Strategic Management of Well-Being at Work

Exploring How Top Managers Perceive Well-Being at Work as a Strategic Issue

Kaisa Penttilä

Department of Management and Organisation

Hanken School of Economics

Helsinki

2012
Abstract:
Well-being at work is a phenomenon that could be seen as having a crucial impact on the success of Western organisations. The antecedents for it are the demographic changes in our society, employees’ increasing sickness and absence costs and a need for higher levels of engagement, productivity and innovativeness. Employers are more and more investing in well-being at work in their organizations and need to be able to manage well-being at work strategically – it can be argued that well-being at work is a strategic issue for companies. However, the phenomenon is highly complex and depends very much on how different individuals perceive and interpret it. The perceptions of top managers on the phenomenon have not been studied using cognitive mapping before this.

This thesis seeks to structure the well-being at work phenomenon and explore how it is linked to a company’s business strategy both through a literature review and through an empirical examination in the form of a case study. The research strategy is based on a Soft Systems Methodology for researching complex socially constructed phenomenon. The literature review is focused on two strands of research: 1. The multidisciplinary field of research on well-being at work and 2. Strategic management grounded in the cognitive school of thought. In the empirical examination I map the perceptions of seven top managers of a big Finnish corporation on well-being at work and its linkages to business strategy, by conducting semi-structured interviews and a cognitive categorization exercise. The qualitative data is gathered from multiple sources and I use triangulation of methods of data analysis in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the analysis.

In the findings of the study I present the perceptions of the top managers in light of the literature and identify key issues that are important for the strategic management of well-being at work. The key findings of this study are that key issues for focusing on well-being at work are seen to be that being able to motivate the employees and develop their abilities is seen as a key to fulfilling goals of the business, the company image or brand could be enhanced by promoting well-being at work, and by managing well-being at work systematically (measuring and follow-up of indicators) the risks of poor well-being at work could be handled. Five out of seven managers perceived well-being at work as a strategic issue in the company. The managers had recognized many of the key elements of the strategic management of well-being at work, but individual differences existed, which is a potential target of development in the future.

Keywords: Well-being at work, strategic issue, cognitive mapping, soft systems methodology.
CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. 1
  1.1. Research problem and objectives .............................................. 2
  1.2. Research Aim ........................................................................... 3
  1.3. Definitions ................................................................................. 3
  1.4. Structure of the thesis ................................................................. 4

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .......................................................... 6
  2.1. The Well-Being at Work Phenomenon ....................................... 6
      2.1.1. Employee well-being .......................................................... 9
          2.1.1.1. Mental well-being vs. Stress ......................................... 11
          2.1.1.2. Engagement ................................................................. 12
      2.1.2. Organizational health .......................................................... 13
      2.1.3. Linkages to performance ..................................................... 17
  2.2. Why strategic management of well-being at work? ................... 18
      2.2.1. The resource-based perspective on the firm ...................... 19
      2.2.2. Comparing well-being at work to SHRM ......................... 19
  2.3. Strategy formation as a cognitive process .................................. 21
      2.3.1. Categorization, Schemas and Sensemaking ....................... 22
      2.3.2. Strategic issue diagnosis ..................................................... 24
  2.4. Summary of the literature review on well-being at work and its strategic management ..................................................... 26
      2.4.1. Presentation of a conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work ..................................................... 28

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ............................................................ 32
  3.1. Research Strategy ..................................................................... 32
  3.2. Research Design ...................................................................... 36
  3.3. Research Setting ....................................................................... 37
  3.4. Data Collection Strategy ............................................................. 37
      3.4.1. Executing the interviews and the cognitive map exercise ......... 37
      3.4.2. Documentation .................................................................... 40
  3.5. Data Analysis ............................................................................ 42
      3.5.1. Cognitive mapping technique ............................................. 42
      3.5.2. Interpreting cognitive maps ............................................... 45
  3.6. Validity, reliability and ethics ..................................................... 48
4 FINDINGS ........................................................................................................51

4.1. The well-being at work phenomenon in the perception of the top managers .. 51
  4.1.1. Manager A ................................................................. 52
  4.1.2. Manager B ................................................................. 53
  4.1.3. Manager C ................................................................. 53
  4.1.4. Manager D ................................................................. 54
  4.1.5. Manager E ................................................................. 55
  4.1.6. Manager F ................................................................. 55
  4.1.7. Manager G ................................................................. 56

4.2. Well-being at work as a strategic issue and linkages to the company's business strategy .................................................. 57
  4.2.1. Manager A ................................................................. 57
  4.2.2. Manager B ................................................................. 58
  4.2.3. Manager C ................................................................. 59
  4.2.4. Manager D ................................................................. 60
  4.2.5. Manager E ................................................................. 61
  4.2.6. Manager F ................................................................. 62
  4.2.7. Manager G ................................................................. 63

4.3. Desirable changes in the managers' perception for enhancing the strategic management of well-being at work ............................................. 64
  4.3.1. Make sense of the phenomenon and interpret what it means for your organization ......................................................... 64
  4.3.2. Make strategic decisions about what to focus on ................................................................. 65
  4.3.3. Create processes and policies for enhancing and developing well-being at work ......................................................... 67
  4.3.4. Create processes and policies for preventing and responding to problems and Measure and follow up ................................. 68
  4.3.5. Make adjustments to processes and policies based on the information gained ........................................................................... 70
  4.3.6. Realize competitive advantage ......................................................................................................................... 71

4.4. Summary of the findings ........................................................................... 72

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ................................................................. 75

5.1. An enhanced understanding of the link between well-being at work and strategy ............................................................................. 75

5.2. Implications for the case company ........................................................... 77

5.3. Limitations of the study ............................................................................. 78

5.4. Future Research Directions ....................................................................... 79
5.5. Final Remarks

SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

REFERENCES

TABLES
Table 1 Attributes of organizational health
Table 2 Categorization of words related to well-being at work, Manager E
Table 3 Data Collection and Usage

FIGURES
Figure 1 A framework for organizing and directing future theory, research, and practise regarding health and well-being in the workplace
Figure 2 Work ability and related factors
Figure 3 Conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work
Figure 4 Cognitive map, Manager E
Figure 5 Cognitive mapping technique applied on the interview with manager A

APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1 Conceptual Model of The Strategic Management of Well-Being at Work (detailed version)
APPENDIX 2 Interview Questions
APPENDIX 3 Instructions for Cognitive Categorization and Mapping Exercise
APPENDIX 4 Cognitive Mapping Analysis of Interview, Categorization of Words, and Cognitive Map (drawn by the managers themselves)
1 INTRODUCTION

The well-being at work is in crisis⁴. The demands of an international competitive business environment has had its impact on modern working life so that the pressure on employees has become so hard that more and more people feel that they will not cope with their work anymore. In Finland, the rising numbers of disability pensions speak their harsh language: in 2007 as many as 272,000 Finnish citizens were on disability pension (Kauppinen et al 2010:27). There is also concern for the young people entering the workforce. It has been calculated that the disabled workforce who are under 35-years of age cost the society 6.6 billion euro annually (included are costs of treatment and loss of tax revenues)(ibid.). No company manager or politician can overlook these facts. Thus, keeping employees healthy, productive and longer in working life is more and more a crucial point on the agenda of both employers and governments concerned about the national economy.

Well-being at work has been a hot topic for the last few years, both in the media and in the society at a more political level. In Finland, the research on the topic dates back to the late 80s and early 90s. A huge amount of different development projects have been conducted since by the Finnish government and the issue of well-being at work has been raised up by many different actors in the society. Internationally, and more specifically in the Western world, the issue has mostly circulated around the huge numbers of employees retiring in the near future and its effect on a threatening talent shortage. The increasing international competition has resulted in that all companies have to improve and sustain their competitiveness through greater productivity, innovation and skills development in order to survive. The well-being of the employees is an issue that no Western manager can ignore in order to stay competitive and prosper in business for a longer time period.

The risen awareness of the issue has resulted in that it is quite common nowadays that employers consider employee health and well-being an important factor for the well-being of their organizations and the overall success of their businesses. Arranging occupational health services is a legal requirement for all employers in Finland and most of them support their employees’ well-being at work also by other means (such as sports and lunch benefits). The attitude towards the employees’ health and well-being has traditionally been reactive - when a worker gets sick she or he is offered health

⁴ This captivating line was borrowed from Vilen (2011).
services. A change in the mindset of employers has only recently occurred: well-being at work has come to be seen as a source of potential competitive advantage that could be proactively enhanced (Vilen 2010). Offering well-being services and having an image as an employer who is concerned for the overall well-being of the employees can be used to attract the best talents and as a mean of keeping these people working longer for the organization.

1.1. Research problem and objectives

The well-being at work issue has forced managers to begin to deal with both the threats and opportunities of what it can bring to the company and how it can affect the business. I argue that well-being at work has become a strategic issue that every manager must deal with and make decisions about i.e. to make decisions about if the factors related to well-being at work are strategically important and what this means in terms of allocating resources to it. As can be reasoned based on the publicity the issue has had in the media and the number of seminars and workshops offered by different service providers, a dilemma that many managers face is that the management of well-being at work is very difficult: the issue is as broad as one makes it, but being able to outline it is a requirement for being able to manage it properly. A need for being able to manage the work well-being in organizations on a more strategic level is clearly a pressing concern – to understand what well-being at work is about, how it affects the business operations of a company, and what can be done to enhance it.

In terms of successful business and developing good strategies to reach it, the challenges of well-being at work forces managers to deal with different kinds of changes. An aging population, rising number of depressed citizens and work inability among younger workers, threatening talent shortage, and requirements on being ever more productive and innovative are all indicators that the well-being at work issue is something that no manager can ignore. In order to deal with these challenges managers need to interpret and make sense of the changes around them and to determine how to react (Weick 1995). Studies indicate that the mental models of firm leaders play a critical role in directing resource allocation and in this way also to the creation of strategic factors that contribute to competitive advantage (Barr et al. 1992).

---

2 A search on google with the words "työhyvinvointi seminaari" turns out with 1840 results, and "työhyvinvointi koulutus" in 1740.

3 According to a recent research only approximately 15% of all companies manage their well-being at work on a strategic level (Aura, Ahonen, Ilmarinen 2011).
I argue that well-being at work might very well become a sustaining competitive advantage in a company, if it was to be strategically managed. This is something that I believe many managers are beginning to realize and therefore the interest to understand and make sense of well-being at work has increased.

1.2. Research Aim

The aim of this research is to explore and analyze how the top managers of a major Finnish corporation perceive well-being at work as a phenomenon and if and how they link it to the business strategy of the company.

The three main question of this thesis are:

What is well-being at work and what kind of factors are related to it?
Is well-being at work a strategic issue in the perception of the top managers?
What is the link between well-being at work and the business strategy of the company?

Besides the three main questions that are explored I will make an analysis of areas of well-being at work in the perception of the top managers using that could be developed so that the strategic management of well-being at work would be enhanced in the case organization.

1.3. Definitions

**Strategic issue** is a forthcoming development (event or thing), which is likely to have an important impact on the ability of an organization to meet its objectives. It can be either positive or negative: an opportunity in the environment or internal strength, or it can be an internal weakness or an external threat. The defining element of a strategic issue is that it might imperil the continuing success of an organization, or even its survival. (Modified from Ansoff 1980)

**Well-being at work** is used as an umbrella term for all aspects of well-being and health in the organizational context and for an individual employee. The term includes all aspects of well-being that need to be taken into account in an organization, i.e.: leadership, work arrangements, skills and knowledge, safety at work, work community, psychological and physical health, motivation and engagement, and life situation.
Strategic management of well-being at work means that the wellbeing and health of the employees of an organization are considered to be important factors of the overall business of the organization and its human resource objectives. There are actions that are systematic and well planned, resources have been assigned to them, they have defined targets for which there are liable persons, and that the results are regularly measured both on an organizational and an individual level. The strategic management of well-being at work has a clear effect on employee productivity and through that on the profitability of the organizations business. (Modified from Aura, Ahonen & Ilmarinen 2010)

A cognitive map is a visual representation of the perceptions of an individual of how the world looks like. I will base my definition on the one made by Fiol and Huff (1992), who define cognitive maps as: “... graphic representations that locate people in relation to their information environments. Maps provide a frame of reference for what is known and believed. They highlight some information and fail to include other information, either because it is deemed less important, or because it is not known. They exhibit the reasoning behind purposeful actions.”

