If Everyone Knew What Everyone Knows, Everyone Would Know More

- How Organisational Storytelling can be used to Manage Tacit Knowledge

Bachelor's thesis within Business Administration

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Abstract

In order to achieve competitive advantage, organisations have to be strategic in their knowledge management. This specifically concerns the management of tacit knowledge, which is known as the intangible type of knowledge. Without an effective strategy for this, organisations stand the risk of losing valuable knowledge and expertise when employees leave the organisation. Research on how to manage tacit knowledge is limited. Therefore, this thesis has investigated the possibility of using organisational storytelling as a tool to manage tacit knowledge. Hence, the purpose with this thesis is to investigate whether organisational storytelling can be used as a strategy to manage tacit knowledge.

This has been examined through a case study at SCA Packaging Sweden, which is a rare example of an organisation, which uses storytelling to share knowledge. Qualitative interviews and organisational stories have been analysed in order to investigate how storytelling can be used to create, retain and transfer tacit knowledge. The data collected has also been used to determine if organisational storytelling is effective when managing tacit knowledge.

From our analysis we could conclude that SCA Packaging Sweden’s usage of organisational storytelling creates, retains, and transfers knowledge within the organisation. In addition, our analysis has shown that the stories are rich in tacit knowledge. We can therefore argue that organisational storytelling can be an effective strategy to manage tacit knowledge.
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Introduction

“We know more than we can tell...” (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4)

This statement from the recognised researcher and philosopher Michael Polanyi is almost 50 years old, but still central for contemporary businesses. Knowledge is today considered to be one of the most important strategic resources of a firm and has become a central subject in recent research (Grant, 1996; Quinn, Anderson & Finkelstein, 1996; Lam, 2000). During the last decades, businesses have experienced a shift in what generates competitive advantage. From having actual, physical resources to stay competitive, it is today capabilities to capture intellectual assets which are of importance (Hansen, Nohria & Tierney, 1999; Grant, 1996; Quinn et al., 1996). Due to this shift, the earlier resource-based view of the firm has developed into a knowledge-based view.

Knowledge is a flow of personalised information and influenced by its human holder (Nonaka, 1994). One of the greatest challenges contemporary managers face is the loss of knowledge due to retirements and resignations (Arif, Egbu, Alom & Khalfan, 2008). The ability to manage knowledge in order to keep it within the organisation is therefore essential for the firm to stay competitive (Grant, 1996; Nonaka, 1994).

1.1 Background

The area of knowledge management has received increasing attention and can be defined as “the explicit strategies, tools, and practices applied by management that seek to make knowledge a resource for the organization” (Scarborough, 2008 p. 758). Knowledge management includes several different aspects. Argote, McEvily and Reagans (2003) suggest that knowledge management discusses fundamental questions of how knowledge is created, retained and transferred in an organisation.

Two different types of knowledge can be distinguished: tacit and explicit (Grant, 1996; Nonaka, 1994; Polanyi, 1966). Explicit knowledge is systematic and can be codified and is thus easily managed. Tacit knowledge on the other hand is highly personal, connected to context and difficult to articulate, which makes it problematic to share among individuals (Nonaka, 1994). To distinguish them, one can say that tacit knowledge leaves room for interpretation while explicit knowledge does not. Even though tacit and explicit knowledge differ they are complementary in practice and an interaction of the two is crucial (Nonaka, 1994; Lam, 2000)

Researches suggest most knowledge in organisations is in tacit form (Suppiah & Sandhu, 2011). Wah (1999) states that 90 per cent of an organisation’s knowledge is stored in individuals heads rather than in databases and explicit knowledge is
only considered to be “... the tip of the iceberg of the entire body of possible knowledge” (Nonaka, 1994, p.16). Moreover, from research it is shown that tacit knowledge improves innovation development and economic possibilities and is thus, important for gaining competitive advantage (Johannessen, Olaisen & Olsen, 2001; Mascitelli, 2000; Suppiah & Sandhu, 2011). The tacit knowledge can be experienced as an intuition developed within an environment (Lubit, 2001). It consists of a combination between technical and hard-to-pin-down skills, mental models and beliefs. It is often referred to as the term “know-how” (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2007). Another example of knowledge that is considered to be tacit is sales skills (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). An expert within a field can easily understand the expression of “rule-of-thumb”. However, to know when to actually use the rule of thumb is dependent on expertise, which is gained through experience. This expertise is an example of tacit knowledge that a person without prior experience would benefit from knowing (Swap, Leonard, Shields & Abrahams, 2001).

Organisations have earlier invested substantially in IT solutions to cope with knowledge transfer. However, this is not the solution in the case of tacit knowledge but can rather have a negative effect (Desouza, 2003; Johannessen et al., 2001). Instead, it is suggested that organisations need to provide “Supportive, interactive learning environments built on trust, openness and collective ownership...” (Smith, 2001, p.319). Further, Desouza (2003) argues that an alternative approach to good old-fashioned face-to-face communication needs to be taken in order to manage tacit knowledge. According to Kleiner and Roth (1997), learning stories is an effective way to share and implement knowledge. It has also been suggested that it is possible to make tacit knowledge more tangible, by the usage of storytelling (Boje, 2007).

Storytelling is “…a detailed narrative of past management actions, employee interactions, or other intra- or extra- organizational events that are communicated informally within the organization.” (Swap et al., 2001, p. 103). There has often been a doubtful mind-set when it comes to the introduction of stories in the business world, however it can be argued that it is gaining more and more acceptance (Denning, 2004; Gabriel, 2005). Researchers in the subject of storytelling have further not been focusing on making this applicable as a management tool. Due to this, Gabriel (2005) states that there has been a gap between academic research and practitioners of storytelling. An integration has begun between the two, however this research has mainly been associated with fields such as corporate culture, marketing and branding (James & Minnis, 2004; Woodside, Sood & Miller, 2008). Yet, there is still a lack of research of the internal use of organisational storytelling.
1.2 Problem

In contemporary organisations physical resources are no longer as vital as intellectual assets. Therefore, the management of knowledge has become increasingly important for organisations. Research has shown that a great majority of the knowledge in organisations is tacit. Tacit knowledge is valuable since it contains skills, experiences and other types of important knowledge, which may be lost due the difficulties of managing this type of knowledge. Therefore, the strategic management of knowledge, especially the management of *tacit knowledge*, has become crucial for organisations in gaining competitive advantage.

The potential loss of valuable tacit knowledge is a constant risk for contemporary organisations. At the same time, there is a lack of research on how to manage tacit knowledge. Therefore, there are not yet any well-acknowledged strategies for this purpose. Consequently, to reduce this risk, there is a need for strategies to manage tacit knowledge.

It has, in recent research, been shown that organisational stories have the potential of carrying tacit knowledge and make it more tangible. Nevertheless, the research on organisational storytelling in relation to managing tacit knowledge is scant. We therefore aim to explore the possibilities of using organisational storytelling as a tool to manage tacit knowledge. This will be further introduced in the following section, where our purpose and research questions will be presented.
2 Purpose

The purpose with this thesis is to investigate whether organisational storytelling can be used as a strategy to manage tacit knowledge.

2.1 Research Questions

1) In what ways can organisational stories carry tacit knowledge?

2) How can organisational storytelling be used in creating, retaining and transferring tacit knowledge?

3) Is organisational storytelling effective in managing tacit knowledge?

2.2 Definitions

Knowledge Management: “... the explicit strategies, tools, and practices applied by management that seek to make knowledge a resource for the organization.” (Scarbrough, 2008 p. 758). According to Argote et al. (2003) this is achieved through creation, retention and transfer of knowledge in organisations.

Strategy: The planning and coordination of actions by managers in order to achieve a set of long-term goals and objectives for the organisation. (Lewis & Kipley, 2012).

Organisational storytelling: “... a detailed narrative of past management actions, employee interactions, or other intra- or extra- organizational events that are communicated informally within the organization.” (Swap et al., 2001, p. 103).

Story: Nonlinear, fragmented, distributed and collective. Stories leave more to the imagination of the listener since the whole chronology is not revealed (Boje, 2007).

Metaphor: A figure of speech where one thing is described in terms of another (Nelson & Di Domenico 2007).

Tacit knowledge: The type of knowledge, which is highly personal and difficult to articulate. Examples of tacit knowledge include skills and experience (Nonaka, 1994).

Explicit knowledge: The type of knowledge, which can be expressed in words and numbers. Examples of explicit knowledge include documented procedures and research findings (Walsh & Bartunek, 2007).
3 Frame of Reference

This frame of reference will treat some central aspects within knowledge-based theory and knowledge management, including its sub processes of knowledge creation, retention and transfer. Further, it will discuss how tacit knowledge should be treated in order to make it more tangible and finishes with a section on organisational storytelling and its classification.

3.1 Knowledge-based Theory

Knowledge-based theory of the firm builds on the previous and well-acknowledged resource-based theory of the firm. This resource-based theory suggests that a firm should base its strategy on its unique key resources and capabilities to stay competitive (Barney, 1991). The theory further suggests that these key resources should fulfil certain requirements of being valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable in order to offer competitive advantage to the firm.

Today, knowledge has arguably become the most important resource for a firm to stay competitive (Grant, 1996). Thus, a knowledge-based theory of the firm has evolved from the resource-based theory. Knowledge is important since it is intangible and specific for the firm (Nickerson & Zenger, 2004) and enables innovation and improvements to become more efficient (Nonaka, Toyama & Nagata, 2000). According to Grant (1996), knowledge-based theory does not consider knowledge by itself as most important but the integration of individuals’ specialised knowledge to be vital for the firm. The theory suggests that the firm’s primary role is this integration of knowledge. This suggestion is based on the assumptions that knowledge is the most important capability of production and efficiency requires knowledge to be created and stored within the individual. Further, many types of specialised knowledge is required for production (Grant, 1996).

