees using Facebook from communicating. As Facebook is primarily a written

channel that keeps record of what is said, employees will not speak openly and honestly on Facebook if they do not trust their managers. This applies to any other written channel such as email.

Managers also understood that it would be important not to regulate Facebook as an internal communication channel. Employees should not be scared of using Facebook to state an opinion. However, this will give employees a certain responsibility to understand that this openness can affect others and that the policies that regulate their communication and behaviour at the office will regulate their communication and behaviour on Facebook as an internal communication channel. The importance of interactivity, or two-way communication, especially to build trusting relationships was continually emphasised.

Another important issue that many managers mentioned is their expectation that employees will spend so much time on Facebook that it will influence their productivity negatively. One manager however added that employees have as much time to spend on Facebook as they have standing by the coffee machine talking to a colleague or making a personal phone call. It could be a solution to monitor employees' output according to key performance indicators, rather than by measuring the time spent on Facebook. Self-regulation remains an important key to ensuring high productivity. The comments on self-regulation are in line with the presuppositions of an organisation with a symmetrical organisational worldview. In such an organisation employees have autonomy and need to take responsibility for their actions, which is implied in the participants' comments (see section 2.2.2).

Another issue mentioned by the managers is the potential problem with security and privacy. As Facebook is built in an open source code, hacking may be a problem. However, Serena Software (see section 3.3.4.1) uses Facebook only as the entry point and protects sensitive information by putting up firewalls. Thus, this issue can be solved.

The last possible issue managers and employees commented on is the question of how to motivate employees to participate and use the technology. In this case, managers believe that relevant information communicated on Facebook will motivate employees to use the communication channel. It would seem as if managers realise that research is necessary to determine the specific needs of employees to ensure that the organisational Facebook page is useful (see section 2.4 on strategies for relationship building by using Facebook). Both the interviewed managers and employees agreed an organisational Facebook page needed to be useful and relevant for them to motivate the use of Facebook as an additional internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement. The more employees use it, the

more others will also be active on it. This view corresponds with Waters' *et al.* (2009:1-3) view that a Facebook page needs to be useful if an organisation wants to use it as a communication channel to enhance relationships, or employee engagement.

Lastly, managers agreed that the risks regarding the use of Facebook should be mitigated by developing policies and guidelines that can govern the use of Facebook.

To address these findings, this study proposes some recommendations, which will be discussed in the following sections.

6.3 Recommended guidelines for managing Facebook as an internal communication channel to engage employees

The research findings led to the formulation of recommendations on how Facebook, as an internal communication channel, could be managed to enhance employee engagement. These recommendations or guidelines present an answer to research question 5:

Research question 5: How can Facebook, as an internal communication channel, be managed to enhance employee engagement?

Recommendation 1: Using Facebook as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement

There are two specific ways in which Facebook could be implemented as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement:

Firstly, it may be difficult to use Facebook as a formal internal communication channel as it is. Serena Software has in this case probably created a balance on how to implement Facebook for internal communication (see section 3.3.4.1 on Serena Software's use of Facebook). By using Facebook as the front end of their intranet, managers and employees can meet and find information in a space that is recognisable, user-friendly and free. From the front-end page, secure information can be accessed by means of a password-protected link. Thus, sensitive business information is kept behind a firewall that can only be accessed and viewed by employees and not by external stakeholders.

It is also vital to keep a balance between formal and informal communication. Managers should create an open environment where employees trust that they can share their opinions and thoughts, whether it is business related or not.

The second option is for the organisation to create its own 'internal Facebook'. A socially interactive channel based on the principles and functionality of Facebook can be created, and because it is based on an intranet, all information will remain secure and private. Thus, because it is a closed social platform, security and privacy issues are eliminated. Employees and managers can create their own profiles, with as much personal information as they choose. Groups can also be created for discussions on specific topics whether formal or informal. However, this implies that Facebook would not be suitable as it is.

Planning for and implementing a new communication strategy around Facebook is vital and should be a strategic management function, especially if the organisation aims to use Facebook to engage employees. The communication strategy for Facebook as an internal communication channel should be developed alongside the broader organisational strategy in order to assist the organisation to achieve its goal of engaging employees. Furthermore, for both the above options, it is crucial to create a policy that will regulate employees and managers' use of Facebook for internal communication. This policy should provide very specific guidelines that will mitigate some of the risks involved in creating an open and trusting culture within the organisation, including disclosure of sensitive business information and defamation (see section 3.3.4.2).

In order to overcome the risks involved in using Facebook for internal communication, it is crucial that the organisation develop policies and guidelines on the use of Facebook as an internal communication channel. Some of these guidelines include that the leaders of an organisation should lead by example and model the behaviour they would like to see from employees. The organisation should build its policies around performance rather than productivity, measuring success on output rather than the fact that employees worked an eight-hour day. Training is also an essential part of the process of implementing Facebook and ensuring that all employees understand how to use it. Through an 'employee bill of rights', the organisation can demonstrate to employees that their opinion and views matter. Employees must however take responsibility for their actions by remaining respectful and by adhering to the organisation's values and culture when communicating. The guidelines can also include specific sections on the issue of confidentiality and disclosure of sensitive information (Department of Internal Affairs, 2011:3; Ross, 2009; Blanchard, 2011:85-93).