Cognitive mapping (method) is a technique developed by Eden and Ackermann (2001), which is used as a primary analysis method to elucidate how managers perceive well-being at work and its linkages to strategy.

1.4. Structure of the thesis
This study aims at bringing together the pressing issues regarding well-being at work, its management in an organizational context and linkage to strategic decision making. The introductory chapter introduced the reader to the current discussion on management of well-being at work in general. Thereafter the aim of the research was established and specific research objectives were presented. In the following section I will present the theoretical framework for the research, which is based on a multidisciplinary view (Danna & Griffin 1999, Macik-Frey, Quick, & Nelson 2007) of the well-being at work phenomenon. The framework is divided into three main themes: Well-being at work of the individual, organizational health, and linkages to organizational performance. These three themes form the ground for why the phenomenon is further on linked to the business context and strategic decision making.
The third chapter presents in detail the soft systems methodology (SSM) (Checkland 1981 cited in Checkland 2000), which is a branch of soft operations research and guides the research process and its presentation in this thesis. In accordance to the seven stages of the SSM process, I will already in the presentation of the theoretical framework follow its guidelines by creating a rich picture of the phenomenon (through the literature review), find the root definitions of the research problem (using the CATWOE technique in the summary), and build a conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work (based on the presented theoretical framework).

The analysis of the research will be divided between the third and the fourth chapter: I will give illustrative examples of how the empirical material was primarily analyzed in the third chapter, while in the meantime presenting the methods used for analysis (the results of the empirical material gathered are found in full in Appendix 4). Furthermore, I will present the key finding of the empirical results in a summarizing table (table 4). Enabling me to compare and contrast the perceptions of the managers in the five different categories used for the analysis of perception (complexity of map, clusters and key issues, non-verbal ques, goals and strategic directions, categories and cognitive map).

A more interpretative presentation of the findings will then be given in the fourth chapter of the thesis. The key findings in the perceptions of each of the managers will be analyzed in detail. Furthermore, the conceptual model of strategic management of well-being at work based on the theoretical framework will be compared to the real world presented through the perception of the seven top managers.

The fifth chapter, which is the last part of the thesis, includes the discussion and conclusions of the research, and gives the thesis a proper closure. The limitations of the study will be discussed as well as the implications for the case company in question. By reflecting back on the research problem and aim, I will argue for how the research has contributed to enhancing our understanding of the link between well-being at work and strategic decision making and how the results of this research could be used in future in the same area of research.
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the theory section in this thesis is to set the ground for the researched subject area through a literature review of research on well-being at work. It is an extension to my previous research on well-being at work (Penttilä 2010) and is complemented with a literature review on strategy and managerial cognition research. The chapter is divided into four sections. I will first introduce the reader to the well-being at work phenomenon, after which I will go on to explore why organizations need to strategically manage well-being at work. These will then be linked to a discussion about how strategies are formed and decisions are made about well-being at work through managerial cognitive processes. In the last section I will present a summary of the literature review and a conceptual model, which presents an ideal for the strategic management of well-being at work.

2.1 The Well-Being at Work Phenomenon

In order to understand the complexity of the well-being at work phenomenon it is helpful to know something about the history behind the research field: The school-of-thought which has the longest history of research in the area of well-being at work is probably the occupational medicine school, but there are also many others such as psychology, management research, and industrial engineering, which have all long traditions studying issues liked to well-being at work (Macík-Frey, Quick, & Nelson 2007). These approaches have during the last decades merged into a multidisciplinary field of occupational health research, with an own journal (Journal of Occupational Health Psychology), concentrating on overlapping theory and research from psychology, management, public health, preventive medicine, industrial engineering, epidemiology, and occupational medicine and nursing (ibid.). Although the focus of the research field has historically been on work safety and preventing work related health risks, the emerging trends are more concerned with issues of leadership, effective intervention strategies, and enhancing the vitality and efficiency of employees. (ibid.)

Forming an overarching picture of what well-being at work is – what actors participate in it, who are the beneficiaries of it, how does it affect the actors, and why should it be a concern for organizations (i.e. the worldview intrinsic to the phenomenon) – is in itself a complex task, since it draws from so many different strands of research. There have, however, been researchers who have taken up this task and formed frameworks to aid
multidisciplinary and holistic research on well-being at work. In order to give the reader a good understanding of the overall context in which this study is situated, I will present the key ideas of Danna and Griffin (1999) in their much cited review article that is a corner stone for the occupational health research. This review article gave a frame for the studies on health and well-being as a research field and set out the basics for defining and distinguishing it (presented in Figure 1).

Figure 1 A framework for organizing and directing future theory, research, and practice regarding health and well-being in the workplace (Danna & Griffin 1999:360).

The framework for health and well-being in the workplace developed by Danna and Griffin (1999) sets the grounds for the research on well-being at work. The framework has been divided into three main parts: antecedents for well-being at work, well-being in itself in terms of health (both mental and physical) and satisfaction (work related and overall life satisfaction), and the consequences of well-being at work on the individual and the organizational level. This division exemplifies the different aspects of the well-being at work phenomenon and the different standings from which the phenomenon can be researched: studies have focused on what the factors are that enhances well-being at work or what causes a lack of it, others have focused on how well-being at work is manifested in the workplace, and some fields have focused what
the outcomes of well-being at work are both from the perspective of an individual or that of an organization.

Danna and Griffin (1999) acknowledge that the meanings and definitions attached to the different terms that are included in the framework vary between different fields of research, but conclude that this should not stop research being done on the issue as a whole. This is also something that is a challenge for my research, especially when I draw my theoretical framework from both national and international research and must thus also work with different languages and their impact on the definitions attached to terms. All in all, the holistic framework is, despite its weaknesses, helpful in bringing together the different approaches to well-being at work in an organized way and helps to give an overall picture of the different fields that the well-being at work phenomenon has been about.

The exact meaning of the concepts in the model is often given through operational investigations and I will present further on in the text more detailed descriptions of the ones that have been researched the most. As can be seen from the framework, there are things that affect well-being in the workplace which relate to work itself and to its settings, the individuals working in an organization, and the social world intrinsic to the organizational environment. The antecedents for well-being have been grouped in three categories comprising of work settings, personality traits, and occupational stress. As the core constructs of health and well-being, the authors identify both mental and physical health as well as satisfaction in the workplace and non-work factors. It is thus important to note that the different aspects related to well-being at work are not only part of work itself, but can also be concerned with things outside the organization, such as family-life and other factors influencing overall life satisfaction, but which are reflected in the well-being in the workplace.

According to the review by Danna and Griffin (1999), there are both individual and organizational consequences of health and well-being in the workplace and this is what links the phenomenon of well-being at work to the managerial context: a point which in its essence forms the ground for this research is that organizations and their managers need to understand and be able to make conscious decisions and interventions in order to handle the consequences of well-being at work. As I will explore in the next sections, the framework presented here is by no means a complete presentation of factors impacting on the well-being in the workplace, but functions well as a broad framework for understanding the phenomenon as a whole. By having a preliminary understanding
of the phenomenon it is now possible to move on to constructing a more detailed picture of the actors involved and their roles and impact on well-being at work.

### 2.1.1. Employee well-being

The impact and consequences of well-being at work can be seen both on an individual level and on an organizational level. The business logic of most companies today is based on the employees’ ability to create value for the company by performing well in terms of quality and effectiveness as well as being innovative. Therefore, work ability of employees is central to all companies: employees must have the ability to meet the requirements of the work in order that companies can realize their strategies. This makes it important to understand how the well-being at work of an individual employee is made up and what factors affect it.

Especially the Finnish well-being at work research has long focused on the management and enhancement of work ability (von Bondsdorff et al. 2009). According to Ilmarinen (2006: 132), work ability is a combination of an employee’s personal resources and the requirements of the job itself, which is also in line with the framework of Danna and Griffin (1999). The personal resources of an individual are made up of health (both physical and psychological), education, skills, values and attitudes while the job requirements include the working environment, the content of the work, how the work tasks and the work itself is organized as well as what is required in terms of performance.

![Figure 2 Work ability and related factors (Ilmarinen 2006:132)](image-url)
Ilmarinen (2006) describes work ability and the factors that are linked with it by using a house model. Health, as seen as the physical, psychological and social capacity of an individual, lays the foundation for the house and everything else is built on top of these. An individual’s health is the basis of her functional capacity and can thus heavily affect ability to work, both in a negative and in a positive direction. The second floor represents the professional knowledge and competence of an individual. In a continuously changing business environment the professional knowledge and skills of the employees need to adapt to the new requirements. To be able to maintain the work ability and professional competence of an individual requires learning new technologies, developing new ways of working, and being able to work with different kinds of people and participating in different kinds of work communities.

The third floor contains the values, attitudes and motivations of an individual reflecting the balance between requirements of work and personal aspirations. Without the balance of the private self and the working self, it is not possible for individuals to achieve the best possible results (Otala and Ahonen 2003: 28). The fourth floor, which represents work itself and is the largest and heaviest of all the floors, consists of working conditions, work content and demands, work community and organization, and management and supervision. Besides these, the surrounding world has an impact on the individuals work ability: in different life stages family, community and the whole society play a role.

It can thus be established that the work ability of an individual employee is comprised of a range of different factors that to some extent are possible to manage. The managers of an organization have the power to make decisions about e.g. work settings and conditions, what is demanded of employees, and how the functional capacity, professional competence and values of the employees meet those of the organization. Factors that impact on the well-being and work ability of employees, but which are out of the control of managers are mostly related with factors outside the organization, such as the society, the employees family, and close community. However, what can be controlled is how managers in organizations respond to societal or family-related changes and this way affect the well-being at work of employees.

Given that the well-being of employees is comprised of such a broad range of factors, I will limit the more detailed exploration of these to those factors that have been seen as the most important for the well-being at work. To this end, the next section reviews in
greater detail aspects of employee well-being at work that have been a key focus of research both nationally and internationally.

2.1.1. Mental well-being vs. Stress

During the last four decades, major changes have taken place in workplaces: the nature of work has radically changed by the use of information technology, globalization and pace of changes and organizational restructuring, work time scheduling (diffusion between the line of free time and work), and many other factors (Sparks, Faragher, and Cooper 2001). These changes have had an impact on an increased focus on the mental side of the individual employee’s well-being in the international literature on occupational health. Although major areas of research on well-being at work also cover themes such as work settings and risks associated with them, the most voluminous area of research is focusing on mental well-being and its negative consequences, such as work related or occupational stress (Danna & Griffin 1999).

Mental well-being includes affective well-being, sense of competence, aspirations, autonomy, and goal-oriented and harmonious functioning (Warr 1990; von Bondsdorf 2009). Based on empirical evidence it has been argued that an individual’s subjective well-being at work is built up of both emotional and cognitive components (Hart & Cooper 2001). The emotional component is best described by two terms: negative and positive affect. These two dimensions of the emotional component are independent of each other. The negative affect is that of distress and is made up of feelings such as worry, anger, guilt and grief. Positive affect is called morale, and include emotional states such as energy, enthusiasm and pride. The cognitive component is called job satisfaction and reflects the employee’s assessment of the level of their satisfaction with the work which is based on the sum of positive and negative work experiences. (Hart & Cooper 2001; Cotton & Hart 2003).

The well-being at work research has traditionally focused on the problems and threats to well-being at work (Hakanen 2009). One of the most popular strands of research has been the occupational stress literature, which has investigated the negative impacts of occupational stress on behavioral, medical, and psychological problems (Danna & Griffin 1999). Stress is often seen as the consequence of a lack of fit between individual needs and the demands of the environment (ibid.) In an organizational setting this can be linked to a variety of factors intrinsic to the job, such as work overload or too little work, long hours and overtime work, new technology, and physical working
environment. Other factors that have been found to cause stress in organizations are for example role ambiguity and conflict, relationships at work, and career insecurity or development opportunities (ibid). One of the most influential factors affecting perceived stress at work is the managerial style (Sparks et al 2001; Bondsdorff 2009). All of these factors are important to take into account when making judgments about the well-being at work of employees in an organization and designing interventions to improve it.