Similarly to Grant (1996), several researchers have taken on a knowledge-based approach in their research. Nonaka et al. (2000) suggest knowledge to be embedded in humans and focus knowledge-based theory on the creation of knowledge from existing knowledge and information. Argote et al. (2003) argue knowledge-based theory to deal with the content of organisational activities. Nickerson et al. (2004) have developed knowledge-based theory further by stating the generating of new knowledge to be the most crucial capability of an organisation. Moreover, knowledge-based theory includes both tacit and explicit knowledge. However, it put emphasis on tacit knowledge, because of the difficulties in transferring this type of knowledge (Grant, 1996).
3.2 Knowledge Management

Knowledge management has gained more attention in research in recent years (Argote et al., 2003; Scarbrough, 2008). It is a multidisciplinary field and therefore, to facilitate and have a clear focus, this paper will take on the description of knowledge management used by Argote et al. (2003). Their description treats some fundamental questions of knowledge in an organisation. Firstly, how it is created within an organisation, secondly, how it is retained within an organisation to last over time. Finally, it treats how knowledge is transferred within the organisation (Argote et al., 2003). The different processes are separate yet highly interrelated; one cannot exist without the other. To illustrate; knowledge creation and knowledge retention is closely linked with knowledge transferral, without the transferral of knowledge an organisation can hardly retain knowledge (Argote et al., 2003).

3.2.1 Knowledge Creation

The knowledge creation process emerges when knowledge is shaped in an organisation (Argote et al., 2003). For this, an integration and transformation between tacit and explicit knowledge through communities and social interaction is needed (Nonaka, 1994). Similarly, Bathelt, Malmberg and Maskell (2004) stress the importance of individuals working together to learn and create knowledge on an organisational level. Nonaka (1994) has developed a model for knowledge creation. The model treats both tacit and explicit knowledge and the interaction of the two. For the knowledge creation process to work a conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge is needed. In the model four modes of knowledge conversion is captured: socialization, combination, externalization, and internalization. This is illustrated in figure 3-1.

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**Figure 3-1** Modes of the Knowledge Creation

Nonaka, 1994, p.19
The *socialization* mode treats the conversion of tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge. Employees learn from more experienced workers through observation and imitation. Experience is most important for the sharing of tacit knowledge and this is found in a social context of emotions. However, there are restrictions in the usage of pure socialization as it is difficult to apply in other social contexts (Nonaka, 1994). This view is shared by Ambrosini and Bowman (2001), who suggest tacit knowledge is found in deep relationships between colleges, and therefore, difficult to apply in other settings. On the organisational level, the initial part of knowledge is created through composed teams of interactions that enable sharing of experiences (Nonaka, 1994).

The *combination* mode treats the conversion of explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge and is exchanged through instruments such as modern computer systems. Pure combination can however become shallow and useless in the knowledge creation process, since explicit knowledge alone does not capture any personal meaning (Nonaka, 1994).

The *externalization* mode treats the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge and thus, the two types of knowledge interact. In managing this process, metaphors and analogies are effective since this is a cognitive process, driven by intuition and images (Nonaka, 1994). According to Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) metaphors and stories are an effective way to make individuals share experience they would otherwise not share and can, according to Nonaka (1994), further help the creation of new knowledge from existing, abstract concepts.

The *Internalization* mode treats the conversion of explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge and is referred to as the learning process. Nonaka (1994) argues that from interpretation of the explicit knowledge, the individual can create new tacit knowledge. At this stage the new knowledge is tested on a more collective level of the organisation (Nonaka, 1994). The value of organisational knowledge creation, explained by Erden, von Krogh and Nonaka (2008), is when group members work in a collective manner to solve problems without written, explicit rules or guidelines. According to Alavi and Leidner (2001) IT- systems can support this mode of conversion through learning-by-doing systems and software tutors through intranets.

The interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge is important and the loss of this interaction would consequently be damaging to the organisation (Nonaka, 1994) and hinder learning (Akbar, 2003). It is therefore suggested by Nonaka (1994) that a *spiral of knowledge* should be used, combining all the four knowledge conversion modes, from individual level to organisational level. Other researchers also stress the importance of conversion between tacit and explicit knowledge. Akbar (2003) emphasises the individual level of knowledge creation and suggests the knowledge creation to be two-dimensional process in which the conversion from
tacit-to-explicit and explicit-to-tacit is the most crucial. The spiral of knowledge is described in figure 3-2. In the last mode of internalization, the new concepts are tested and in this process more tacit knowledge is revealed, thus a new process of knowledge creation is activated (Nonaka, 1994).

Figure 3-2 The Spiral of Knowledge Creation

3.2.2 Knowledge Retention

Knowledge retention occurs when an organisation is actively working to embed the knowledge within the organisation in a way that makes it last over time (Argote, et al., 2003). This is to prevent the loss of expert knowledge in organisations (Levy, 2011). Similarly, it can be defined as the retention of "... tacit ... and explicit knowledge within an organisation so it continues to be available" (Ward & Wooler, 2011, p.256). Literature refers to this as organisational memory (Arif et al., 2008; Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Arif et al. (2008) has developed a model of the knowledge retention process, which recognises four steps. It starts by arguing that an effective knowledge retention process depends heavily on how willing the corporation and its individuals are to socialise to initially gain or generate the knowledge. Next step involves transferring tacit knowledge to explicit by documenting it. After documenting the knowledge, it needs to be stored as organisational memory. The final step allows easy access and enables retrieval at a later time. Based on these steps the model incorporates different levels to measure the maturity in an organisation's knowledge retention process:

(1) Level-1: The knowledge is shared amongst the organisation employee.
(2) Level-2: The shared knowledge is documented (transferred from tacit to explicit)
(3) Level-3: The documented knowledge is stored.
(4) Level-4: The stored knowledge is accessible, can be retrieved and used easily

Figure 3-3 Levels of maturity

Arif et al., 2008, p. 102
Levy (2011) gives further insight through a three-step model of how to facilitate the knowledge retention process. The model lays a foundation for the development of a framework that creates possibilities to transform the expert’s knowledge into the organisations knowledge. Firstly, it is suggested that an organisation has to decide which knowledge is worth retaining and which is not. Secondly, the organisation has to transfer the knowledge by organising, planning and implementing it. Without this transfer it is impossible to retain the knowledge. The final stage is to make sure that the knowledge is incorporated in the organisations daily routines. It is essential for an organisation to react when it loses knowledge and substitutes this lost knowledge in a reasonable time frame (Levy, 2011).

### 3.2.3 Knowledge Transfer

According to Alavi and Leidner (2001), the transfer of knowledge occurs at different levels in the organisation such as between individuals, from individual to groups and between groups. How the knowledge should best be transferred is based on the type of knowledge, which is to be shared. Personal transfer is more efficient when it comes to tacit, contextualised knowledge while impersonal channels may be more efficient in knowledge readily transferable to other contexts (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Similarly, Bandura (1977) suggests that one key function of learning is to transfer information to observers. There are three ways in which this transfer can be done; one way in which information is transferred is via observations of other human behaviour in everyday situations called behavioural modeling. A second way to transfer information is via the verbal modeling. This means both verbal and written information where details and descriptions of behaviour are told. The third way to transfer is by what Bandura calls the symbolic modeling. In this, a real or fictional person transfers information via visual media. Symbolic modeling is effective since “Children- or adults, for that matter- rarely have to be compelled to watch television, whereas oral or written reports of the same activities would not hold their attention for long.” (Bandura, 1977, p.40). It is pointed out that this way of transferring information has an enormous power when it comes to spreading information to many people rapidly (Bandura, 1977).

A possible problem to knowledge transferral is that a person may not always transfer its knowledge but rather immediately apply it for personal usage only. Furthermore, even though tacit knowledge is transferred, there is no guarantee that it is passed on accurately between individuals (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Despite this, Ambrosini and Bowman (2001) argue that it is of importance to transfer the tacit knowledge although it may not be articulated perfectly. One way to overcome this and facilitating sharing of tacit knowledge is according to Nonaka (1994) to create mutual trust between employees. When a group transfer its tacit knowledge among the members, a common perspective is created which generate a mutual
trust. In the very beginning of tacit knowledge creation process, images through metaphors are useful to bring perspectives together to facilitate knowledge transfer (Nonaka, 1994).

### 3.2.4 Tacit Knowledge in Knowledge Management

The different theories used in this frame of reference give different examples on how to treat tacit knowledge and make it more tangible. Nonaka (1994) and Desouza (2003) stress the importance of *experience* in creating and transferring tacit knowledge. Further, because of the personal aspect of tacit knowledge, it is suggested the *social context* with trust and openness is vital for good communication and sharing of tacit knowledge (Desouza, 2003; Nonaka, 1994; Smith, 2001). Moreover, Nonaka (1994) discusses the use of *metaphors* to convert tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge followed by the *learning process*, which helps in creating new tacit knowledge from explicit knowledge. This, with the importance of using analogies and stories to share tacit knowledge is also stressed in literature (Stewart, 1997; Swap et al., 2001; Wah, 1999).

The typical ways of assessing business results through return on investment, cost and revenue are not applicable for a knowledge-creating organisation (Nonaka, 1994). These standards are simple and quantitative however, standards of evaluating knowledge creation may be of multiple, qualitative value, such as truthfulness, goodness and the reflection of the organisations visions and values. Further, it is argued that tacit knowledge comes from *organisational values* and the shared mind-set off individuals (Hubert, 1993).

### 3.3 Organisational Storytelling

It is argued that that all workplaces are storytelling organisations that use narratives and stories to make sense of the world (Boje, 2008). From research on connecting cognitive psychology and informal learning and memory, Swap et al. (2001) view storytelling as an informal way of transferring tacit knowledge. Moreover, Bandura (1977) who also promotes learning, states that learning would be highly difficult and dangerous if humans only learn by their own actions. Stories are considered to be a way to guide organisational behaviour (James & Minnis, 2004).

According to Boje (2008) there are two types of organisational storytelling. Narrative, which is a rather complete, chronologic telling with a beginning and end, and stories, which leaves more to the imagination of the listener. Stories are efficient as they can be spread over several contexts and times. Organisations using storytelling should have a combination of both types (Boje, 2008). Swap et al. (2001) does not make the distinction between stories and narratives but states that what makes stories effective is their contextual details, which makes them capable of
transferring tacit knowledge. Therefore, managerial systems, norms and values can be communicated through narratives.

### 3.3.1 Cognitive Dimensions of Organisational Storytelling

Research from cognitive psychology has shown that individuals tend to act upon memorable information to a greater extent than unconscious information not retrieved from memory. Swap et al. (2001) argues that stories promote learning. The reason for this is a set of core cognitive mechanisms of memory, which help individuals to remember what they learnt.