Recommendation 2: Creating a culture where two-way communication is valued and trust promoted

Creating trust in the organisation is vital in order for employees to feel that they can state their opinion without repercussions. Managers should trust employees to adhere to the organisation's culture and the guidelines for internal communication on Facebook. Two-way communication is needed to build stronger relationships between employees and managers and this should improve employee engagement. However, if employees fear stating their opinion, it will be a major barrier to improving two-way communication and building a trusting relationship between managers and employees to enhance employee engagement.

Using Facebook as an additional channel for internal communication may promote even better two-way communication between managers and employees. This may in turn increase levels of trust between managers and employees. Trust however, remains a component of the culture of an organisation and if managers are not open to listening to employees, no communication channel available can help to increase trust.

Hon and Grunig (1999:19) identified different dimensions of trust that should be present in order for a level of trust to be present amongst employees and managers. The dimensions include integrity, dependability and competence. In order to promote trust between managers and employees, managers can provide employees the opportunity to speak without fear, for example in a group discussion on Facebook. Employees should be able to depend on managers to act with integrity and not victimise employees giving their opinions on a specific issue, while managers should be able to depend on employees to communicate respectfully with everyone on Facebook. By actively listening to employees' opinions and by participating in discussions amongst employees, managers can demonstrate clearly that employees' opinions matter, that they are respected as being competent and that they are listened to. Most importantly, engaging in two-way communication and listening to employees can also assure employees that they can influence the decision-making process. This will help employees feel valued and will influence employee engagement positively. Information should also be shared equally and honesty should always be valued.

Managers have to cultivate relationships with employees and according to Waters *et al.* (2009:2), there are three strategies to build relationships by using Facebook as an internal communication channel, namely disclosure, usefulness and interactivity (see section 3.3.4.4). These strategies are closely linked to the relationship cultivation strategies as identified by Hon and Grunig (1999:14), namely access, positivity, openness, assurance,

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networking and sharing of tasks (see section 2.4). Managers should be willing to disclose information to employees regarding the goals for using Facebook as a channel, explain who is responsible for monitoring the channel and what the organisation's policies entail that will govern the use of Facebook. Disclosure links to Hon and Grunig's (1999:14) strategies of providing access to information and being open in a relationship. Information shared on Facebook should also be useful for employees and should add value not only in social interaction but also in providing business related information and promoting organisational learning. In this regard, the organisational Facebook page can provide employees a channel through which to network with each other as well as with managers, in order to share tasks. Furthermore, interactivity or two-way communication is necessary for relationship building and Facebook has shown to be an interactive channel that can promote two-way communication. An interactive internal communication channel such as Facebook would assure employees that managers are committed to building a strong manager-employee relationship.

It is furthermore suggested that managers and employees are sensitised to the value of an environment where two-way communication, strong manager-employee relationships and employee engagement are promoted. If employees of all levels of the organisation understand the benefits of working in an organisation with a symmetrical worldview, all employees might strive towards promoting two-way communication and establishing strong, trusting and mutually beneficial relationships.

Lastly, managers and employees together could create a contract of understanding that will form the outline for a policy to govern the use of Facebook. The parties involved can negotiate together the terms of this contract of understanding to ensure that all expectations regarding the use of Facebook are met. Creating a space for mutual control (control mutuality) will most definitively have a positive impact on the relationship (see section 2.4). According to Hon and Grunig (1999:19), control mutuality is one of the indicators that shows a strong relationship, which should lead to more effective employee engagement.

6.4   Limitations and recommendations for future research

6.4.1   Limitations

The exploratory nature of this study led to the researcher focussing on only two organisations within the financial sector of South Africa. This means that the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other organisations within South Africa, although the recommendations could be used as guidelines if organisations would consider implementing the use of Facebook for internal communication.

A second limitation of this research is that the participants do not all have a Facebook account and none of the two organisations use Facebook as an internal communication tool. This means that participants do not necessary have the experience using Facebook as a channel of communication. The focus however remains on the participants' expectations regarding the channel.

6.4.2   Recommendations for future research

It is recommended that a more in-depth and thorough study be conducted on how Serena Software uses Facebook as an internal communication channel, as this could be a valuable case study of how Facebook could be successfully implemented as an internal communication channel to enhance employee engagement.

A follow-up to the study at hand could be conducted to determine whether organisations in South Africa have started to adopt what seems to be an international trend to use Facebook as an internal communication channel, and whether these organisations experience enhanced employee engagement as a result.

Another study could broaden the scope of this study looking at Facebook to communicate internally, and understand how social media in general could be used to enhance employee engagement within organisations. Other social media could include Twitter, LinkedIn, Wikipedia and YouTube.

It is also suggested that a study be conducted on the question whether two-way communication improves manager-employee relationships, which leads to improved employee engagement, or if strong manager-employee relationships will lead to improved two-way communication.

Finally, an interdisciplinary study could be conducted to understand why employees and managers use social media to communicate from a behavioural perspective, and what the factors are that motivate them to use these channels.

6.5   Conclusion

In conclusion, it would seem that from a theoretical perspective, Facebook has the potential to enhance two-way communication between managers and employees. This could then lead to improved two-way communication and employee engagement. The issue amongst employees and managers however remains mainly one of trust. If employees do not trust that their managers would not police the channel and that they are not able to state their opinion openly and with responsibility, Facebook as an internal communication channel will not be effective.

The causal relationship between effective manager-employee relationships and the use of two-way communication is also a complicated issue: Which one comes first? The answer might be that this is a cyclical process. Two-way communication will help built trust and improve relationships, and trustful relationships will help improve two-way communication in an ongoing cycle.

Every organisation should however buy into the concept of a symmetrical worldview where two-way communication is a truly reciprocal process and an act of listening sincerely.

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