However, there is also another side to the focus on occupational stress in the research field on well-being at work. Hart & Cooper (2001) have come to the conclusion that focusing on stress leaves out a great deal of positive emotional reactions related to work that have been shown to affect employee well-being. Hart & Cooper (2001) argue that the individual’s well-being at work and the organization are interrelated and correlated in many ways and impact on organizational performance. The work organization does not just strain an individual, but can actually enhance an individual’s well-being. Engagement is thus another central theme in the well-being at work discussion and will be discussed next.

2.1.1.2. Engagement

In today’s global business environment it is not enough that employees are just present at work, not being absent too often, and just doing the required amount of tasks and not much more. The requirements of the working life have intensified a lot more than that, and nowadays the key concern of employers is to recruit and keep employees who are innovative and initiative, good team workers, manage their time well, and make results with good quality. (Hakanen 2009) The answer to this might be found from engagement (fin. työn imu), which Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) have defines as:

“Engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. ... Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work.” (Schaufeli and Bakker 2003:4-5)
According to Hakanen (2009), engagement can result in both individual and organizational performance to be enhanced. The overall life satisfaction of employees can be enhanced, while the attitude towards work and the work organization is positive. Employees are more initiative and motivated to develop themselves and this way they make better results. Factors that increase work engagement are work related resources like the possibility to be independent and to develop in the work and be able to influence the work content and its organization. Work engagement is also seen as a collective phenomenon: team members influence each other in a way that enhances the collective engagement. Individual factors play a role in increasing work engagement as well – optimism, believing in oneself, self-appreciation, and extraversion all increase work engagement. The definition of engagement is closely related to that of employee morale and these two concepts might be considered to be very similar to each other.

Focusing on the positive aspects of well-being at work and its resources and potential instead of focusing on risk aversion and amendment is a new strand of research termed positive psychology (Quick, Macik-Frey, and Cooper 2007; Hakanen 2009). Focusing on the positive elements of well-being at work is also supported by evidence that positive and negative experiences have an impact on employee well-being independently of each other and that an individual worker well-being may be more influenced by either distress or morale (engagement), or a combination of both, depending on the individual person (Cotton & Hart 2003). "Stress" or poor employee well-being may be a result of lack of positive experiences at work and positive emotional states instead of only a cause of distress and negative experiences. Cotton & Hart (2003) showed that distress and morale have two different determinants that account for how high the level of distress or morale becomes. This has practical implications for how these two sides of well-being at work are handled: very different intervention strategies are needed depending on whether the problems have arisen due to increased distress in the work or lack of morale (engagement) or a combination of both. Thus, we need to look deeper into what the link between employee well-being is in the organizational context and how it should be dealt with.

### 2.1.2. Organizational health

Well-being at work is not just about the individual worker, but incorporates the entire organization. This aspect of well-being at work has mainly been researched in the field of organizational health. Hart and Cooper (2001) open up the well-being at work
phenomenon and link it with the organizational context by considering how the organizations and individuals impact on each other and what the consequences of this interaction are to the well-being of employees and the performance of organizations. Their model of organizational health was originally developed as a framework in response to the limitations that had been identified in the occupational stress literature, which often neglected the positive impact that organizations could have on employee well-being (Cotton & Hart 2003).

The organizational health perspective recognizes that employee well-being and organizational performance are both influenced by a combination of individual and organizational characteristics (Hart & Cooper 2001). The organizational characteristics include both the organization's resources and structures, which could be referred to as the organization's environment, as well as the employees' experience of this environment in terms of organizational climate and work experiences. The relationship between organizations and individuals working in them is not static – the actors respond to each other and build feedback loops both ways. (ibid.)

Their arguments are based on the assumption that employee well-being is not only dependent on the absence of negative factors related to work (high work load, risks in the work environment, bad organizational climate) or the individual employee (introvert personality or emotion focused coping), but positive organizational characteristics and environmental factors have an important impact on employee well-being. These in turn are seen as contributing strongly to organizational performance. It is therefore, according to the authors, not sufficient to study the well-being of individual employees without linking it to the greater whole of the organizational reality and performance measures. (Cotton & Hart 2003)

In their review research on the applicability of the organizational health framework, Cotton & Hart (2003) found that organizational climate is the strongest determinant of individual stress, while taking into account the personality factor. This means that management should be particularly interested in improving this particular area of organizational life if they want to target well-being at work. They also argued that organizational experiences (e.g. how employees experience the managers’ and supervisors’ way of behaving, how they get encouragement and attention, how clear the job roles are, what the decision making style is like in the organization, how aligned goals are with resources etc.) cause more stress and negative emotions for employees than operational factors that have traditionally been seen as the most "stressful".
Furthermore, they found that a low level of morale (the lack of energy, enthusiasm and pride) is a major reason for taking sick leave without a proper cause, having much more impact than a high level of distress for example. This gives an indication that interventions that target an increased morale are more effective than those that attempt to eliminate distress, which could also be linked to the discussion on engagement (Hakanen 2009), and strengthens the cause of the positive psychologists.

These research findings point to the direction that organizational health is perhaps the most important determinant of employee well-being. Cotton and Hart (2003: 125) argue based on their research that: "Interventions to reduce employee withdrawal behaviours that focus on increasing levels of morale will typically be more effective than approaches that focus on reducing levels of employee distress." Thus, interventions that concentrate on improving the quality of leadership and people management practices (i.e.,organizational climate) are more important for improving employee well-being and their ability to manage their work more effectively than those targeting for example reduction of work hours.

The organizational health approach aims at developing healthy individuals in healthy organizations, which are enablers for efficiency and financial success. A healthy organization is characterized by the way written values and everyday practices are congruent with each other and development initiatives are made by participating management, employees, HR, occupational health care, and other actors alike. Central to this approach is that interventions and development projects are made based on an analysis of the current state, where after both individual level and organizational level factors can be targeted. (Hakanen 2009)

Quick, Macik-Frey and Cooper (2007) have compiled a list of qualifications that define a healthy organization, which exemplifies the dimensions of organizational health that must be considered in order for it to be enhanced:
In order for organizations to become healthy, the employees' experience of purpose in life, qualitative connections to other people, and their positive self-regard and sense of mastery must be supported. These three dimensions of positive health are according to the positive psychologist's view key qualifications of well-being and health, both on the individual and on the organizational level (Ryff and Singer 1998 cited in Hakanen 2009).

Thus far, I have discussed the well-being at work phenomenon from the point of view of the individual and the organization in order to develop a thorough understanding of what the different aspects of the well-being phenomenon are. In the next section the discussion will be further on linked with a business perspective on the phenomenon and investigated through approaching the phenomenon through viewing its linkages to performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leading a life of purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clear mission and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give back to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides opportunities for growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rewards or recognizes achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality connections to others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Open, honest communication norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fairness or justice in practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust and safety norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mutual purpose and sense of belonging to the bigger whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Embrace and encourage diversity of people, skills and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cohesiveness and positive affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pride in group accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitates interdependent workers (high autonomy with strong social supports)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive self-regard and mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Growth opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support systems for problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fitness support systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Positive physical work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High safety focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.3. **Linkages to performance**

There is already some evidence that well-being at work results in better performance of the organization. Thus, making well-being at work a part of the strategic agenda is actually a reaction to corporate realities: the well-being of employees must be taken care of because it impacts on costs and profitability, and can also enhance higher performance.

Studies indicate that work ability and well-being has a positive effect on employee and corporate performance and poor well-being at work leads to the opposite (Danna & Griffin 1999; Cotton & Hart 2003; Ahonen & Näsman 2008; Page & Vella-Brodrick 2008; von Bondsdorf et al. 2009). These studies have shown that well-being at work improves employee performance both by reducing negative impacts of factors that would decrease efficiency or work results, but also through enhancing those that account for a greater productivity. The examples range from improving ergonomic working postures and this way enhancing worker efficiency (Danna and Griffin 1999) to the correlation between participatory employee policies and engagement to corporate performance and competitiveness (von Bondsdorff 2009).

There are several national and international case-studies that have reported on great returns on investments enhancing the well-being at work in their organizations. Metso Corporation, a big globally operating industrial company, invested during the years 2003-2006 in its well-being at work and occupational health care services a sum of 3 million euros more than on average in the industry. By having invested in the right targets, managing and governing of its employees health and ability to work, the corporation evaluates the return on this investment to be approximately 11.5 million euros, which is a ROI of 130% (Parvinen, Windischhofer, and Gustaffson 2009).

Similar results have been shown by Ahonen and Näsman (2008) in their DRUVAN-project, where the municipality of Dragsfjärd multiplied the sum invested into its well-being at work and occupational health care by 20-fold. The sickness absences and number of disability pension among the employees of the municipality decreased significantly and the calculated savings were over 65,000 euros a year. Also the management of Johnson and Johnson estimated that strategic investments in employee wellness have cumulatively saved the company approximately 250 million dollars during the years 2002 to 2008 (Harward Business Review 2010). The wellness programs that were launched had covered the social-, physical-, and mental health of
the employees’. The number of employees who smoked was reduced by over \( \frac{2}{3} \), over half of the employees have increased their sports activity level and been able to drop their blood pressure rates.

These are just a few examples of concrete measures of how well-being at work has impacted organizational performance and many more can be found. There is growing evidence for that well prepared and implemented well-being at work projects have results in high employee performance and enhance the success of business (Aldana 2001; Chapman 2001; Aura et al. 2010). Despite the growing evidence, it must be noted that the research on the linkages of well-being at work and performance (especially if measured in financial terms) is still quite difficult and contradictory results have also been found (von Bondsford 2009). The ‘black box’ problem, of what actually impacts on what, is a pressing concern to be dealt with within the research field (Macik-Frey et al. 2007).

### 2.2. Why strategic management of well-being at work?

Why then must well-being at work be managed strategically and why is it interesting to study how managers perceive the well-being at work to be linked to business strategy?

If managers perceive that sustaining and enhancing well-being at work is critical for the success of their organization (which has been already to some extent indicated by the media and some studies, for example Vilen 2011), they must make decisions for allocating resources so that this is possible. However, the challenge that they ultimately meet is that the diversity of different ways to approach well-being at work in an organizational context makes it a complex issue to manage and make informed decisions about it. According to Anttonen et al. (2008:17), it is important for companies to have a holistic approach to well-being at work and not just focus on one issue in order for successfully managing it. I therefore argue that it is essential for the decision makers in a company to be able to understand the different levels of well-being at work, its antecedents and the different actors that are involved in the phenomenon in order to be able to manage it strategically and make decisions about how it is managed. Only through studying the individual perceptions of managers of organizations it is possible to find out how strategic the management of well-being at work is in this particular organization. In the next parts of the literature review I will provide further reasons for, why it is important that the well-being at work phenomenon is managed strategically in organizations.
2.2.1. **The resource-based perspective on the firm**

By taking a resource-based perspective on the firm (Barney, 1991; Wright & McMahan 1992) I argue that through investing in well-being at work employees *can become* a lasting competitive advantage in those companies where they are a vital resource. Finland, as most of western countries, is a technology driven economy and a relatively small nation, and therefore it is not feasible for companies to compete with low costs, but rather with knowledge and innovations (Sveiby 1997). These factors mean that companies must invest heavily in various HR functions and try to attract and retain the best professionals from the talent pool they have access to. As already discussed, the work ability and engagement of employees are all the time more and more important for companies that want to stay competitive, because this way they can save costs and reduce the potential weakness these might bring for their ability to create value. I argue that if managed right, human resources can become a rare resource for companies, one which is very hard to imitate.

Because of the demographic changes, recruitment challenges as well as potential and already existing employee shortage the human resources of a company might even become non-substitutable. A resource-based perspective, viewing employees as a vital resource of the firm (Wright & McMahan 1992) gives good grounds to the strategic management of well-being at work in companies in the Western World. People and their talents are hard to reproduce: To be able to recruit the best talents, who fit in the company culture, and who together as teams are able to make results greater than that of the sum of all individual results is difficult and cannot easily be imitated. This means that the employees of a company can become unique to each organization – and if the well-being at work investments that are made in them are made right, they are likely to increase the company’s competitive advantage.