*Availability heuristic* suggests that an event that is made available from memory is more likely to be believed as true. Thus, if aspects of corporate culture or systems are made more vivid they will become more memorable and judged to be truer than if they would have been communicated through data. *Elaboration* suggests that we remember information better when we can integrate and reflect upon it, for instance by constructing vivid images drawn from experience. Stories combine verbal and visual information, which can result in a greater chance of it being remembered. *Episodic memory* suggests that memories grounded in personal experience tend to be readily retrieved. Stories are episodic in nature and thus well remembered (Swap et al., 2001).

### 3.3.2 Classification of Organisational Stories

Literature shows distinctions between different organisational stories (Boje, 2008; Gabriel, 2000; Swap et al., 2001). Gabriel (2000) even suggests that stories must be classified in order to be able to analyse them. Similarly, Boje (2008) defines eight types of sense making via storytelling that are used in organisational storytelling and describes how employees use narratives, both consciously and unconsciously, to make sense of the world. Moreover, Swap et al. (2001) suggest that some stories are more effective than others. It is further argued that concrete and clear stories are especially powerful when communicating tacit knowledge.

Although distinctions are made, different types of stories can be combined (Gabriel, 2000; Boje, 2008; Swap et al., 2001). Swap et al. (2001) state that one single story can communicate tacit knowledge about a company’s capabilities in more than one way; a story about “dealing with obstacles” can for instance communicate how management cares about quality as well as employees future career possibilities. Further, the same story can contain both tacit and explicit knowledge, with a clear explicit content and underlying tacit dimensions. Additionally, true stories are more effective than artificial (Swap et al., 2001). Notable when dealing with deep specific knowledge such as advanced managerial systems, more explicit means of education are needed since stories leaves too much room for interpretation (Swap et al., 2001).
4 Method

4.1 Research Approach

When conducting a study, two different research approaches can be used, inductive and deductive (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003). The deductive approach tests theory through data, whereas the inductive approach develops theory as a result of the analysis of data. This thesis has taken an inductive approach. According to Saunders et al. (2003), this may be used when there is an interest of the actual context in which the event is taking place. Further, the inductive approach is useful if there is limited access to data or lack of prior knowledge in the subject (Saunders et al., 2003). The objective of this thesis is to find out whether organisational storytelling can be used as a strategy to manage tacit knowledge. Since organisational storytelling is highly contextualised and not well researched in knowledge management literature, this subject needs to be better understood in order to gain new insights and therefore an inductive approach is used.

4.2 Research Purpose

There are three basic types of research design; exploratory research, descriptive research and casual research. Exploratory research is used when the research topic is not well grounded in theory (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Due to the lack of prior knowledge in how organisational storytelling can be used to manage tacit knowledge, this thesis is an exploratory study. From initial data collection, the direction of this thesis has somewhat changed. This is however common with exploratory research according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), who state that it is a flexible approach in which direction could change as new insight may appear from data.

4.3 Research Strategy

There are several research strategies to employ when conducting research such as surveys, experiments and case studies. What strategy to chose should be based on the objectives of the study and meet the research questions (Saunders et al. 2009). This thesis has taken the strategy of a case study for reasons which will be explained in the following section.

4.3.1 Case Study

Case studies are a common technique for qualitative studies (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010) and is optimised when questions such as how or why are to be answered and when many variables are included which makes it hard for the researcher to study the phenomenon outside its social context (Saunders et al., 2009). Since the subject of tacit knowledge is highly complex and contextualised a Case study strategy was chosen.
Further, there are two forms of case studies, *single-case studies* and *multiple-case studies*. In single-case studies one case is studied whereas a multiple-case studies two or more cases (Yin, 2009). Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget Packaging Sweden was for this thesis chosen as a single-case study and will be introduced further in a later section. Single-case studies are used when the case is extreme and can provide analysis of a phenomenon which few have studied before and has a value of being a source for developing and challenging existing theory (Saunders et al., 2009). It can be argued that single-case studies may be more vulnerable than multiple case-design as information comes from only one case. The multiple case study therefore is sometimes preferred over a single case as it may give a stronger effect (Yin, 2009). Often this criticism reflects a doubtfulness regarding the uniqueness of the single case and questions can be arised of the ability to conduct empirical work. However if the circumstance can be justified, a single-case study may be the appropriate design to use (Yin, 2009).

In designing this thesis, a multiple case-study was considered for the above mentioned reasons. Therefore, valuable contact was made with a manager working with storytelling at a leading employer branding company in Sweden. This person had a significant network and knowledge within storytelling and our specific reason for this contact was to gain further knowledge in the area of storytelling and potential possibilities to find other cases to study. From this however we found that not many organisations used organisational storytelling and of those who did, it was mainly used to communicate culture within the organisations and therefore could not be studied as they would not help us to fully answer our research questions. Initial contact with three different companies was made, but they where disregaded for the same reason. We therefore consider SCAP to be an unique case, which strategically use organisational storytelling as a tool to manage knowledge, thus, an excellent singel-case study to study for the purpose of this thesis.

### 4.3.1.1 SCA Packaging Sweden

SCA Packaging Sweden develops, produces and market mainly corrugated cardboard packages. It has been a unit of Sweden’s largest corporate group, Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget (SCA), but was in January 2012 sold to the English corporate group DS Smith. SCA Packaging Sweden operates in more than 100 countries and had in 2011, a net sale of 26 billion SEK (SCA Annual Report, 2011). SCA Packaging Sweden has offices in Värnamo, Göteborg, Malmö, Mariestad, Stockholm and Norrköping. In this thesis SCA Packaging Sweden will hereby be referred to as SCAP.

For this thesis, the main focus has been on the sales team in SCAP. The reason for this is that skills needed in sales is much based on tacit knowledge and was therefore relevant to the purpose of this study. Storytelling was implemented in
2003 in the sales department as a result of an aging workforce. From having worked strategically with organisational storytelling for nine years both management and its employees have experienced different stages of the usage of organisational storytelling. For this reason they can provide the study with important knowledge in order to make an in depth analysis of this phenomena.

### 4.3.1.2 Qualitative Study in Case Studies

Due to the little understanding in previous research on organisational storytelling in managing knowledge, a *qualitative method* has been used in this case study. This method is practiced when the researcher wants to investigate and understand a phenomenon of which little is known. Qualitative methods allow for in-depth studies where several problem areas can be analysed and therefore, by using this method the researchers get a deeper description with many layers. This is in contrast to quantitative method whereby the subject can be studied through statistical measurements or similar types of data quantification (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). A problem with qualitative case studies is that there may be difficulties to generalise them. The aim with this study is however not to generalise but rather explore how the phenomena of organisational storytelling can be used as a strategy to manage tacit knowledge.

### 4.4 Data Collection

A *triangular approach* has been used for the data collection in order to validate the it and make it reliable. With this approach information is verified by getting it from more than two informants (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and different sources (Patton, 2002). For this reason three, unstructured interviews have been conducted, one in-depth interview with a representative from the middle management and two semi-structured interviews with employees. Further, secondary, non-written and internal documentation has been categorised and analysed. This takes the form of 56 stories of *Legenden* (English translation: The Legend). Legenden is a fictive character and one of three tools used in SCAP’s storytelling. According to Saunders et al. (2009) this form of non-written, documentary data can be used to triangulate data collected through interviews. Additionally, an observation of SCAP Värsamo was made during a field visit. This gave us valuable insight and knowledge about parts of the organisational culture and working environment. This is emphasised by Yin (2009) who states that observations help in understanding the contexts of the phenomena studied. Finally, archival records of SCAP’s annual report and homepage have been used to further validate the study.

#### 4.4.1 Primary Data

Interviews are considered as the most important source when conducting a case study (Yin, 2009). There are different types of interviews to be used. Saunders et
al. (2009) explains three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured also called in-depth. The structured interview is often used in quantitative studies, whereas the other two are common for qualitative studies. This thesis is a qualitative study and therefore semi-structured and unstructured types of interviews have been used.

4.4.1.1 In-depth Interviews
In unstructured interviews, the respondent is free to discuss its reactions, opinions and behaviour regarding different phenomena (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Initial contact followed by an unstructured interview with the marketing manager Barbro Berggren at SCAP was made at an early stage in the process. From this initial interview a decision could be made to chose the company as a case study. This is a common use of interviews according to Saunders et al. (2009), as early interviews can help formulate the research questions of a study. The choice was made to later conduct an in-depth interview with B. Berggren, who was the implementer of organisational storytelling in 2003, and has since then been the one in charge for this strategy. The interview took place at SCAP Värnamo and lasted for 65 minutes. By interviewing the initiator, valuable knowledge was gained. This included the strategic dimension of the use of organisational storytelling and how it has developed since the introduction. In-depth interviews are often used in case studies. Although there is not a set list of questions, the interviewers need to be clear of what objectives that are to be obtained with the interview. This type of interview gives the interviewee possibilities to give explanations more freely of the relevant experiences connected to the research topic (Saunders et al., 2009). The fact that the initiator may be less objective of the usage of storytelling have been taken into consideration but the insight given has, nonetheless been considered of great value for analysis. This was also one of the reasons for triangulating the data.

4.4.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews
The in-depth interview laid a foundation on which the following semi-structured interviews could be based upon. The semi-structured interviews were made with the purpose of validating the first, in-depth interview, and to gain valuable insight from an employee perspective (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The interviewees were chosen by B. Berggren and can thus be a form of snow-ball sampling according to Saunders et al. (2009). However, the research team had certain requirements of the interviewees regarding different length of employment, which gives the sampling an aspect of a purposive sampling method as well. This technique is common in case studies where the researcher wish to gather particularly informative data from small samples (Saunders et al., 2009). A negative aspect of snow-ball sampling is the risk of bias as the sample may be homogenous. This has been taken into consideration and to prevent this much preparation of the
Interview techniques was done, which is discussed in coming sections. To meet the objectives of this study the decision was made to interview one employee that was employed during the initiation of storytelling and a second employee that was relatively new to the use of storytelling. These different time perspectives of the employees’ experiences could be assumed to be give a deeper understanding of storytelling in SCAP thus, better answer the research questions of the study.

The two semi-structured interviews were conducted as telephone interviews and lasted for 29 respectively 26 minutes. This approach facilitates the contact making process where personal contact may be impractical due to distance and time. An issue with this approach, is that it may not give interviews the possibility to establish trust, which may hinder full responses to sensitive questions (Saunders et al., 2009). For this study the long distance and lack of time made the researchers decide to still undertake the semi-structured interviews by telephone. The problem of not having time to establish trust was somewhat overcome by the fact that the respondents had been contacted by their manager prior the interview, which made them aware of the objective of the interviews. Further, as both interviews were conducted with employees working within the sales department in SCAP, using telephone is part of their daily routines. This may make them feel comfortable talking by telephone in general which further made us confident in using this approach. Due to the difficulties of taking notes using this approach (Saunders et al., 2009) audio recording was used.

For all interviews, relevant themes were discussed although the themes of the semi-structured interviews were more specific. The use of themes is a flexible yet controlled way to conduct in depth and semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2009) and is beneficial since it leave room for the context of discovery (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The themes were discussed freely but led by the research team. This is emphasised by Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010) who states that the role of the interviewer is to give leading questions and record the responses to later analyse the how and why. For this reason an integration of different types of questions such as open questions, probing questions and closed questions, was used when found needed.

4.4.1.3 Validation of Interviews

As mentioned, the risk of using snow-ball sampling is that the sample may be biased as may be very similar to the previous respondent (Saunders et al., 2009). The fact that the two employee interviewees were chosen by B. Berggren has therefore been taken into consideration. Further, when conducting interviews, the direction the interview will take is dependent on the researchers skills, which can result in the interviewer not being objective. Being aware of these risks of sample and interviewer bias, the research team has put much effort in investigating
interview techniques. This is according to (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010) a way to overcome possible biases. Further, the interviews were designed to build up trust between the interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, more sensitive and private questions appeared at the end, which is suggested by Saunders et al. (2009). Additionally, it is encouraged to balance a neutral language with a positive tone of voice to encourage trust and sharing of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009) which was considered when conducting the in-depth interview. Moreover, to prevent interviewer bias and get an objective perception, all three researchers participated in all interviews. For the in-depth interview, the conversation was open and all three participated, although one was chosen to lead the interview in order to not loose focus and to have a natural flow. For the semi-structured telephone interviews only one researcher was speaking to avoid confusion, but all three were listening to the conversation through speakerphone to prevent misinterpretation.

In the beginning of all interviews the interviewee was asked for permission to record the interview. Saunders et al. (2009) highlight the importance of also explaining the purpose of the audio-recording to the interviewee. Due to this, the research team clearly stated the reasons for the audio recording and that the interviewee was free to either accept or decline this proposition. All interviewees agreed upon this, which has been valuable for an accurate analysis. Beyond the recording, notes were also taken. Notes helps the interviewer to keep focus throughout the interview and to capture details such as facial expressions (Saunders et al., 2009). This was of great value, especially for the in-depth, personal interview.

In this thesis, we have chosen to refer to interviews with the marketing manager Barbro Berggren as B.Berggren, however regarding the semi-structured interviews both interviewees were anonymous to assure confidence and openness. Their names have therefore been replaced by Alpha and Beta throughout the entire study. The themes discussed in the in-depth interview and the questions used for the semi-structured interviews can be found in appendices 2 and 3.

### Chart 4-1 Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Interview type</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Initial Contact with Legenden</th>
<th>Date for the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Berggren</td>
<td>Unstructured In-depth</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Initiator of Legenden in 2003</td>
<td>2012-02-06 2012-02-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>2003 in the initiation process.</td>
<td>2012-03-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>In 2005, in position in quality department.</td>
<td>2012-03-28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 4.4.2 Secondary Data

### 4.4.2.1 Classification of Stories

From interviews, we received valuable insight in how SCAP work with storytelling and its effects, both from a managerial and employee perspective. However, from the interviews alone we would only be able to analyse the company's perception of knowledge in the stories, not whether they carried any actual tacit knowledge. This is due to the lack of prior research on organisational storytelling in managing tacit knowledge and the fact that it is highly contextualised.

To overcome this, we triangulated the data collected from interviews with secondary, non-written documentation. From this we were able to analyse whether these stories help to manage tacit knowledge according to our frame of reference. From SCAP’s internal records we were given access to 56 Legenden stories to analyse. These had a time range from year 2005 to 2008. This was a sample chosen randomly by B. Berggren. Research suggest that stories should be classified in order to be analysed. Thus, Legenden were classified in the light of the theory of tacit knowledge. From this we gained valuable insight to whether Legenden contain explicit or tacit knowledge and how it is communicated.

In the classification process all three researchers initially listened together to a small sample of stories to get familiar with the character and the general composition. From this, six categories were decided upon to make the classification: *metaphor, information, experience, corporate values, sales technique* and *educational*. The categories are defined by the reasearchers according to chart 4-2.

**Chart 4-2 Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>Legenden's symbolic descriptions of something in order to explain something else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Explicit, no need for interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>If Legenden mentions an example of something that himself or a member of the salesteam have been through. Lesson learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CorporateValues</td>
<td>Communicating values and beliefs of how to work and behave in SCAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales technique</td>
<td>Transmit skills in sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Explanation of products and how SCAP works.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Analysis of Data

Each interview has been transcribed by the members of the research team. The interviews resulted in 36 pages of transcription. These have been stored, together with the recordings, and can be accessed to upon request. This was done in order for the research team to be able to analyse the data as accurate as possible. All interviews was conducted and transcribed in Swedish. It should be noted that empirical material used has been translated to English from Swedish however, extensive time have been devoted to make it as accurate as possible.

In summarising and analysing the secondary documents of Legenden an triangulating analysts strategy was used to validate the data. This strategy is explainid by Patton (2002) as having more than two people to individually and independently interpretate the qualitative data and then compare the different findings. All three researchers listened individually to the stories and classified them independently according to the classification scheme which can be find in appendix 4. For the stories and their categories, comments were made. These comments were used for giving examples to the empirical findings and to help analyse the content. The result of classification was formulated in percentage form and personal comments. The result varied somewhat between the researchers, however this is unavoidable as some categories are of tacit character, thus the interpretations are highly personal. We decided to calculate the average mean since the classifications of the sample were substantially similar. The average mean was calculated by adding the three researchers analysis in each category; three then di-vided the total sum.

The analysis is structured to meet the objectives of this thesis. First the tacit dimension of Legenden is discussed. This is followed by an analysis of the three sub processes of knowledge management, namely the retention, creation and transfer-ral of knowledge. It should be taking into consideration that these three processes overlap both in theory and practice. Finally, the effectiveness of storytelling in SCAP is discussed. Because of the complexity with tacit knowledge the effectiveness will be analysed by assessing how well in line SCAP is with the frame of reference. The data from which the analysis is based upon will be presented in the follow-ing section.
5 SCAP as a Storytelling Organisation

5.1 Organisational Storytelling in SCAP

5.1.1 Reasons for Implementing Organisational Storytelling

SCAP started with storytelling in 2003 when it was faced with the fact that the demography within the company would lead to a large part of their sales team retiring within the coming 5 to 10 years. This demography led to a problem since this large group of people were the ones holding much of the knowledge within SCAP since they had been a part of the company for a long time (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24).

According to B. Berggren, SCAP decided to use storytelling in order to keep the knowledge within the company

“... otherwise we saw a scenario where more and more people with knowledge just disappeared from the company and was replaced with people with no knowledge about the company, because you cannot have knowledge about a company that you just started at” (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24)

B. Berggren suggests that the reason to why storytelling is preferable in keeping this knowledge is since everybody get to take part of the knowledge, in contrast to one new employee walking alongside one senior employee. However, she also underlines that not all stories SCAP uses are relevant for all employees all the time. It is therefore up to the employee to select what is of importance to them. Similarly, Alpha suggests that "It is up to each and everyone to absorb what can possibly be of importance" (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-20).

5.1.2 How SCAP Implemented Organisational Storytelling

To capture the knowledge SCAP decided to gather the around hundred salespeople that where about to retire in smaller groups. B. Berggren (personal communication, 2012-02-24) highlights the importance of the groups not being to big since this in her opinion would hinder the natural flow of telling their personal stories. SCAP decided that the groups would consist of seven people. When the groups where constructed, each group was invited to an old house outside of Värnamo at different dates. They met at noon and started by having lunch together, after they lit a fire to set the mood for storytelling. The sales team where not informed beforehand what the meeting was about. Employees found it difficult to start sharing their stories B. Berggren (personal communication, 2012-02-24) therefore asked them to say something about their latest sale and then about their first sale, which is something everybody remembers she says. Similarly, Alpha suggests, “… someone told something that created a spinoff to a new story told by another person...”
(Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-29). More and more stories where told and every single one of them where recorded.

This procedure was repeated until everyone had been given a chance to tell their anecdotes. As a result SCAP gathered a vast amount of stories it wanted to spread in the organisation. SCAP wanted to spread this valuable knowledge in a structured and feasible way, which would last over time and not just for the moment since it was crucial for this knowledge to stay within the organisation. Different options where addressed when revising alternatives of how to do this. One alternative that SCAP discussed was the option of taking the collected sales-stories and publish them on the intranet just as they were. This alternative was disregarded since SCAP was of the opinion that no one would read the information. Another alternative was "... to collect them in a book. But there is no use to do that because no one would read it anyway" (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24). Similarly, Alpha argues that mass emails would not be read frequently.

SCAP then came to the conclusion that in order to spread the collected stories most effectively a figure had to be created. In cooperation with a copywriter, which had been working with SCAP in other projects, Legenden was created. Legenden is a man that has been working within SCAP forever, has worked in all departments and knows everything within the organisation. The copywriter then took all the gathered material and started to dramatise it into 550 stories, which were read and recorded by professionals. In the early versions Legenden talks about his wife, children and personal life in order to create the impression of Legenden as a real human being and not a fictional character (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24).

When Legenden is communicated, each employee gets an email with a link to the weekly Legenden story. When the email is opened a video of a fireplace is played and the well-recognised voice starts telling the story (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24).

If employees want to share a story or experience, they contact B. Berggren, which in turn contact the copywriter who gets back to the employee. B. Berggren believes this is a good way since it makes more employees share their stories if they do not have to dramatise and write the stories themselves.

"... people are horrified of how they shall express themselves...therefore we are rigorous in telling the employees that they do not have to write the story." (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24).