2.2.2. **Comparing well-being at work to SHRM**

Just as human resource management is an organizational function part of those processes that need to be strategically managed in an organization, we can argue that well-being at work needs to be managed strategically in a similar way. How HR is managed in a company is actually included in the management of well-being at work. Because today’s society is most of all a knowledge society, the organizations nowadays are mainly dependent on human resources for their success. As I argued in the introduction, well-being at work is a key issue to the survival and success of Western
organizations and therefore also a crucial issue to be managed strategically. Just like human resource management, the management of well-being at work is an organizational process in itself which cuts through all other organizational operations.

Because well-being at work encompasses such a broad and varied field of different activities there are often things that are more important to the operations of other organizations and less to others. Therefore, for the success of the organization it is important to identify specifically which activities are important for a specific organization, and this way tie the management of well-being at work to the organization’s strategy. Just like strategic human resource management (SHRM), the strategic management of well-being at work must be concerned with the determinants of decisions about practices that affect the well-being at work in an organization and the way that they are linked to the organization’s strategy (Wright & McMahan 1992).

Understanding the strategic management of well-being at work can be enhanced by comparing it to the strategic management of human resources. The definition of SHRM given by Wright and McMahan (1992) in their much cited article was “the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals”. This definition is very much in line with the definition used of strategic management of well-being at work. Also this definition considers the organizational goals in that the wellbeing and health of the employees of an organization are considered to be important factors of the overall business of the organization and its strategy. Furthermore, the definition emphasizes that there are actions that are systematic and well planned, resources have been assigned to them, they have defined targets for which there are liable persons, and that the results are regularly measured both on an organizational and an individual level. Just like SHRM, the strategic management of well-being at work can be seen as having a clear effect on employee productivity and through that on the profitability of the organizations business. (Aura, Ahonen & Ilmarinen 2010)

How then do managers deal with strategic issues and make decisions about them? In this study I will ground my research in the cognitive approach on strategic management and in the next part I will discuss why it is important to understand how managers understand the well-being at work phenomenon by taking a cognitive process approach on strategy formation.
2.3. Strategy formation as a cognitive process

The cognitive school on strategy postulates that strategy formation is a cognitive process that takes place in the mind of the strategist. The way managers form strategies is shaped by the concepts, maps, schemas, and frames they have formed from the inputs that come from the environment. (Mintzberg et al 2009:181) The aim of my thesis is to find out how managers perceive well-being at work and its linkages to strategy.

There are several things that affect the interpretation processes of managers and this way also the outcomes of decision making and strategy (Daft & Weick 1984). These are among other things scanning behavior or sources of information, urgency and feasibility assessment, organizational beliefs and resources etc. (ibid; Dutton & Duncan 1987). In order to survive, top managers need to be able to interpret ambiguous events and give meaning and direction to these interpretations according to Daft & Weick (1984). They also argue that interpretation might be the most important function organizations and their decision-makers perform, together with responding to these interpretations.

To understand how managers form strategy and make decisions upon which organizational action can be taken, we need to understand the cognitive processes underlying strategy formation. When strategy formation is thought of as a cognitive process, it can be argued that clearly formed cognitive structures and thinking processes help managers to manage well-being at work more strategically. In the introduction, well-being at work was presented as a strategic issue that managers are forced to deal with. Identifying it as such helps decision makers to impose order on the environment and thus also manage well-being at work more strategically.

An interesting model linking the cognition and motivations of decision makers to the meaning attached to strategic issues and the actions taken in response to them is presented by Dutton and Jackson (1987). This model focuses on how strategic issue diagnosis (and specifically labeling an issue either a threat or an opportunity) affects both the information processing and the motivations of key decision makers. A strategic issue is defined as “a forthcoming development, either inside or outside of the organization, which is likely to have an important impact on the ability of the enterprise to meet its objectives” (Ansoff 1980: 133). Strategic issues are developments or events that have the potential to influence an organization’s strategy (Dutton & Duncan 1987:...
Issues can be external threats or internal weaknesses, but also opportunities in the environment or internal strengths that could be exploited (Ansoff 1980: 133). These definitions of what strategic issue means fit very well with the discussion about well-being at work and the concrete challenges that managers face in their everyday work.

Dutton and Jackson (1987) argue that decision makers impose different categories on strategic issues in order to describe the issue and in this way attach certain meaning to it. These categories are formed using linguistic labels, which in turn affect the cognitions and motivations of key decision makers. The model is based on the assumption that organizational action is determined by the perceptual and interpretive processes of decision makers, which in fact in this case is a very valid assumption: without the decisions as well as engagement and understanding of the top management well-being at work issues would not become a key topic on the management’s agenda and important part of organizational strategy.

### 2.3.1. Categorization, Schemas and Sensemaking

The concern of this thesis is to explore the linkages between well-being at work and its strategic management. By linking the strategic management of well-being at work to the strategic issue literature we can explore what Dutton and Jackson (1987) have suggested, which is that managers can actively manipulate the meaning of strategic issues and subsequent organizational responses. This is according to the authors done by making certain attributes of organizational issues salient by labeling them and forming cognitive categories of the issues. These categories can be explored by studying the linguistic labels used by decision makers, with which they describe their environments (Dutton & Jackson 1987). Categorization theory helps to understand how objects and events are represented in the human cognition and how they affect the information processing of the subject and his or hers subsequent behaviors (ibid.).

A critical assertion of the categorization theory is that people form cognitive categories based on their observations of the attributes of objects and events (i.e. issues) in their environment. The categories are formed out of issues with similar attributes and which have a correlational structure in their environment. Cognitive categories reflect the perceived correlations that the individuals have of certain issues and are efficient for storing information. (Dutton & Jackson 1987) For example managers who must make strategic decisions use categorization to “reduce the complexity of stimulus world by organizing objects into meaningful groups” (Dutton & Jackson 1987: 78).
Rosch (1978 cited in Dutton & Jackson 1987) has modeled the categorization to be comprised of both a horizontal and a vertical dimension along which different issues are structured. The vertical dimension is divided into three levels: the highest is the superordinate level which includes the two other levels, the basic and the subordinate. The basic level then subsumes the subordinate level. An “organization” could be categorized on the superordinate level, while “profit” and “not-for-profit” would be basic level categories (Dutton & Jackson 1987: 78). Subordinate categories could then be for example banks or hospitals. The members of a category are similar, but not identical. At a given level, they share some common attributes, but might be differentiated by many dissimilarities. (ibid.).

The issues of well-being at work are comprised both of the “natural” world and the “social” world, which includes social objects, situations, and events (Dutton & Jackson 1987: 78). Because social objects and situations are often surrounded by ambiguity, the linguistic labeling of them makes the categorization a very powerful device (ibid.). Categorization of issues is on the other hand also closely linked to cognitive schemas (Bartlett 1932; Piage 1952 cited in Dutton & Jackson 1987) which describes how knowledge about concepts is stored in memory in the form of structured data.

According to Balogun & Johnson (2004:525), schemata are central to organizational sensemaking. Through mental schemata, the formation of knowledge in ways that make its utilization easier is possible. Clustering thematically related knowledge enables the construction of cognitive frameworks of past events that can then be stored in memory (ibid.). Key decision makers in organization need to deal with a huge amount and a constant stream of information, which results in that they need to somehow filter the information before it is used. Because schemata act as data reduction devices, they help managers make sense of a complex and confusing world (ibid.). The human capacity to deal with information is limited and schemas function as tools for processing new information. According to Barr et al (1992) the mental models of top managers must keep pace with the changing environment. According to their study the renewal of the mental models involves attention to environmental changes, the interpretation of stimuli, and the matching of perceived problems with solution.

Dutton and Jackson (1987) suggest that after an issue has penetrated the cognitive filters, it is labeled and categorized. The label is a sort of address to the cognitive category in question. Categorizing an issue is important because it affects the following
interpretations and information processing, which in turn are translated into decisions about how to resolve the issue at hand. In order to understand how managers interpret and process information on well-being at work in order to make sense of it, I need to identify the salient and meaningful categories used by decision makers while this process is active. Dutton and Jackson also point out that knowledge of attributes associated with the strategic issue is needed in order to be able to specify and test the model of issue categorization, since attributes “suggest the content of information likely to be (mis)associated with ... a strategic issue”. (ibid.)

The model linking issue categorization to organizational action integrates the interpretive view of organizations with psychologist’s view of how cognitive processes affect behavior (Dutton & Jackson 1987). In terms of categorization theory, “well-being at work” as a strategic issue represents a superordinate level category. “threat” and “opportunity” are basic level categories and it could be argued that the different “fields of well-being” are then subordinate categories. These will be further explored in the analysis section of the paper.

The model provides a good starting point for the analysis of how top-level managers perceive and make sense of well-being at work, because it helps to understand the cognitive process. Using categorization theory to understand how decision makers make strategic decision and schema theory to understand how they make sense of well-being at work, it is possible to determine the most important categories that are employed for classifying the issues linking well-being at work and strategy.

2.3.2. Strategic issue diagnosis

The strategic issue diagnosis -school of strategic management deals with the question of how decision makers can deal effectively with challenges to strategy that come from the environment (Dutton & Duncan 1987; Ansoff 1980). Daft and Weick (1984:285) have noted that “organizations must develop information processing mechanisms capable of detecting trends, events, competitors, markets, and technological developments relevant to their survival”. The well-being at work issue can be considered an issue of survival in today's market. Diagnosing well-being at work as a strategic issue promotes the possibility of being able to manage it strategically.

Dutton and Duncan (1984) suggest that after a strategic issue diagnosis has been triggered top managers make urgency and feasibility assessments, with which they
apply meaning and definition to an issue. These assessments are made on the basis of subjective judgments and the organization’s relationship to the issue. Furthermore, they suggest that by understanding the assessment of SID and their interaction, it is possible to predict if the issue initiates changes. Thus by studying the interpretations made by the top management of well-being at work issues we can explore if well-being at work becomes strategically manageable in such a way that managers can act upon the issue.

The way organizations respond to strategic issues involves the way these issues are triggered and interpreted by decision-makers, this is in literature referred to as strategic issue diagnosis (SID). The discipline aims at linking the organization theory with the concerns of strategic management theorists, and in this way inform on the links of strategy formulation to the external environment it takes place in. It furthermore illuminates the strategic adaptation process, which is closely dependent on the assessment and interpretation made by the decision-makers of the organization. (Dutton & Duncan 1987: 279-280).

Dutton & Duncan (1987: 280) propose in their paper that “...meanings formed in SID create the momentum for change through which forces for further adaptation are set into place”. They argue that through recognizing the consequences of some current trend or emerging development a SID process can be started and through a subjective judgment of urgency and feasibility managers apply meaning and definition to the issue. According to them, by understanding the decision-maker’s assessment of SID and the interactions involved with it, one can predict if the issue will initiate organizational change.

The model of strategic issue diagnosis presented by Dutton & Duncan (1987) consists of three different phases: activation, issue assessment, and SID outcome. In this thesis I’m mostly interested in the second phase of the SID process, namely, the issue assessment phase. I argue that the analysis of well-being at work (that is made in the case organization) acts as a triggering mechanism for a SID process of well-being at work. The argument that well-being at work is a strategic issue and the background to how it has become one, was presented in the introduction. Thus, the activation of the strategic issue diagnosis will not be studied in greater detail here.

The model proposes that after the strategic issue has been recognized decision-makers need to interpret and understand it. Decision-makers need to actively engage in
understanding the issue in order to be able to create “momentum for change” and take action on the issue (Dutton & Duncan 1987:283). As Mantere (2000: 63) points out, all of the building blocks of strategy (content, context, and process), have a link to interpretation. This makes the study of managerial interpretation of strategic issues both very important and interesting. Interpretation is the key to understanding how strategy is formed: People who write strategy need to interpret the content of strategy in order to be able to form it. Both the internal and external context of an organization needs to be interpreted so that strategies can be made.

SID acts as a part of an interpretive process where decision-makers give meaning to data that they are confronted with (Daft & Weick 1984). Top managers make strategic choices and decisions based on the interpretations that are formed from information gained of the organizations environment (internal, competitive or external) and interpreted through their mental models (ibid.). Daft & Weick argue that “strategic-level managers formulate the organization’s interpretation.” Thus it must be acknowledged that there are many different actors that participate in the scanning or data processing of information, but it is on the top level that information is converged into a form that action can be taken in the organization.