Further, Alpha suggests:

"... the most important is that we do not need to put a lot of effort on this, there is other people that handle it for us. I do not think it would
work if we had to write this because you would not take of your own
time to do this. Instead you get to talk to Olle [the copywriter] who is
always a decent man” (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-29)

5.1.3 Extensions of Legenden in SCAP

Bestpack Oss Emellan (English translation: Bestpack between us) was introduced in
2008 as a response to signals within the organisation wanting to have a visual me-
dia that showed what Legenden talked about. SCAP therefore decided to videotape
their employees while they explained how different innovations of packaging
worked. In this type of storytelling the employees are responsible for writing their
own script. According to B. Berggren (personal communication, 2012-02-24) the
purpose of Bestpack Oss Emellan is to capture the feeling of “… being in the canteen
talking to your colleagues.” but it is being videotaped since SCAP is located
throughout Sweden. Moreover, management has tried to make Bestpack Oss Emellan
as simple as possible, and not let the employees take too many retakes. If it is
too perfect, then next person might not dare to go through with his or her idea B.
Berggren (personal communication, 2012-02-24).

Kommuniké (English translation: non applicable) is SCAP’s newest addition to or-
ganisational storytelling. According to B. Berggren they realised that they have
much internal communication that also needs to be spread within the company. B.
Berggren suggests that internal communication within SCAP range from how the
employees are expected to behave when answering the telephone to how to write
an email. Kommuniké also treats subjects such as the core values of SCAP. Kom-
muniké is also a visual media but the difference from Bestpack Oss Emellan is that
it is the same person in every video. (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-
02-24).

5.2 How SCAP Exercise Organisational Storytelling

5.2.1 Functions of Organisational Storytelling in SCAP

B. Berggren (personal communication, 2012-02-24) argues that storytelling “… is a
way of connecting to each other, someone says something that the next person con-
tinuous to develop”. Further, she argues that storytelling is natural in human’s life
and has been throughout history, it starts at home with fairy tales. Beta (personal
communication, 2012-03-28) explains organisational storytelling as a means of
sharing experiences among colleagues, no matter the content. Alpha (personal
communication, 2012-03-29) suggests that storytelling is a means of transmitting
information in a fast and successful way throughout the company. Moreover, B.
Berggren suggests that storytelling does neither have to be success stories nor true
stories, “… they just have to be reliable stories that can happen in a salespersons eve-
day life” (personal communication, 2012-02-24).
According to B. Berggren, stories of Legenden are meant to teach employees tips and tricks on how to work in SCAP. The stories can be about absolutely anything, not necessarily good things, but also stories about situations that went wrong. The stories should also be aligned with the core values and objectives of SCAP, of which the copywriter is aware. B. Berggren states, “If a story from an employee does not fit the core values, naturally it is changed so that it does.” The same goes with a story that is considered negative, for example promoting one employee while offending another since this can rather damaging for the organisation. Therefore, B.Berggren argues it is of high importance when using organisational storytelling to have it under structured forms. (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24).

Except for exchange of skills and experiences, B. Berggren states that Legenden helps in creating a good corporate culture. It can also be a communication tool for news and the organisation does not have as many information-emails since some things can be communicated through one of the storytelling medias. Moreover, B. Berggren argues that storytelling is a mean of getting all employees on track. She states that “...if not everybody is on the same page we cannot succeed with our business activity.” and further “You are never stronger than your weakest link in the chain” when explaining the importance of sharing knowledge and experiences at SCAP. Alpha suggests, “I believe that you can say that Legenden somehow have made each and every employee more involved in SCAP” (personal communication, 2012-03-29). B. Berggren views the sharing as an obligation “... if I learn something that I know my colleagues do not know, it is my obligation to share this with my colleagues in order to make us better” (personal communication, 2012-02-24).

5.2.2 Frequency

Today, Legenden is "tuned out to all employees of SCAP" not only to the sales team as it was earlier. On Mondays they receive Bestpack Oss Emellan, on Wednesdays Kommuniké and on Thursdays Legenden.

All medias for Storytelling at SCAP are succinct and to the point, they take 1-2 minutes to listen or view. They are stored and made accessible through SCAP’s intranet for employees to go back and listen to them again at a later time. Through the years, B. Berggren points out they have learned that the stories in Legenden have to be quick pace and without too much irrelevant information by explaining “... in the beginning Legenden talked more about his wife and children, to make him more alive... but nowadays everybody already knows Legenden" (personal communication, 2012-02-24).

For employees to participate in the listening of stories, SCAP leaves some messages of news only through its storytelling medias, which makes them more interesting and crucial to take part of (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24).
When it comes to the contribution of stories to Legenden both interviewees mentions that the material feels somewhat drained. Alpha points out that SCAP recently have introduced a point system “You gather points if you contribute to Legenden, Bestpack Oss Emellan or Komminuké and when you have gathered enough points you receive a price” (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-29). Beta suggest that there could be a longer interval between the “…Legenden emails in order to not drain the bank of ideas, when the marketing team goes out and ask for stories you feel the pressure to contribute” (personal communication, 2012-03-28).

5.3 Reactions to Legenden

5.3.1 Employees Perception of Organisational Storytelling

According to B. Berggren, the response to Legenden was positive at first, but after a while the interest decreased somewhat and many thought they did not really have anything to contribute with. The commitment increased for each media that was introduced. Storytelling is something, which takes time to implement; it can take years before employees understand the importance of the stories (Personal communication, 2012-02-24).

The two interviewees, both listen to Legenden on a weekly basis. They have generally a positive perception of Legenden and think it is a good tool for sharing experiences and information within the organisation. Alpha describes Legenden as a fictive character, a senior in the sales team while Beta describes it as a tool for sharing experiences among the employees:

“…Legenden is a fictive character which share all his knowledge to all the members of the sales team… and these ideas that he shares, he gets from all of us...” (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-29)

“To me, Legenden is among us to tell about different stories, episodes and experiences someone has experienced that one wants to share” (Beta, personal communication, 2012-03-28)

Both interviewees describe that the Legenden stories can be about absolutely anything including practical tips, information and sharing of experiences, both internally and externally in the organisation. The stories are different from each other but it is difficult to determine if some are better than others. It differs in what you learn from each story: “Sometimes you learn more, but sometimes you had that experience or knowledge already but get a reminder from Legenden” (Beta, personal communication, 2012-03-28). The perception of Legenden among employees is a bit varying but mostly positive according to the interviewees. Further, Legenden has become a natural part of their everyday working life:
“... I actually believe it increasingly is something everyone listens to and embrace straight away. I believe so. It has become a part of the everyday life.” (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-29)

When first introduced to Legenden, Beta felt it was positive that employees learn from each other; “…it is of course positive to hear other’s experiences and what they can contribute with.” In general Beta feels there is a tradition of learning from each other at SCAP, and that creates a good working environment:

“... people [in SCAP] are passionate to actually teach, and are, yeah, willing to do so, since that is actually the tradition that creates an open and good working environment” (Beta, personal communication, 2012-03-28).

Both interviewees feel encouraged to participate and share their anecdotes and experiences through Legenden. However, while the listening participation is high, it is low for one of the interviewees. Beta has not yet shared an experience through Legenden. This is not for any special reason, and the interviewee does not feel unwilling to share. Alpha was taking part of the implementation stage of Legend and has contributed with several stories. This interviewee feels that once storytelling is implemented, new ideas to stories come automatically.

If SCAP decided to stop using storytelling and Legenden, Alpha believes ideas and thoughts would be lost since Legenden would be difficult to replace with another forum for sharing this. E-mails and newsletters are not the same thing; “… I don’t think much information and ideas and thoughts would stick.” (Personal communication, 2012-03-29). Beta feels it would be unfortunate if SCAP would stop with Legenden since it is a tool which employees use: “…it [Legenden] becomes a part of our tools and it is always good to listen to how others solve their everyday problems and issues” (Personal communication, 2012-03-28)

## 5.3.2 Effects of Organisational Storytelling

B. Berggren believes that storytelling has had many positive effects in SCAP, even though they are difficult to measure in financial figures. Since the implementation the concept has developed. It is considered that all employees have experiences to share. “If everyone knew what everyone knows, everyone would know more” (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24) is the motto of SCAP’s storytelling. A young recently hired employee can teach an older professional and vice versa: “…when you figure out that the older can learn from the younger just as well as the opposite, that’s when you have cracked the code somehow.” (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24). Beta also highlights that storytelling can be used across generations:
“...it [experience] does not have depend on how long one has been in the company, but it can also be new people that comes with new ideas and also gets experiences rather quick...” (Personal communication, 2012-03-28).

Further, B. Berggren states that without storytelling, SCAP would still be successful, but maybe not as successful as it is today. It is probably a little bit sharper than its competitors. Both B. Berggren and Alpha suggest another effect organisational storytelling has had on SCAP is the decrease of internal email traffic.

Even though organisational storytelling has never been measured in financial figures, B. Berggren argues that SCAP has realised that the value of exchanging experiences and knowledge is “...worth so much that we cannot afford not to do it” (Personal communication, 2012-02-24). However, what can be measured is the attitude towards storytelling trough employee evaluations and this is how SCAP can measure that the popularity of storytelling has increased as new medias have been introduced.

5.4 Organisational Storytelling as a Tool for Organisational Learning

Alpha can not come up a specific example of what Legenden has learnt the interviewee, however, the stories are often discussed and sometimes employees can remind each other on the content in previous stories, which can be helpful in everyday situations.

“... I cannot say ’we used this or that’. But one can say like this, that much of what has been on Legenden has through the years also been discussed afterwards, when you meet a colleague. – Have you listened to Legenden today? And then you discuss around it and in that way it becomes a spin off...” (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-29)

Beta highlights the importance of teamwork in SCAP and how Legenden helps to communicate SCAP as a unity to the customer. It further teaches things you might not be aware of. Earlier in the interview Beta also states that Legenden gives a reminder of things you already knew or should have known. He gives an example of when Legenden recommended using colleagues if you need help with a customer:

“...we work in teams, and then you should think about your team colleagues, which can provide experience and expert help or something, who then gladly help you out and make it easier for you in your everyday life.” (Beta, personal communication, 2012-03-28)
According to Alpha the best thing about Legenden is that it enables information to be spread quickly in the organisation (personal communication, 2012-03-29). Beta describes, in comparison to Legenden, the other media Bestpack Oss Emellan presents tricks and solutions, while Legenden is more about sharing experience (personal communication, 2012-03-28).

It is important to facilitate the storytelling process in order to make as many employees as possible to participate. B. Berggren believes some organisations makes the mistake of trying to be ‘top of the line’ and exclusive with their storytelling. Instead it needs to be down to earth and within a good corporate culture to work efficiently. Both B. Berggren and the interviewees believe the corporate culture in SCAP promotes sharing and cooperation.

Regarding new employees, SCAP has a three-week Human Resource program that new employees attend after working for some time. If new employees want to learn their new role well, it is a good idea to listen to Legenden (B. Berggren, personal communication, 2012-02-24). Beta feels that the storytelling medias are there from the beginning when new employees start.

Finally, organisational storytelling is something, which takes time to implement:

“I don’t think you can do this thing storytelling for a month or so and believe you have reached something with that, I don’t believe so. You probably have to keep going, I don’t know how many years we have been doing it but you probably need to 5-6-7 years at least.” (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-29)

5.5 Classification of Legenden

5.5.1 Content

The content of Legenden varies from story to story but Legenden always uses the same voice. The stories are told from either a private or work-related setting and sometimes it is a combination of the two. For instance, the stories may contain suggestions on how treat areas such as customer-relationship, finding new customers, grumpy customers, the environment, package design and how to work together as a team. Several of the stories had multiple content and elements of narratives.

The classification of Legenden, which is based on theory and summarised into an average, can be seen in chart 5-1. The percentage used in the following sections is based upon these averages.
5.5.2 Metaphor

51,2 % of the stories contained one or more metaphors. The metaphors can be in the form of short expressions such as “taming a lion”, for explaining an employee, having “a heart behind a safe” to describe an insensitive purchaser and “not mixing the cards up” regarding keeping customers information separate. Other metaphors are more in the for of idioms, such as the necessity to “sail wise in the wind of change” in a time where the market changes or how SCAP walks to a “set table” while the competitors “smell the cooking fumes from the kitchen fan” explaining how salesman found new customer by fixing a fan.

Further, there are stories, which explain private situations in which lessons can be drawn to work related situations. Examples of these include when Legenden is cleaning the attic, he finds some old interesting newspapers and connect this to the value of old knowledge. Another when he draws wisdom from a situation of his wife’s clothes to the colour of the packages.

5.5.3 Information

16,6 % of the stories contain pure information such as coming sales-campaigns, fair trades or the opening of a new production sites. In one story employees are explicitly encouraged to reply in order for them to be able to see the winning piece of a design contest.

5.5.4 Experience

67,9 % of the stories contain an experience from a work-related situation. The experience is either direct from Legenden, indirect from one of his colleague or a collective SCAP experience. Generally, experiences cover situations of dealing with costumers, competitors or co-workers. Legenden’s experience of a purchaser, who for a long time has grown hatred between Legenden and one of his competitors, illustrates this. Several of the stories are success stories in which new customers
have been found or problems have been solved. Some stories also mentioned failures of situations such as loosing a customer.

5.5.5 Corporate Values

38,1% of the stories contains values but they differ from story to story. Some stories are about how to treat customers, others how to treat co-workers or how to behave as an employee of SCAP. The stories mediate values such as working together in SCAP regardless of your position, the importance of being honest, the need of being focused on fulfilling customer needs or being environmental friendly. Furthermore, in SCAP employees do not trick customers but how employees with such behaviour “should work for competitors”.

5.5.6 Sales Technique

54,8% of the stories contains sales techniques. These stories cover techniques such as sales arguments, innovative deals and how to approach new customers. The sales techniques are sometimes concrete such as why corrugated cardboard is better then plastic or how the product of the customer was changed in order to find a good packaging solution. Others are more general for behaviour, such as the value of being personal towards customers, to be creative and how to be one step ahead of the customer. One illustrative example explains how arguments can be confronted, although every customer is different and therefore different approaches is needed to find successful solutions in negotiation.

5.5.7 Educational

31,5% of the stories is of educational content. Some stories explain how SCAP works to meet future demands, others are about how products are designed or changed. When Legenden describes how to use a new standard system for corrugated cardboard, it is an educational story for the employees.
6 Analysis

In this analysis we will use the theories and models elaborated in the frame of reference to crystallise our empirical observations. For simplicity and ease for the reader the analysis will start by examining the tacit dimensions in SCAP and its storytelling, followed by analysing if its storytelling is possibly a way to manage knowledge finish with analysing the effectiveness of organisational storytelling.

6.1 Tacit Knowledge in SCAP

This thesis emphasises the value of knowledge and suggests firms today increasingly consider knowledge to be an important asset, and thus take on a knowledge-based view. Several examples can be drawn to show how SCAP regards knowledge as important: when facing the potential loss of knowledge because of upcoming retirements, SCAP considered it to be a threat and believed it was crucial to keep the knowledge within the organisation. Further, SCAP has spent nine years working with organisational storytelling as a tool for sharing knowledge in the company, which, B. Berggren believes has made SCAP a better player on the competitive market. SCAP also finds it important to keep all employees on track and that sharing of knowledge can help in this process. These arguments all suggest that SCAP considers knowledge to be an important resource. The expression used in SCAP “if everyone knew what everyone knows, everyone would know more” further implies the importance of knowledge in SCAP.

According to theory, tacit knowledge is difficult to manage and therefore gives a competitive advantage to the firms which manage it well. This type of knowledge is developed from experience and difficult to articulate. Alpha is positive to storytelling but finds it difficult to come up with specific examples of what has been learnt. Further, the same interviewee states that if Legenden would stop, it would be difficult to find a similar forum for sharing since emails and newsletters are not the same thing. Beta describes Legenden to talk about experiences and how to work at SCAP. These perceptions of diffuse learning from storytelling can be drawn to the concepts and difficulties of tacit knowledge. It can be drawn to the very definition Polanyi (1966) made of tacit knowledge; “we know more than we can tell” (p.4). The difficulties management at SCAP had in initially deciding what strategy to use when trying to share the knowledge in the company further implies the existence of tacit knowledge in SCAP. Moreover, Alavi and Leidner (2001) suggest sales skills to be an example of tacit knowledge, something that also Nonaka (1994) touches upon when exemplifying tacit knowledge as specific skills and “know-how”. One important aspect of Legenden, is to transfer sales techniques and experiences, and thus arguably also tacit knowledge.
6.2 Classifications of Legenden

Bandura (1977) suggests that it is not only possible but also necessary to learn through modeling which is something that can be seen in SCAP’s storytelling. By using one employee’s experiences, success stories and mistakes, other employee’s can through modeling learn how to improve without the actual experience.

By using organisational storytelling within SCAP is using an informal way of transferring tacit knowledge. The contextual details of stories make them suitable for managing tacit knowledge according to Swap et al. (2001). Legenden uses private and work-related settings and metaphors to make transitions between the two. An example could be drawn from when Legenden is using the metaphor of his wife’s clothing problems, and at the same time open up for a discussion about design of boxes. From Boje’s (2008) distinction between stories and narratives it is evident that Legenden consist mainly of stories since they leave more to the imagination of the listener and seldom have a chronologic order. However, Legenden do have some elements of narratives in some stories. An organisation using storytelling should have a combination of stories and narratives, which Legenden by elements of narratives has.

Moreover, research suggests that memorable information tends to a greater extent be act upon than information not retrieved from memory. The approach SCAP have chosen to implement, work with and structure Legenden shows clear parallels with availability heuristics, elaboration and episodic memory. An example of usage of availability heuristics in SCAP is the usage of metaphors and the dramatising of Legenden. It is a way of making Legenden more vivid and therefore the message will be judged as more true and become more memorable. Furthermore, SCAP uses elaboration when it, through the format of Legenden, makes it possible to reflect upon the experiences. Legenden can therefore be interpreted and remembered by employees as their own experiences. Likewise, SCAP incorporates an episodic memory in their employees since Legenden imply a personal experience and the very nature of the stories are episodic.

Since the format of Legenden is short, succinct and to the point, it is in line with the theory of how stories should be structured in order to transfer tacit knowledge. Further, Boje (2008) suggests that storytelling within an organisation can be both conscious and unconscious. By the usage of Legenden SCAP makes the stories within the organisation more conscious for the members of the organisation. In addition, Boje (2008) underlines the importance of the ethical aspects in organisational stories which, is something SCAP according to B. Berggren also view as highly important since they do not let stories that are offending to be tuned out.

From analysis we have seen that Legenden in 67,9% of the stories treats subjects of experiences, this is as mentioned in the frame of reference a tacit knowledge.
Generally the stories discussed how to behave towards customers, in the example of one customer putting SCAP against one of its competitors Legenden suggested that this is something the sales department have to be aware of. This illustrates how Legenden communicate an experience, which if aware of the sales team can avoid. Further, analysis showed that Legenden in average communicates sales skills in 54,8% of the stories, which together with values also is tacit knowledge. The fact that Legenden averagely uses metaphors in 51,2% of the stories analysed is in line with how organisational stories should communicate tacit knowledge. In the few cases, 16,8%, were Legenden communicated information, which is a pure explicit knowledge, we saw the integration of tacit and explicit knowledge several researchers mentions is of importance.

### 6.3 Knowledge Creation

Knowledge creation is the process in which knowledge is shaped in an organisation and contains both explicit and tacit knowledge. An important factor for this is that individuals work together. From interviews with both B. Berggren and Beta, it has been shown that SCAP works in teams and the need of employees being on the same track is emphasised. In the knowledge creation model by Nonaka (1994) there are four modes of knowledge creation that together form a spiral of knowledge.

In the socialization mode, were tacit knowledge is converted into tacit knowledge, it is suggested that this is done through imitation and observations. In SCAP the use of storytelling is not based on imitation and observation in real life but the tacit knowledge is rather based on experience of others through the stories of Legenden. This can however still be argued to be socialization since this process is based on experience and exercised in social contexts. Beta points out that Legenden is based on shared experience among employees, between employees and customers, which is arguably in line with this. When B. Berggren emphasises that even inexperienced employees have valuable experience to share in stories it is not in line with the theory, which argues one should learn from more experienced workers. In the initiation process of Legenden, B. Berggren formed groups of seven people, from which employees were to share their experiences. This is in line with the frame of reference of initiating the creation process at an organisational level.