2.4. Summary of the literature review on well-being at work and its strategic management

The summary of the literature review is guided by the third stage of the soft systems methodology process (see the method section on a detailed description of the seven different stages) in which the root definitions of the problem are identified using a technique called CATWOE (Checkland 2000). Based on the rich picture created through the literature review, I will now identify the Customer, the Actors, the Transformation process, the Worldview, the Owner, and the Environmental factors linked to the well-being at work phenomenon and its strategic management. Following this, I will form a conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work.

CUSTOMER

Well-being at work has been identified as an umbrella term for all aspects of well-being and health that impact both individual employees and organizations as a whole. The beneficiaries of well-being at work are thus both the individual employees whose overall life satisfaction can be enhanced (Quick & Macik-Frey 2007; Hakanen 2009)
and organizations whose performance and productivity can be enhanced and costs cut through and enhanced well-being of the individuals and teams working in them (Hart & Cooper 2001; Cotton & Hart 2003; Otala & Ahonen 2003). Also the society in general and other stakeholders (families, customers, suppliers) benefit from the well-being of individuals and organizations, since they are in interaction with these actors (ibid.).

ACTORS

Within the well-being at work phenomenon, the actor who decides whether or not an organization as a whole focuses on well-being, are the top managers of an organization. The perceptions and understanding of the top management has a key role, since it is they who make the decisions about whether or not well-being at work is a focus area in the organization (Daft & Weick 1984; Dutton & Jackson 1987).

TRANSFORMATION PROCESS

The transformation process taking place within the well-being at work phenomenon can be concretized by considering what the inputs and the outputs are. Inputs can be viewed in terms of employee and organizational health: the personal resources, physical and mental health, education, skills, values, and attitudes of individual employees interact with the organizational health factors of work environment, content and organization of work, demands and requirements, leadership, organizational climate, and development initiatives that involve actors from all organizational levels. The outputs of well-being at work can also be looked at on both the individual and the organizational level: Employees are able to meet the requirements of the work and have the potential to even excel. The overall life satisfaction of employees is enhanced. Organizations are able to fulfill their strategies, enhance their productivity, and potentially even get competitive advantage. (Hart Cooper 2001; Cotton & Hart 2003; Ilmarinen 2006; Quick et al 2007; Hakanen 2009).

WORLDVIEW AND OWNER

In order for investments and interventions that enhance well-being at work to be effective, these must target the right areas that are specific for each organization. This implies that the management of an organization considers wellbeing and health of the employees to be important factors of the overall business of the organization and its human resource objectives, and understand it in a holistic way (Anttonen et al. 2008; Aura et al 2010). Furthermore, it requires that there are actions that are systematic and
well planned (the current state of well-being is clarified), that resources have been assigned to them, they have defined targets for which there are liable persons, and that the results of well-being at work are regularly measured both on an organizational and an individual level (Hakanen 2009; Aura et al 2011).

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The well-being and health of an individual has organizational consequences: well-being and healthy individuals are less absent from work, they are more productive, and likely to stay with the organization (Danna & Griffin 1999; Macik-Frey et al 2007). Organizations can benefit from well-being at work through enhanced potential to make good results, but also through clear cost saving which is a result of the enhanced well-being of individual employees (Aldana 2001; Chapman 2001; Aura et al. 2010). Investments made in well-being at work have the potential to become a source of competitive advantage, because human resource processes and policies and their outcomes are hard to imitate (Wright & McMahan 1992). Furthermore, the changes in society, such as the demographical changes, governmental actions, overall health of the population (Kauppinen 2010) and in the global market place like the intensified global competition, rivalry for talent etc. (Sparks et al. 2001) make focusing on well-being at work a strategic issue that no Western organization or manager can ignore.

2.4.1. Presentation of a conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work

The fourth stage in the SSM process involves building a conceptual model of the problem that is researched in order to be able to structure the problem in a meaningful way. The model serves as an ideal model and demonstrates a set of potential activities of managing well-being at work strategically. The activities are joined by arrows indicating dependence, which implies that the results of the other are dependent of the way the first one is performed.

The conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work is based on the theoretical framework presented above and the knowledge that I have gained throughout the research process and through my work as a consultant (a discussion on the impact of the previously held knowledge of the researcher on the research is found in the methods chapter). It is important to acknowledge that my understanding of the strategic management of well-being at work has also strongly been influenced by the
ideas of work colleagues, which has had an impact on the formation of the model. In Appendix 1 you can find a more detailed version from a cognitive mapping exercise that presents the thought process leading to the formation of the conceptual model in.

Figure 3 Conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work

1. Since the top managers are the actors who make the decision whether or not an organization focuses on well-being at work as a strategic issue it is the first point in the conceptual model that they make sense of the phenomenon and interpret what it means for their organization. The managers should understand what the opportunities and threats of well-being at work are for their business and compare these to the costs and potential returns involved. (Daft & Weick 1984; Dutton & Jackson 1987; Anttonen et al. 2008; Aura et al 2010)

2. After interpreting what well-being at work means for their organization, the top managers need to make strategic decisions about what areas of well-being to focus on in the organization. These decisions should be based on the strategic
objectives of the organization and an analysis of the current state of well-being at work in the organization. A question that should be raised is What are the specific areas that need to be targeted? (Wright and McMahan 1992)

3. The nature of the well-being at work phenomenon is such that the processes and policies that are created for enhancing and developing well-being at work should focus on the positive (engaging employees rather than trying to eradicate sources of for example stress). (Hart Cooper 2001; Cotton & Hart 2001; Quick et al 2007; Hakanen 2009).

4. Processes and policies for preventing problems and responding to them, such as guidelines for managers on how to act when a worker is no longer coping with his or her work, are needed so that the costs of potential lack of well-being at work can be managed. (Otala & Ahonen 2003; Ilmarinen 2006)

5. The well-being at work of an individual and the overall health of organizations is dynamic and easily influenced by changes in the environment. Therefore, measuring and following up the realization of well-being at work regularly (both on an individual and an organizational level) is essential. (Hart Cooper 2001; Cotton & Hart 2003; Ilmarinen 2006).

6. The same reasons as mentioned above advocate for regularly making adjustments to policies and processes based on the information gained from the measurements and follow-up. (Hart & Cooper 2001; Cotton & Hart 2003; Otala & Ahonen 2003).

7. As an end result of managing well-being at work in a strategic way is to realize the potential competitive advantage through the benefits of well-being at work of individuals and the organization as a whole. (Wright & McMahan 1992; Sparks et al. 2001; Aldana 2001; Chapman 2001; Kauppinen 2010; Aura et al. 2010)

The above presented seven stages are a summary of my understanding of the key issues involved with strategically managing well-being at work. This understanding will help me in the following stages of the research to further deepen my understanding of the well-being at work phenomenon and expand it by studying how the top managers in the case company studied perceive it and how they relate to it in terms of their business and forming strategies.
In the next chapter I will give a detailed presentation of the methodological underpinnings of this research continuing with the presentation of the research methods that are used and their results.
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to motivate the choices for strategies of data collection and analysis I will next outline the philosophical underpinnings of the thesis. Furthermore, the linkage between the research strategy and the research’s purpose and aim will be discussed. In this part I will also present the procedures that are taken to establish the trustworthiness of the empirical part of this thesis and the interpretations that are made from its analysis.

3.1 Research Strategy

The analysis of well-being at work (which forms the borders of the empirical material of this study) is based on an ontological assumption that the external and internal environment of the organization is to at least some extent concrete and that “events and processes are hard, measurable, and determinant” (Daft & Weick 1984: 287). Also this thesis is therefore based on the assumption that by measuring and investigating a large amount of organizational factors that affect the well-being at work of employees in an organization, one can find out the things that are the most important for the organization’s and the employees’ well-being and this way conceptualize the issue in a way that makes it strategically more manageable.

On the other hand, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991: 435) have concluded that “Understanding and action, including strategic action, ... derive from the framework of meaning ascribed by the organization’s members.” According to them, the meaning ascribed to some event or piece of information is unavoidably subjective and constrained by the context the individual making the interpretation and meaning giving is in. Just like Gioia and Chittipeddi, I find the study of interpretation and the meaning systems (or perceptions), and the processes whereby those systems are altered, fundamentally important to the study of strategy.

The interpretations made and the sensemaking of the top management of the well-being at work -issue, is socially constructed. It changes with the individuals that are studied and also according to who actually does the “studying” of the phenomenon itself. Managers need to interpret the phenomenon of well-being at work and make sense of it in order to be able to conceptualize it so that they can make strategic decisions about it.
Thus, the philosophical underpinnings of this thesis are based on two somewhat contradictory view systems: On the one hand, that managers can make informed decisions about well-being at work in their organizations and manage it strategically, if they have the required information and if they are able conceptualize the phenomenon properly in their minds. On the other hand, that to be able to conceptualize the well-being at work issue and to make strategic decisions about it, they must first interpret it and make sense of the phenomenon, which are both in their essence very subjective cognitive processes of social construction.

These philosophical underpinnings make the base of the research strategy that is chosen for this research. My research method draws on the management research school of soft operations research\(^4\). Soft OR methods can be seen as methods that, rather than solving a problem, are able to structure it. “Soft OR uses predominantly qualitative, rational, interpretative and structured techniques to interpret, define, and explore various perspectives of an organization and the problems under scrutiny. They generate debate, learning, and understanding, and use this understanding to progress through complex problems.” (Hayer 2004: 4) Choosing Soft OR as my research strategy gives me the opportunity to take into account much of the complexities that are intrinsic to researching strategy: Strategic issues and the making of strategy are an integral part of organizations, affected by the people constructing them. People in turn are complex organisms on their own, whose worldviews, interests, motivations, and cognition affect their behavior and in this way the organizations they are part of and the strategies that are made in them (ibid.). The researcher’s role in Soft OR is to ensure the group that is studied contains key stakeholders and to act as a facilitator of the research process in order to capture a group’s perception of a problem both verbally and in diagrams (ibid.).

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), which is perhaps the most known Soft OR methodology, was originally developed by Peter Checkland in 1981 (cited in Metsämuuronen 2006). The methodology is well suited for my study, since it takes into account both the researcher’s previously held attitudes and interpretations and those held by the studied objects. Studying the linkages between strategy and well-being at work is in its essence a study of social systems, which exist primarily as abstractions in the mind of human beings. Problems are much more complex and difficult to define

\(^4\) The debate about whether soft OR actually is OR is out of the scope of this paper.
when studying systems that are constructed upon human activity rather than natural or physical systems.

There are altogether seven stages in the SSM process developed by Checkland (1981 cited in Checkland 2000). I will use these stages roughly to guide my research process and make some modifications in their content to suit the purposes of this research. Next I will present how the SSM research strategy is used in this study:

The stages 1 and 2 of the SSM research process build upon confronting the problem situation that is researched. I do this in the introduction of this thesis and through the theoretical framework by identifying what the research problem is, i.e. identifying well-being at work as a strategic issue in general in society an in particular for Western businesses. I then explore the issue deeper and connect it to the actors involved with the issue, individual employees, organizations, and the managers of these organizations. I discuss well-being at work as part of a greater societal phenomenon linking it to the demographical changes happening in society and their impact on companies and their strategies. In the introduction of this thesis I try to present a rich picture of the phenomenon of well-being at work in order to identify the relevant themes of the issue and create a shared understanding of the issue with my readers.

Stage 3 in the process includes identifying the root definition of the problem. The root definition consists of sentences that describe the ideal system of how things should look like. For this thesis it means identifying the purpose of well-being at work as a strategic issue, defining what strategic management of well-being at work could be, what factors affect it, who are taking part in the formation of it, who are affected by it and who can affect it by their actions or decisions. In this thesis the third stage will be based upon a literature review of well-being at work literature and strategy literature.

Checkland has created a technique for constructing root definitions named CATWOE. The technique draws upon defining the following:

C. Customer: who are the customers, beneficiaries, victims of the system?
A. Actors: who are the actors, participants in the system?
T. Transformation Process: what is transformed by this system?, what inputs are transformed into what outputs?
W. Weltanschauung (Worldview): what is the worldview underlying the system?
O. Owner: who is the owner of the system?, who has the power to stop the system?
E. Environmental Factors: what are the environmental constraints that need to be considered?
This technique will function as an overall guide to the representation of the literature review and the identification of the root definition of well-being at work as a strategic issue and the strategic management of it, which is presented in the summary section of the literature review.

The fourth stage involves building a conceptual model directly out of the root definition. The model should be a diagram of potential activities with nodes linking the different activities together in order to be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of how the activities are linked together. Checkland advocates limiting the number of activities to seven (plus or minus two). Based upon the literature review and my own knowledge that I have gained of the well-being at work phenomenon under the research process, I will construct a conceptual model of what strategic management of well-being at work is and how different concepts related to it are linked together. The conceptual model is presented in the summary section of the literature review. A detailed version of the conceptual map can be found in Appendix 1.

Stage five involves the comparison of the conceptual model with the real world. In the original seven stages methodology created by Checkland this stage is made through asking questions from group members involved in the research (for example managers of the case company that is researched) about the conceptual model and if it resembles their perception of the real world. I have modified this stage a little in order for it to better suit the research’s limitations: I will make conceptual models of the perceptions of what well-being at work is according to the seven top managers based on the semi-structured interviews that are held with them using the cognitive mapping method designed by Eden and Ackermann (2001). In addition to this the seven managers will make their own conceptual models with help of another modified cognitive mapping approach (Söderström 2010). Thus the conceptual model based upon the literature review will then be compared with the view the managers have of the real world pictured in the conceptual models they themselves have drawn and the conceptual models (or cognitive maps) drawn from the interview material.

The methods and results of this first step of analysis are presented in the form of illustrative examples of the categorization exercise and cognitive map of manager E and the mapping of the interview with manager A. All the categorization and cognitive map exercises as well as the interview mappings (managers A to G) are found in Appendix 4 in order for the reader to be able to check and evaluate the interpretations that I make based on the analysis.
In the sixth stage the researcher should identify “systematically desirable and culturally feasible changes to the real world system” (Hayer 2004:4). This can be done together with the participants involved in the case organization itself, but as my research will not fully qualify for action research because of time restrictions, this stage will be made by me as the researcher in the analysis part. This involves analysis and interpretations of the differences found in the fifth stage and conclusions made upon them. This is done in the Discussion.

The seventh stage of the SSM process involves taking action upon the changes that were identified in the sixth stage. This stage is out of the scope of this research, but can hopefully be completed in the future through the cooperation between the researcher and the case organization and will thus be discussed in the Discussion and Conclusions part of this thesis.

I will describe the research strategy in detail in the next section, in order for the reader to get a thorough picture of the procedures that were followed and the way these enable the empirical part of this study to fulfill the purpose of the research.

### 3.2. Research Design

The SSM research strategy postulates an overall qualitative approach also to research design, which is chosen in order to gain enough rich data and to be able to study a real-world situation in a natural setting (Patton 2002:40). The research designs actually followed in this thesis are based on multiple different methods: qualitative research with semi-structured interviews, cognitive mapping and categorization exercise. I take a conscious risk in not strictly following any particular research design and instead combining a few different, but I justify it by being this way better equipped to explore a problem of complex nature. Also Munro & Mingers (2002) have reported that “combinations of soft OR methodologies have been used in Organizational Research studies for a more robust outcome and with more acceptable results” (Hayer 2004: 19).

Since the purpose of my study is to understand how top managers perceive and interpret well-being at work as a strategic issue, I have good reason to choose purposeful sampling and a case study design. I will be studying one case organization because studying the perceptions of managers in one case organization instead of many gives the opportunity to analyze their perceptions in relation to the organization they are in and make interpretations about whether or not the way these managers perceive
well-being at work is congruent with the reality of in their organizations. Furthermore, because the aim of the research is to explore the perception of specifically top managers, I have good reason to choose purposeful sampling and choose the members of the top management group of the case organizations as my research subjects.

### 3.3. Research Setting

The case organization on which this research is based is a big Finnish corporation, with some operations also outside Finland. During the time of the research, the organization had decided to conduct a well-being at work analysis of how good its policies on well-being at work were and how well it managed its well-being at work processes. The service provider for the analysis was Pohjola Health Ltd, which is a consultant company offering well-being at work consultant services. The analysis was to be a part of a well-being at work program that had been started in the organization the same year.

During the whole process of the well-being at work analysis of the case organization, I was working for Pohjola Health and participated in the analysis process as a consultant together with a team. I did data collection both for the purpose of this research and the analysis that was done in the organization by Pohjola Health. This gave me access to internal documents and made it possible for me to observe and discuss ideas and interpretations with other more experienced consultants making use of triangulation of data sources and investigators (Yin 2003) (see table 3 on data collection and usage), which helped me to develop a good understanding of the case organization.

### 3.4. Data Collection Strategy

As the primary source of data I used semi-structured individual interviews with seven top managers and the categorization and cognitive map exercise done by the managers themselves after the well-being at work analysis of the case company was finished and reported to the management group. The secondary source of data is comprised of field material from the case organization, which is used to strengthen the analysis.

#### 3.4.1. Executing the interviews and the cognitive map exercise

The semi-structured interviews were part of a well-being analysis that Pohjola Health conducted in the case company. The interviewees were thus given and the interview questions were mostly determined by the needs of the well-being analysis. Since the
aim of the analysis was to determine the quality of how well-being at work was managed in the case company the interview questions were quite suitable to be used for the purpose of this thesis as well. The questions that were the most important for this study concerned the linkage between strategy and well-being at work, but all the questions informed on the way managers perceived well-being at work in relation to their business and were thus suitable to be used in the research as well (see list of interview questions in Appendix 2). The duration of the interviews ranged from 38 minutes to 65 minutes, the average being approximately 45 minutes in duration. To train my researcher skills and test the purposefulness of the cognitive map exercise I conducted one pilot interview, and two pilot cognitive map exercises, before confronting the research participants.

Besides gathering data through interviews, I collected data by having the interviewees do a modified cognitive map exercise (see instructions to the exercise in Appendix 3). The exercise was conducted after the well-being at work analysis conducted by Pohjola Health was finished and reported to the top management team of the case company. According to Kamppinen (1995:57-59) it is possible to study cognitive structures through categories, which different cultural phenomenon are positioned in and through which human beings arrange and make sense of reality. Since well-being at work and strategy are both cultural phenomena, it is possible to study the meaning that the respondents give these through the categories they are placed in and the functions that are given to them. In order to study the cognitive maps of the respondent one can make use of a method called multiple sorting, fin. monilajittelu (Kamppinen 1995: 65). It is based on giving a list of words to the respondent and then asking him or her to sort them in categories, while at the same time asking for an explanation why the respondent classifies them in a particular way.

In this study I used a modified version of Kamppinen’s (1995) method, successfully used by Söderholm (2010). The six managers were given a list of words which are related to well-being at work. The validity of the list of words was enhance by triangulation as I asked two professionals of well-being at work research to give their comments on it. After receiving the list of words the managers were asked to pick out those that they thought were related to or should be related to their business strategy. After this they were asked to form groups of those words that they thought were closely related and give the groups labels. They were also asked to explain how the words within a group were related to each other and how the different groups were
interrelated by drawing maps where they visualized their ideas (referred to here after as cognitive map).

Below is an illustrative example of both the categorization and the cognitive map of manager D (the categorizations and cognitive maps of the other managers are found in Appendix 4).

### Table 2 Categorization of words related to well-being at work, Manager E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Work ability</th>
<th>Brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top management</td>
<td>Work motivation and meaning</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Employer image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiors</td>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>Sickness absences</td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Participation of the employees in development</td>
<td>Overtime work</td>
<td>Recruitment policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development talks</td>
<td>Knowledge management</td>
<td>Preventive occupational health care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement and follow up</td>
<td>Individual health improvement programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Figure 4 Cognitive map, Manager E**
3.4.2. **Documentation**

All the interviews were recorded with a recorder appropriate for interview recording and with good sound quality. After each interview the record file was saved in two places in order to secure the documentation and prevent a possible loss. Each interview was then transcribed using a good level of detail to qualify for the research purpose: the recorded material was first transcribed into standard language sentences, which could then be used for further analysis and interpretation of the propositions they held. According to Kamppinen (1995:49) it is the sentences and their content that are a priority in the transcription of recorded research material that studies the cognitively significant cultural models and which are represented through the propositions made by the interviewee. Because the purpose of this thesis was not to study the cognitive maps of the managers, it was not expedient to transcribe every sound that the interviewee made, but instead be careful to explore the relationships in which the interviewee put different concepts.

Below is a table of the data collection and its usage:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Item name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audio recordings</td>
<td>All interviews were electronically recorded using high quality recorders to ensure the quality of the interview material. After each interview the record file was saved in two places in order to secure the documentation and prevent a possible loss.</td>
<td>The audio recordings were used for transcribing the interviews on paper, thus having proper documentation and being able to make detailed analysis of the recorded material.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts</td>
<td>Each interview was transcribed using a good level of detail to qualify for the research purpose: the recorded material was first transcribed into standard language sentences, which could then be used for further analysis and interpretation of the propositions they held. Because the purpose of this thesis was not to make a discursive analysis, but to study the cognitive maps of the managers, it was not expedient to transcribe every sound that the interviewee made.</td>
<td>The transcripts were used to aid in the creation the cognitive maps. According to Kamppinen (1995:49) it is the sentences and their content that are a priority in the transcription of recorded research material that studies the cognitively significant cultural models and which are represented through the propositions made by the interviewee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive maps using cognitive mapping technique</td>
<td>Cognitive maps for every individual manager were drawn using both the audio recordings and the transcribed interview material. The technique used was adapted as a modified version of that used by Eden &amp; Ackermann (2001).</td>
<td>The cognitive mapping method (Eden &amp; Ackermann 2001) was used as a data analysis method on the interviews. The cognitive maps were used as the primary source of data to directly be used in the advanced data analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorization of words</td>
<td>The managers were given a list of words related to well-being at work, which was compiled based upon well-being at work literature. They were asked to form categories of those words that they thought were linked together and then give these categories a title.</td>
<td>The categorization of words related to well-being at work and the visualization made by the managers themselves was used to further explore the way the managers perceived the well-being at work phenomenon. It was used to get a more detailed picture of what concepts of well-being at work the managers perceive to be important for their organization and how they link these to the business strategy. Using different methods to gather data and analyze it was used in order to make the research more solid in terms of validity and reliability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visualization</td>
<td>The managers were asked to make a visual demonstration of how they perceive the concepts of well-being at work are linked to business strategy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with or public speaking of top managers outside the interviews</td>
<td>Records made from the different conversations made with the interviewees on different points of time after the semi-structured interviews.</td>
<td>Getting a deeper understanding of the managers perception of what the linkages between well-being at work and strategy is for them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations with well-being at work consultants during and after the analysis process</td>
<td>Records made from the different conversations made with the well-being at work consultants on different points of time during and after the analysis process over a period of six months.</td>
<td>Adding investigator triangulation into the research process and making the validity and reliability of findings stronger.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being at work program leaflet</td>
<td>The program leaflet presents the official way of perceiving well-being at work in the case company.</td>
<td>The internal documents were used to deepen the analysis and understanding of the managers' perception of the issue and reflect on the findings by comparing them to the everyday reality of the case company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being at work analysis report made by Pohjola Health</td>
<td>The report goes through the functioning and level of different processes and policies related to well-being at work and gives an extensive analysis of how well well-being at work is managed in the company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5. Data Analysis

A first step in data analysis is to work the interview material (the transcribed audio recordings) into such shape that it can be used for further analysis. The method I chose to use here is cognitive mapping – a technique developed by Eden & Ackermann (2001) and explained in detail in the next section. The second step of the data analysis comprises the fifth stage in the research strategy: the conceptual model based upon the literature review is compared with the view the managers have of the real world reflected in the interview, which is analyzed using the cognitive mapping technique, and the categorization exercise and models they themselves drew.

Because my research interest is specifically focusing on the cognitive maps of top managers, the primary source of data that was used in the analysis were the semi-structured interviews and the cognitive maps drawn by the interviewees themselves. On top of these, other field material was used to support (or contradict if that be the case) the interpretations that could be made based upon the primary sources of data and hence to be used in the deeper data analysis.