The combination process occurs when explicit knowledge is created from explicit knowledge through social processes by the help of modern computer systems. The actual creation process comes from re-contextualising information given. The storytelling medias in SCAP is communicated through computer systems. Some of the Legenden stories contain pure information and further Kommuniké is used to spread explicit information such as how to sign email letters.
The conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit is referred to as the externalisation mode by Nonaka (1994). This process is facilitated by the use of metaphors, analogies and stories, as it is a cognitive process. Legenden is a fictive person that shares experiences and information through metaphors in a dramatised style. The metaphors can be about anything in the daily life, such as a badly glued mug that breaks to illustrate and transmit the importance of reading instructions before recommending a product. This type of storytelling can thus be said to be in line with presented frame of reference.

When the knowledge is tested and learned at a collective level, as explicit knowledge is converted into tacit knowledge, it is referred to as internalization mode. From the interviews with SCAP, B. Berggren says Legenden teach unity, the value of everyone being on the same page and that sharing experiences makes the company more competitive. For Beta, Legenden is a tool to learn from other colleagues’ everyday problems and issues, while Alpha believes Legenden have made employees more involved in the company. This is arguably in line with the learning process, which suggests that employees work in a collective manner without any explicit guidelines. Further, from the classification of Legenden, it was discovered that the stories contain as a much as 54,8% sales techniques as well as 38,1% values and 31,5 % of educational content. The stories contained success stories, new customer acquirements and problem solving. This implies an environment of creation of new tacit knowledge.

SCAP’s implementation and usage of storytelling goes from an individual sharing of experiences, to an organisational level of learning from these. This is in accordance with the model of knowledge creation, which suggests an on-going spiral of knowledge should be used. Employees have mentioned the value of learning from Legenden. When Alpha states, “... you discuss around it and in that way it becomes a spin off...” (Alpha, personal communication, 2012-03-20) it is further highlighted how new knowledge is created from Legenden.

## 6.4 Knowledge Retention

To actively work for embedding of knowledge within an organisation so that it will last over time, also known as creating an organisational memory is a method for retention of knowledge. This is something SCAP work naturally with since all storytelling medias are saved on the intranet, to which all employees have access. When B. Berggren suggests that storytelling is a faster way of spreading knowledge than one employee walking along side another employee it shows how deeply embedded their knowledge retention is. Further, how SCAP is actively encouraging the sharing of stories to the point where, as Alpha and Beta puts it, it feels drained is a means of making sure that no knowledge will be lost and continues to be available.
Arif et al. (2008) have developed a four-step model, which highlights important aspects of the process of retaining knowledge. Firstly in accordance to this model, SCAP showed high willingness to share knowledge when starting the project of Legenden since it were afraid of loosing valuable experience. A stronger indication of SCAP's willingness to share is when both Alpha and Beta describes Legenden in terms of a tool for sharing experiences and information. Alpha has shared several stories in contrast to Beta, who has not yet shared any story, however, both feel encouraged to share their experiences.

SCAP have a clear process of documentation of the knowledge; initially B. Berggren is contacted which in turn contacts the Copywriter who dramatise it into a story from Legenden. This is in line with the next step of the model. Further, from studies of Legenden we have seen that the Copywriter uses metaphorical language to make abstract messages concrete. This can arguably be seen as a way to make tacit knowledge more explicit as suggested in theory. The way in which SCAP store its storytelling medias and make it accessible incorporates both the third and fourth step of the retention process. Legenden is stored in the intranet, which can be accessed by all the employees at all work hours.

Additionally, it can be argued that SCAP to a large extent work in accordance to Levy's (2011) three main stages to facilitate knowledge retention. SCAP do not actively chose which knowledge to retain instead the attitude is that everyone has a story to share. This is not in line with the model, however, there is to some extent a screening process since SCAP aim to incorporate its corporate values in all Legenden stories. Further, the concept of Legenden has been part of the organisation for nine years with the management and responsibility of transmission of the storytelling medias by B. Berggren. This together with the use of a professional copywriter makes the procedure highly structured and organised, which is in line with the model. The final step is to insure the knowledge is incorporated in the organisations daily routines. SCAP tune out their storytelling medias three times a week. Furthermore, some messages are only announced through the storytelling medias, which is a way of incorporating them into daily routines. This is confirmed by Alpha when stating that the storytelling medias have become a part of his everyday life.

Finally, the fact that SCAP had a relatively quick response when they realised that they would loose valuable knowledge is in line with Levy's (2011) argument that it is essential to react in a reasonable fast time frame in order to facilitate the retention process. Moreover, the fact that both Bestpack Oss Emellan and Kommuniké came as a response to signals within the organisation shows that SCAP have a relatively quick reaction time and is responsive to internal signals.
6.5 Knowledge Transfer

The interrelation of the three sub processes becomes further evident in analysing the process of knowledge transfer. Therefore, initial stages of transfer have somewhat been mentioned in previous processes.

Legenden is based on individual experiences and tuned out to the organisation. Thus, the media can arguably be seen as a way of transferring knowledge from an individual to a group level in SCAP, which is in accordance with Alavi and Leidner (2001). Further, the frame of reference suggests personal transfer to be suitable for transferring contextualised tacit knowledge. In the implementation process of Legenden, employees were seated in groups to talk about their experiences, which can be argued to be a rather personal way of transferring knowledge. Moreover, Legenden is seen as a senior member of the sales team, which is something Alpha describes and also confirmed in the classification of stories. This way of seeing Legenden as a person arguably makes this transferral more personal and thus suitable for transfer of tacit knowledge.

Additionally, since knowledge is personalised flows of information, it can be argued that SCAP work in accordance with the social learning theory. Symbolic modeling is something SCAP particularly use in the transferring of knowledge since Legenden is created as a fictive character. Moreover, Bestpack Oss Emellan and Kommuniké are visual medias, which is aligned with this model. Learning from observation and learning from oral or written descriptions of behaviours are the remaining types of modeling. Since Legenden is only a voice SCAP’s storytelling does not exercise behaviour modeling. However, since Legenden, even though he is a fictive character and thus symbolic, verbally describes behaviours of colleagues and himself, it implies verbal modeling.

The frame of reference suggests that a common problem with knowledge is that people might keep it to themselves. This is a problem that B. Berggren highlights when stating that generally, members of sales team might feel reluctant to share. However, B. Berggren further states that SCAP’s corporate culture emphasises sharing of knowledge and teaching others, which also Beta supports when explicitly stating SCAP has a tradition of learning from each other. In this way, the problem of keeping knowledge to oneself is overcome at SCAP.

Additionally, the tradition of sharing and rather open corporate culture in SCAP can also be argued to create mutual trust among the employees, which is something Nonaka (1994) stresses. Mutual trust is needed in the process of making people willing to share and transfer their knowledge. Further, a common perspective helps creating this mutual trust, which can be attained with the help of metaphors and images. Several examples from SCAP can be drawn, which implies creation of mutual trust. Apart from the previously mentioned openness in the corpo-
rate culture, the implementation process of storytelling describes how employees were initially afraid of sharing their experiences, but once seated in groups and someone started, everyone realised they had something to tell. The fact that around 550 stories were recorded in the initial stage shows the trust among SCAP’s employees. Further, interviews imply storytelling in SCAP creates unity and makes the business sharper than its competitors, which arguably also can be seen as having a common perspective of becoming better and more competitive. When examining Legenden, one can also see that approximately half of the stories incorporate metaphors, which help in creating the common perspective and in turn create more mutual trust among the employees.

6.6 Effectiveness of Organisational Storytelling in SCAP

SCAP has never measured its storytelling in financial figures but instead sees the value of the exchange of experiences that the storytelling encourages. This was stressed by B. Berggren when saying storytelling is “...worth so much that we cannot afford not to do it”. In theory, tacit knowledge is suggested to be intangible and difficult to manage. Further, it is mentioned by Nonaka (1994) that for handling tacit dimensions of knowledge, qualitative values would be more applicable than financial figures. An analysis of its effectiveness therefore has to take qualitative forms. B. Berggren states its storytelling help SCAP succeed with its business activity and that “Legenden somehow have made each and every employee more involved in SCAP”. These are a form of qualitative measures of SCAP’s storytelling.

Furthermore, from the classification of Legenden, it can be argued that much of its content was of tacit character. Only 16 % of the stories contained pure information of explicit form. In contrast, 67.9 % contained experiences, which according to the framework is fundamental aspect in tacit knowledge. From the rich dimensions of tacit knowledge in Legenden, it could therefore be argued that it is an effective in carrying tacit knowledge.

Additionally, the way SCAP has implemented and currently works with its storytelling has through the analysis in earlier sections of the sub processes of knowledge creation, retention and transfer, shown to be well in line with the frame of reference. All aspects in theory were not followed, such as the value of selecting what knowledge to retain. Besides this, most other aspects were to a great extent in line with theory, such as the spiral of knowledge to facilitate knowledge creation and the use of fictive characters and the establishment of common trust, which is crucial for the knowledge transfer.
7 Conclusion

In this thesis we have examined whether organisational storytelling can be used as a strategy to manage tacit knowledge. We have fulfilled this purpose by examining a set of research questions. This has been done through a qualitative research of a single case study at SCAP. From this case study, some conclusions can be drawn.

Through analysis it has been shown that tacit knowledge exists in SCAP in several forms, such as sales skills and expertise. Further, the design and format of Legenden mirrors well what theory suggests being organisational stories. The purpose of Legenden is to share SCAP’s knowledge among its employees. From analysis of Legenden it has been shown that much of the knowledge, which the stories share is in tacit form. This is done by the usage of metaphors and experiences in order to make it more tangible. These are arguably ways of how organisational storytelling carry tacit knowledge.

Further, it is shown from the example of SCAP that organisational storytelling can help to create, retain and transfer tacit knowledge. Firstly, knowledge creation is encouraged in SCAP by the way it uses storytelling, and also by the way it was implemented. Employees can use and develop the knowledge they learn from Legenden. Further, they feel Legenden helps to encourage new stories to share, which is in line with the theory of knowledge creation. Secondly, organisational storytelling has facilitated the process of making the tacit knowledge in SCAP more tangible through Legenden by using means such as metaphors and experiences. Furthermore, how Legenden is documented, stored and made easy accessible for its employees, reflects the frame of reference of knowledge retention. Finally, when studying SCAP’s storytelling, it has on several different levels been shown that employees do to work together with mutual trust and a common perspective. Legenden is a fictive character, which personifies the media. Theory suggests these factors to facilitate the process of knowledge transfer.