3.5.1. Cognitive mapping technique

The cognitive mapping technique that is used as the method for the data analysis is a technique developed by Eden and Ackermann and described in detail in their book *Making Strategy, The Journey of Strategic Management* (2001). Although the technique in its original form is part of a complete action research methodology (JOURNEY, Eden & Ackermann 2001) and often used in cooperation with the participants, it is a technique that also provides good insights for the researcher: It helps to structure a wealth of material (from an interview for example), it gives guidelines for discovering properties and patterns in this material, understand emergent strategies that arise, and help the researcher to “move towards developing a sense of strategic direction and vision” (Eden & Ackermann 2001:281). Furthermore, by using only one technique of this action research method I follow the recommendations of the authors themselves when they have noted that “rather than embark on a fully fledged intervention, it is helpful to start with the use of one or two of the techniques and build competence and confidence gradually” (ibid.).

The technique itself has been developed to aid working with complex strategic issues and is therefore well suited as a technique to research well-being at work and its
linkages to strategy. It is based on exploring what individual statements mean by revealing their content and context as well as finding out why and how the statements fit together as they do. By using the cognitive mapping technique, individual statements are put into a causal network format that displays them in a hierarchical way permitting the exploration of both holistic and detailed properties of the issue under scrutiny. Each statement or construct is linked to others using arrows that indicate either ‘may lead to’, ‘has implications for’, ‘supports’ when moving up in the arrows direction. Statements at the top of a map can be seen to reflect values, aspirations, or goals. The statements under can be seen as strategies supporting these goals or making them possible and the more detailed the statements get and the more one moves in the downward direction on the map the statements can be seen to reflect different options and assertions. According to Eden and Ackermann (2001) the technique enables the mapper to explore multiple explanations and consequences, dilemmas, feedback loops, and options for the constructs that are represented in the map. (Eden & Ackermann 2001:285).

The cognitive mapping technique is guided by a set of quite clear principles and I present them here as they are used for the analysis of the interview material: The map should be kept on one page (I used an A3 size paper) in order to create a ‘tight’ map where relationships are easily recognizable. Drawing the map should be started two-thirds up the page and in the center as this will leave room for goals to be entered at the top and details underneath. Statements are written down as rectangular blocks to help manage the information on the map. Statements presented by the interviewee are separated into distinct phrases in order to reflect separate constructs and be able to link them in a meaningful way. The hierarchy is build up by identifying which statement is the option and which is the valued outcome. Both negative and positive goals are identified (I mark them as a G or G-), because they are both equally important in driving action. Strategic directions (marked with SD) are important objectives of development in the future. Strategic key issues are identified (I mark them as KI) as those constructs that are broad based, costly, irreversible, and/or take a long time to achieve or which the interviewee focus a lot of attention upon or in other ways (nonverbal, tone of voice) express being emotionally important. Contrasting poles are expressed with a ..., which is a substitute for rather ‘than’. Contrasting poles clarify the meaning of the construct by expressing its counterpart.
The analysis of the interview with manager A and his cognitive map is presented below as an illustrative example of how the cognitive mapping technique was used. The mapping of the other managers' interviews is found in Appendix 4.

Figure 5 Cognitive mapping technique applied on the interview with manager A
The purpose of the analysis using cognitive mapping was to structure the wealth of information gained during the interview into a form, which can then be used for discovering properties and patterns. The visual form of the map helped to explore the perception of the managers on the relations between different concepts (Eden & Ackermann 2001). Because the purpose of this research was to study the perceptions of individual top managers, a map of each interview was drawn separately. This made it also possible to compare the perceptions of the different top managers to each other. The seven top managers who were interviewed were promised anonymity and were therefore referred to as Managers A to G.

**3.5.2. Interpreting cognitive maps**

When making interpretations of a cognitive map Eden and Ackermann (2001) have made up a set of guidelines to assist the researcher: The map is a hierarchical visualization of the interviewees' perception of the issue or problem that is dealt with. *Structure* is the first thing that is looked at when interpreting a map: centrality in structure reveals also centrality of concept. *Complexity* of the issue or problem is revealed through the number of nodes and also acts as an indication of which concepts or themes are more important to the interviewee. Also the number of different heads (the concepts on top of the map) is an indication of issue complexity. The more heads the more complex the issue and vice versa. (Eden 2003).

If it is possible to break the map apart and find *clusters* that are ‘islands’ of themes of the issue at hand, it can be interpreted that the interviewee has been able to simplify the complex issue of the real world by categorization. Eden (2003:680) states that: “When the map has been coded properly the top part of the map ("heads") will depict the “goal system”, and the bottom part the detailed potential action points or options.

It is important to identify what the *goals* of the map are, what the *options* to reach them are, and what other *key issues* or *strategic directions* are revealed. This can be done through the means that were just presented, but the non-verbal cues during the interview are also very important. The added value of a map that is quite small in size(as the ones in this research), is mostly in its ability to “provide a starting point for understanding the basic, if not subtle, structure of an issue” (Eden 2003: 675). Axelrod (1976) argued that the graphical form of representing a cognitive map makes it relatively easy to see how concepts and causal relationships are related to each other (cited in Eden 2004). Maps are intended to explore problems at hand of the
participants by making graphical interpretations of what is meant by the interviewee, and thus the quality of them is heavily dependent on the quality of the interviewer as a listener and interpreter (ibid).

The categorization exercise and the cognitive map drawn by the managers themselves further inform on the way the managers are able to make sense of well-being at work phenomenon. Although there exists methods for analyzing different kinds of cognitive maps (Eden 1992), the purpose here is to use these more as means of understanding what the most important areas of well-being at work are in the perception of every individual manager. The specific form of every individual manager's map is therefore not analyzed in depth, but instead they are used to compare the manager's perception of well-being at work to the conceptual model derived from the literature review.

Following the presented guidelines the interviews of the seven top managers were analyzed using the cognitive mapping technique on the transcribed interview material. The results of both these and the categorizations and cognitive maps drawn by the managers themselves are presented in a table format here below (see Appendix 4 for the original material). The primary analysis that is presented in the table below is further deepened in the Findings chapter.
**Table 4: Presentation of the empirical results (managers A to D)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity of map</th>
<th>Clusters and Key issues</th>
<th>Non-verbal questions</th>
<th>Goals and Strategic directions</th>
<th>Categories and cognitive map</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager A</strong></td>
<td>Number of nodes in the map is 49, it includes several heads, both positive and negative goals, and clusters of themes, which all indicate that manager A perceives the issue widely.</td>
<td>There are clearly identifiable clusters of themes in the map, which suggests that manager A has been able to simplify the complex well-being at work phenomenon by categorizing. Options or key issues of well-being at work revealed by the different clusters are: Offering employees the possibilities for succeeding, motivating employees through different means, and making strategic decisions in the top management to focus on well-being at work in the company.</td>
<td>Despite the fact that manager A is during the interview able to lift up a wide range of things relating to well-being at work and demonstrate a good understanding of the issue, he is quite hesitative in his words and checks with the interviewer if he is giving the &quot;right answer&quot;.</td>
<td>The goals of well-being at work are revealed by the heads in the map: the ultimate goal is to create a successful business and make good results. The opposite can be realized if well-being at work is handled poorly (the negative head on the map), strategic directions to reach these are to promote employee coping, be flexible as employer, and increase knowledge capital. Only increasing knowledge capital was linked directly to goal achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager B</strong></td>
<td>Number of nodes is 73, several heads and an hourglass shape of map contrasting positive and negative goals, indicates a perception of a highly complex issue.</td>
<td>Complexity of the issue is reduced by several clear clusters. Manager B perceives key issues to be creating a healthy working community, getting people to feel good about work, ensure that leadership and management practices are on a good level, and that top management decisions are operationalized and work in practice.</td>
<td>Manager B puts great emphasis on the individual employee’s feeling of coming to work and the emotional and cognitive components of well-being at work by talking very passionately and at length of this.</td>
<td>Besides making good results, manager B identifies as goals both increasing the investments made in human capital and being a competitive employer. Also having employees staying in work life longer is a goal, but not a strategic goal (thus not marked with a G-sign). A strategic directions that needs to be done in the near future is to create more exact instruments for follow-up and measurement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager C</strong></td>
<td>49 nodes, less heads than managers A and B, and no negative goals indicate that issue complexity is high, but the clarity of meaning is not as evident as with managers A and B.</td>
<td>The themes of clusters indicate that being a flexible employer, creating systematic processes of analysis, and the intent and aspirations of the top management are key issues for well-being at work in the company.</td>
<td>Talking about the importance of well-being at work is an easy task for manager C reflected in his presence, but categorizing different words of well-being at work is much more difficult and clear signs of discomfort are noticed.</td>
<td>Manager C perceives the well being at work in it self to be the ultimate strategic direction: getting competitive advantage, getting business growth, fulfilling the employee promise which is stated in the strategy, and prolonging the employment relations hip are the goals that are achieved through creating good well-being at work of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manager D</strong></td>
<td>Number of nodes is 36, no hourglass shape, less clusters, and no clear heads indicate that the perception of the phenomenon is not very wide.</td>
<td>The themes of clusters are: superiors follow indicators, take care of the needs of the employees, and things that affect the well-being at work of an individual.</td>
<td>Manager D is somewhat reluctant to discuss the issue in deeper detail: when asking specifying questions his tone of voice gets more pointed and he also refuses to make the categorization and the cognitive map exercise.</td>
<td>Manager D perceives the development of skills and competencies for the need of the organization and motivating and making employees committed to the organization as strategic goals of HR activities of which the well-being of employees is a part of.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6. **Validity, reliability and ethics**

The methods I have used have been modified to suit the research objectives and the time and resource restrictions that are part of a master’s thesis research. Therefore it is up to the readers to make their own judgment of how well I have succeeded in applying these modified versions of methods in a credible manner. I have to the best of my knowledge tried to keep the essence of the methodologies while modifying them and thus retain the validity and reliability of using these methods. Because the methods I have used draw on different methodologies, also the approaches of judging the validity and reliability of the research must mix criteria from different approaches (Patton 2002). A few key arguments can be presented to account for these:

The Soft Systems Methodology has its philosophical traditions in the interpretive paradigms and is therefore concerned with understanding individuals' world views,
capturing their perceptions and experiences, and delineating the processes through which phenomena are interpreted (Brocklesby 1995). Because the researched area of interest is ‘soft’ and very much prone to subjectivity (compared to research that would be ‘hard’ and could be measured in numbers for example), it has consequences for the way the validity and reliability should be evaluated.

The SSM research process has its own distinctive features, which should be taken into consideration when evaluating research that draws on this tradition. Checkland has said:

“Firstly - an intangible, aesthetic point, but an important one - its fried-egg shapes and curved arrows begin to undermine the apparent certainty conveyed by straight arrows and rectangular boxes. These are typical of work in science and engineering, and the style conveys the implication: ‘this is the case’. The more organic style of the seven-stage model (and of the rich pictures and hand-drawn models in SSMA) is meant to indicate that the status of all these artefacts is that they are working models, currently relevant now in this study, not claiming permanent ontological status. They are also meant to look more human, more natural than the ruled lines and right angles of science and engineering.” (Checkland 2000:10)

A key issue is that the research process is recoverable and transparent, which enables the readers themselves to judge the value of the findings (Checkland and Holwell 1998). The concept of validity is all in all different in a qualitative study designs than for quantitative studies. Validity is actually judged by how well the researcher is able to persuade the reader about his or her perspective and therefore, validity is based more on the “credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness” of the study (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

In order to account for these, I have tried to describe the methods I have used in detail and present the outcomes thoroughly. Presenting the setting of the research and the case organization, the interview guide and the instructions for the categorization exercise (which are found in the appendices 2 and 3), the analysis methods and the results of them, I have tried to display rigor of methods. To complement my inexperience as a researcher I trained my interviewing skills with a pilot interview and was also able to get support by more experienced consultants as four out of the six interviews were made with two interviewers.
Furthermore, the value of a qualitative approach was enhanced by triangulation of data by using multiple data sources and methods for data collection strategies: The perceptions of seven different managers were explored individually, which made all of them cases on their own. The perspectives of the managers were explored first by conducting semi-structured interviews and after a period of time conducting the categorization and cognitive map exercise. This allowed me to do in depth inquiry of the personal perspectives and experiences of the interviewees, which were not limited to just one point in time. With the use of the interviews, and the direct quotations from them, as well as other sources of field material I was able to gain a rich and deep amount of collected data, which can be analyzed. Also my personal engagement with the case company allowed for a deeper personal experience of the phenomenon that is under study and this way also better understanding and insight of the situation. (Patton 2002:40)

The ethical concerns included several points, which had to be taken into consideration while designing the study and conducting the actual research: The consent of the interviewees to record the interviews was asked in beforehand. Privacy and anonymity of the interviewees were addressed by handling the material discreetly and presenting it in a way that the individuals could not be recognized e.g. referring to the managers with letters A to G, not disclosing the sex of the interviewee, etc. Furthermore, the case organization is not revealed, which also enhances the privacy of the interviewees.
4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings that were made based on the analysis of the empirical material. A presentation of the primary results of the analysis in the form of a summarizing table (table 4) was presented in the methods section above, and the results of the categorization exercise and the cognitive maps drawn by the managers themselves as well as the analysis of the interviews using the cognitive mapping technique is found in Appendix 4.