SCAP has not measured its organisational storytelling in financial figures. Therefore, to measure the effectiveness we have examined how well SCAP’s storytelling fit our presented frame of reference of knowledge management and communication of tacit knowledge. Except for minor deviations, SCAP’s storytelling is clearly in line with the sub processes of knowledge management. This, together with the rich content of tacit knowledge in Legenden shows that the stories are effective in managing tacit knowledge. Thus, organisational storytelling can be argued to serve as an effective tool in managing tacit knowledge.

These conclusions of the research questions gives us the ability to argue that organisational storytelling indeed can be used as a strategy for managing tacit knowledge.
8 Discussion

It is of importance to remember that organisational storytelling is still a rather new and debated concept, especially within the area of knowledge management. Even though it was discussed in interviews that SCAP probably has reached a little longer than its competitors thanks to its storytelling, it should still be remembered that there could be different ways of exercising this tool, which has not been examined in this study or in SCAP. These methods may vary in effectiveness depending on its context and aims. In SCAP’s example, storytelling was originally used in the sales department, which is arguably very rich in tacit knowledge. Further, the aim was to actively try to capture skills and experiences of a retiring workforce. These aspects, together with how organisational storytelling is used in SCAP, make it an effective strategy for this specific context. However, for different business, it might not be the appropriate tool.

Additionally, employees expressed some concern about Legenden being somewhat drained. From the classification of the stories it was evident that there were some repeat on demand stories and that Legenden started to mention employees by name in some of the later stories. This could indicate attempts to make employees share. Moreover, Beta mentions a newly introduced incentive system to make employees share their experiences through Legenden. These aspects may indicate some weaknesses with Legenden as tool to encourage sharing since SCAP have started to use incentive systems. We do not argue that incentive systems is negative, it can though be negative in this for of usage of storytelling since it can create pressure on employees to share experiences.

The aim with this thesis has been to focus on the management of tacit knowledge, since this is where research is scant. When discussing knowledge, it is important to remember the integration of tacit and explicit knowledge and that these build upon each other. The findings show that organisational storytelling can be a proper tool for managing tacit knowledge, however the explicit knowledge in this processes should not be forgotten. Therefore, the premier training in an organisation should still, as research also suggests, teach more explicit instructions of fundamental practices, such as IT-systems and critical expertise. With this said, it is also important to discuss the fact that even though storytelling can be argued to be effective in managing tacit knowledge, it cannot replace the usage of Human Resource and training programmes, however, it can sometimes decrease the need for some. We would like to argue that it should rather be seen as an additional tool to capture the valuable tacit knowledge, which explicit means cannot.
8.1 Limitations

A limitation for this thesis is that it was conducted as a single-case study of one company, SCAP. Further the sales department was chosen as a single department to study due to the need for tacit skills in this particular area of work. The result is therefore context specific. Although the result can be of value to other organisations, a generalisation, saying the result is equally applicable in all organisational settings would be insufficient.

In conducting the primary research a limitation could be the potential bias in the interviews. B. Berggren is the initiator and implementer of SCAP’s storytelling and may therefore have emphasised the positive effects of the storytelling. Further, from having worked with the storytelling for a longer period of time, the more negative aspects may have been neglected, whether consciously or unconsciously. There is further a limitation that the employees interviewed were chosen by B. Berggren and thus might have a more positive attitude than the average employee.

Another limitation is the lack of secondary data in form of statistics of the employee usage of Legenden to measure the popularity. These statistics were not given to the research team and therefore we had to rely solely on interviews in analysing the perception of the storytelling in SCAP. We could therefore not fully analyse the effectiveness of storytelling.

8.2 Implications for managers

In this thesis we have argued that, if handled correctly, organisational storytelling can become a valuable tool for organisations, especially those rich in tacit knowledge. However, to work successfully with storytelling, there are some vital aspects to remember. Based on our study on SCAP, we suggest some implications for managers.

Knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, is highly personal. Therefore, the sharing process can be problematic. Further, to share this personal knowledge through stories in a work setting can come with scepticism among the employees. To overcome this issue, a positive organisational culture is of great importance. In SCAP, the culture and tradition of sharing has been crucial for the success of its storytelling. It is worth mentioning that storytelling can, and is also often used in improving the organisational culture. However, when aiming at knowledge sharing, a good culture helps the process and willingness to share a great deal. Closely linked to organisational culture is the need for trust in the organisation. This has been pointed out in our thesis, but cannot be emphasised enough. Without a trust, there will be no willingness to share stories of both positive and negative experiences.
Another important aspect for a successful usage of storytelling is to facilitate the process in order to increase participation. If employees need to compose and spread the stories themselves, there is a risk that the storytelling would not be prioritised, due to lack of time, interest and ability. The short messages and easy process of listening to storytelling in SCAP, together with the usage of a copywriter and a professional voice, which write and produces the stories, are examples of how to facilitate the process of storytelling. Further, active management of the storytelling is needed in order to make it work successfully and structured. At last, when implementing, it is important to be patient and allow time for storytelling before it becomes accepted and natural in the organisation, a process which can take years.

### 8.3 Contribution

Even though there is extensive research in the areas of knowledge management, tacit knowledge and storytelling separately, it has not yet been researched on the management of *tacit* knowledge by the means of *organisational storytelling*. Our thesis has given new insight in this relatively unexplored area.

Further, research in the area of organisational storytelling has implied there is a distance between practitioners of storytelling and academic research. By studying an organisation, which actively uses storytelling, and analysing this through theory, we have arguably contributed somewhat in getting these two more aligned.

Since storytelling is more commonly used and researched in areas such as marketing and branding, the example of SCAP is further a unique example of how storytelling can be used and understood within the particular field of knowledge management.

At last, in this thesis, we have suggested a new possible way of classifying organisational stories in order to determine if they incorporate tacit knowledge. This classification scheme has been based on previous research on tacit knowledge and is highly contextual to the example of SCAP. However, it is still a proposition, which can be built upon in further research.

### 8.4 Future Research

This is an exploratory study, therefore further research is necessary. Since, the relation of storytelling and knowledge management is such a novel research and practice area, it can be elaborated on to a great extent.
One suggestion for future research, which has spurred during our study is how the processes of knowledge management may change and adapt to different stages of implementation of storytelling. Therefore, a longitudinal and multiple case study would in our opinion give valuable insight in how the different processes develop and effects an organisational context during time. Another aspect, which could give contribution to both the academic research and the business world, is to investigate whether different types of stories can communicate different intentions of learning.

Further, it is of importance to discuss potential negative aspects of storytelling. From interviews, employees expressed feelings of stories being drained. It can be argued from theory that to have a good knowledge retention process, all knowledge should be captured within the organisation. However, if put into contrast to the knowledge creation process this might be negative since it might create a pressure, which might suppress the motivation to share. This issue may be valuable to explore in a more mature stage of using storytelling as a strategy for managing tacit knowledge since it is rarely something organisations will experience in the beginning.

Finally, even though using figures and financial instruments may not be appropriate when measuring tacit knowledge today, a future study of the possibilities of measuring cost efficiency would be valuable. Suggestively, a study on whether other training and development costs decreases with the introduction of organisational storytelling.
List of references


Appendix

Appendix 1 Unstructured Initial Interview

With B. Berggren 2012-02-06

• How do SCAP use storytelling?
• When did SCAP started to use storytelling?
• Why did SCAP decide to start with storytelling?, what was the purpose?
• How did SCAP start with storytelling? Push or pull method? Internally or externally?
• Does the whole corporate group use storytelling?
• If not: In which departments are storytelling used?
• How have employees reacted to storytelling?
• Does the HR-department work with this?
• How does the format of your storytelling look like?
• Do SCAP measure the results?
• Do you see a connection between employee’s satisfaction and storytelling?
• What are the newly recruited reactions?
• Where was the idea of storytelling born?
Appendix 2 In-depth interview

Themes discussed during the in-depth interview with B. Berggren. 2012-02-24

- SCAP
- What is knowledge to SCAP
- Why organisational storytelling
- How do SCAP do it
- What is Legenden
- Effectiveness of Legenden
- Reactions to storytelling
Appendix 3 Semi-structured Interviews

Questions in the semi-structured interviews with Alpha, 2012-03-29 and Beta, 2012-03-28.

- For how long have you worked within SCAP?
- What is you position in SCAP?
- What is your job assignment?
- Who is Legenden to you?
- What does Legenden talk about according to you?
- Do you listen to every story? Why/Why not?
- When do you usually listen to Legenden?
- Are there some stories you like more than others? If yes; which and why?
- Can you tell us about your first impression of Legenden?
- Can you give us some example of things you have learned from Legenden?
- In your opinion, is Legenden helpful in your everyday work life?
- Have you ever changed the way you do something after listening to Legenden?
- What, in your opinion, is the general attitude towards Legenden among your colleagues? What is your attitude? Why?
- Do you feel encouraged to share you experiences in Legenden? If yes; in what way?
- Have you shared an experience? Why/Why not?
- Is Legenden in your opinion a good tool for sharing experiences?
- Do you go back to the stored stories and listen to them again? Why/Why not?
- In you opinion, what would happen if SCAP stopped with their storytelling medias?
- Is Legenden, in your opinion a good tool for sharing knowledge? If so; what type of knowledge do you feel Legenden is a good communicator of?
- Is there something you would like to change with Legenden? If so; what?
- Would you like to add something to the discussion?
Appendix 4 Classification of Legenden

Researchers 1- Swedish version:

Due to the fact that the stories of Legenden are initially made on Swedish to avoid confusion. Later all common where translated by the research team into English. Hence, the Swedish version is followed by an English translation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Customer</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>John Doe</td>
<td>2023-01-01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jane Smith</td>
<td>2023-01-02</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Robert Johnson</td>
<td>2023-01-03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Needs clarify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Customer names are placeholders.
- Dates are illustrative.
- Statuses range from Open to Closed.
- Notes field is used for additional comments or actions.