The Findings chapter is divided into four parts. The first two sections, sections 4.1 and 4.2, present the findings to the main research questions. The key findings to the research question *What is well-being at work and what factors are related to it?* are presented in section 4.1. The research questions *Is well-being at work a strategic issue in the perception of the top managers?* and *What is the link between well-being at work and the business strategy of the company?* are presented in section 4.2.

The third section 4.3. presents the findings of the comparison of the managers' perception to a conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work (see Figure 3). Also findings from the field material collected are presented to support the conclusions that can be drawn. This is done in accordance with the sixth stage of the SSM research process, in order to find out if there are areas of well-being at work in the perception of the top managers that could be developed so that the strategic management of well-being at work would be enhanced in the case organization.

The fourth section 4.4. concludes the chapter by presenting a summary of the findings in order to give the reader a short repetition of the most important points before moving on to the discussion and conclusions in chapter 5.

4.1. The well-being at work phenomenon in the perception of the top managers

In this section I describe what characterizes the individual top managers' perception of the well-being at work phenomenon overall and what factors they think are related to it. Analyzing the perceptions of the managers using the cognitive mapping technique and gaining further insight from the categorization exercise and cognitive maps revealed that there are many similarities between the managers' perception, but also differences exist.
By doing the analysis individually for every manager I am able to form a better understanding of the distinctions between the way different managers perceive well-being at work. This is important in order to be able to come to valid conclusions about the way every individual manager deals with well-being at work as a strategic issue, interpret it, and make decisions about it (Dutton & Jackson 1987). Furthermore, it is important for the purpose of this research to explore the key findings on an individual and not a group level, since the study design (data collection through individual interviews and cognitive map exercises and not group interviews or company statements) implies that the data reflects the views of individuals and not collectives (Fiol & Huff 1992).

4.1.1. Manager A

Looking at the cognitive mapping made on the interview with manager A, it is clearly identifiable that he has a broad view of what well-being at work is. He identifies both individual and organizational factors that affect well-being at work. The individual employee level aspects of well-being at work he raises up are physical and mental health, and employees’ abilities and talents, whereas the organizational level aspects are organizational structures and atmosphere at work. Factors related to well-being at work in the perception of manager A are extensive, which he himself also clearly recognizes exemplified in the following quote:

"In my world it [well-being at work] includes very many things... and these are not now in an order of importance ... well, I wont say measurement tools now... it is related to results, what our atmosphere is like, how much we have sickness absences, motivation, mental health, physical health, willingness to be at work, company image – both internal and external." (Manager A 2011)

Manager A emphasises the organizational level aspect of well-being at work: for him well-being at work is not just owned by the individuals themselves, but it is a characteristic of a healthy organization. This characteristic is very well visible both in the mapping of the interview and the cognitive map he himself had drawn. His perception of the well-being at work phenomenon is broad, and he has been able to make sense of it and simplify the complexity of the reality, which is reflected in the results of the categorization exercise.
4.1.2. Manager B

Like manager A, also manager B has a broad and structured way of perceiving what well-being at work is about: Looking at the cognitive mapping analysis of the interview with manager B it can be seen that there are aspects that are part of strategic processes of the business and operational processes. There are aspects that are part of organizations as cultures and the atmosphere in them. There are aspects that are part of an individual’s abilities i.e. know-how, health, and engagement. And then there are aspects that relate to the measurement and follow-up of well-being at work.

A characteristic of Manager B’s perception is his emphasis on employees’ feelings as a key for the individual employee’s well-being. He says that: "Well-being at work means for me that it is nice [fin. kiva] to be at work. This is perhaps a bit naive, but that is where I start." Manager B has strongly adopted the way well-being at work is communicated officially in the organization, creating a healthy work community, getting people feel good about coming to work, an ensuring leadership is on a good level (Manager B 2011) are basic elements also of the well-being at work plan published in the company. In that plan the development of well-being at work has been divided into three: the work itself, the work community, and the individual employee (the company’s well-being at work plan 2011).

The well-being at work phenomenon is in the perception of manager B something that is an essential part of the organizational life, but compared to the perception of manager A, it is not as much dependent on processes and structures in the company, but instead strongly linked to attitudes and emotions – a more abstract feeling of good work. Manager B perceives well-being at work to be owned both by work communities and the organizations as a whole, as well as individual employees themselves. He does not think that any one actor would be responsible for well-being at work more than the others.

4.1.3. Manager C

Very much the same concepts of well-being at work are repeated in the perception of manager C as in the perception of both manager A and B, only with small differences in the emphasis. He states that:

"Well-being at work is in its essence how satisfied people are at work and have things been organized in a way that people are satisfied ... it includes the workplace, the
physical place and especially the work of the superiors and the colleagues, the roles at work, responsibilities and requirement levels... and what the daily work tasks are and if your know-how is more or less on the required level..." (Manager C)

Manager C’s perception of the well-being at work phenomenon is characterized by the daily realities that well-being at work and all the factors related to them have on both an individual and an organizational level. The phenomenon of well-being at work is in the perception of manager C both a property of an individual, but also something that has consequences for the society as a whole. It is something that can be influenced by organizational means. He emphasizes the importance of focusing on well-being at work very strongly, basing his arguments both on the demographical changes in the society and on the need of individuals to be able to lead full and satisfying lives while at work. He also recognizes the role of actors who impact on well-being at work from outside the organization (society, government, family). The phenomenon involves also actors outside work and is this way also influenced by them.

4.1.4. Manager D

Manager D perceives well-being at work to be a phenomenon which is tightly related to the HR practices of an organization, occupational health care, improving physical fitness, employee surveys, and also everyday management practices. Although he states that he thinks it is a broad phenomenon including many different things, the aspects of well-being at work he mentions are quite scarce. He says that:

"Our employees are for the most part young and active and that makes this sample perhaps a little bit screwed compared to a normal workplace ... I think that this makes well-being at work a natural part of the organizations operations, but not necessarily a focus area ... of course you have to invest in well-being at work, but I think that our employees are [because of the age structure and overall employee structure] naturally very motivated and have a positive attitude without the organization having to invest specifically in well-being at work."

Well-being at work is in the perception of manager D something that belongs to organizational life as a natural part of everyday activities, and the factors related to it, like motivation and atmosphere are things that either exist or do not depending on the type of employees that have been recruited. Thus it can be interpreted that he perceives well-being at work in an organization being tightly integrated to the personality or skills of individual employees and the sum of these.
The phenomenon as a whole is not very broadly represented in the perception of manager D, which can be concluded based on the number of different factors related to it he takes up during the interview. This can also be supported both by the cognitive mapping analysis of the interview by looking at the number of nodes and by the fact that he was not willing to do the categorization and cognitive map exercise.

4.1.5. Manager E

Manager E’s perception of well-being at work is characterized by a focus on the individual employee’s well-being and a division of this into two aspects: motivation and work ability. He sees work ability as a result of an individual’s health (mental and physical) and coping with work. He separates motivation on its own as one side of an individual’s well-being at work, but the two together (work ability and motivation) result in how efficient employees are at work. Also manager E links well-being at work to the greater societal phenomenon of the need to prolong working lives and recruit new workers, just like manager C. He says that:

"Well-being at work is a current issue from two respects: the bigger and more long-term is the one concerning time in work life and when people factually retire ... and there is a lot that employers can do to this through well-being at work ... And the other one is how we can manage the way people do their jobs... In some business lines where it is even idealized to work for 20 hours straight ... how we handle and organize the working conditions, and how well-being at work is in line with our culture and the total compensation, and what our employees think of it..." (Manager E, 2011)

Although manager E’s perception of what well-being is about is characterized more of a focus on the individual than the whole work community, he sees that the well-being at work of individual employees is reflected in the work atmosphere of the whole organization and that the way organizations are managed affects the individual well-being at work. As a whole, manager E perceives the phenomenon to be more the property of individuals, than that of an organization as a whole.

4.1.6. Manager F

Manager F’s perception of well-being at work is characterized by an emphasis on the feelings of employees, just like manager B. His perception of well-being at work is perhaps closest to the work engagement view of well-being at work, but he does also
identify the need to support for example physical and mental health, and be flexible as an employer to the different needs of individuals in different life stages.

He says that well-being at work means for him: "... for people to feel good about coming to work, that they feel they are doing something important and that the atmosphere at work is pleasant and unreserved, that people see that management appreciate what they do..." (Manager F, 2011)

Manager F sees well-being at work as something belonging to an individual, but also something that employers can affect and support by their decisions. However, the amount of detail in the different fields of well-being at work he takes up is not extensive. He mainly identifies the broad lines of well-being at work, but does not give very many examples on how the well-being at work activities could be realized in practice. Some of the more concrete activities he does identify are for example providing employees sports facilities, giving training to enhance know-how, and arranging development talks. Manager F focuses much more on what enables well-being at work than those factors with which to tackle already realized negative outcomes of poor well-being at work.

4.1.7. Manager G

Manager G’s perception of well-being at work is very much like manager D concentrating on the individual. He links well-being at work in his own organization to the employee structure, to the educational background, and to motivation and satisfaction of work that arises from these individual properties. He says that:

"The people in my organization are very well educated, many have doctoral education backgrounds, academic ... people who have been recruited here enjoy their jobs... they want to build their careers, I don’t need to motivate them to do their jobs.. the most important is to be able to recruit them here... well-being at work is the whole of getting people to choose us as an employer, coping in their work, and do their best" (Manager G, 2011)

Well-being at work is thus something natural to the employees, if they are the right type in the right position. Manager G emphasizes the work atmosphere as an important part of well-being at work and perceives it more as an abstract concept of something that engages individuals to work than something concrete that would be part of the normal employment policies and processes.
Although the breadth of the phenomenon is not very large in the perception of manager G (indicated by the number of nodes in the cognitive map), he does identify basic elements of supporting well-being at work like having an appropriate amount of work load, a meaningful content in the work, working conditions and work atmosphere supporting the well-being, and employees coping in their work. Although there are both individual and organizational level factors that manager G identifies as part of well-being at work, he does not distinguish between these two in any systematic way.

4.2. Well-being at work as a strategic issue and linkages to the company's business strategy

In the following section I will present if the managers perceived well-being at work as a strategic issue and how they thought it was linked to their company's business strategy.

4.2.1. Manager A

Manager A sees well-being at work both as a way to reduce the negative impacts of poor well-being on organizational performance and as a way to enhance the positive effects it has on creating a successful business. Furthermore, he also identifies that if the company does not promote well-being at work there are serious threats to company results that can be realized through negative customer experiences and a bad company image. The fact that manager A sees well-being at work both as a possible success factor and the lack of it a threat to success, indicates that he does in fact identify well-being at work as a strategic issue for the company.

Following indicators of well-being at work and managing it strategically is a key issue and a strategic direction for Manager A. He identifies that the individual employees, superiors, HR, and top management all have their own roles and responsibilities in enhancing well-being at work in the organization. Also the safety organization, occupational healthcare, and other outside partners have a place in his perception (in the categories organization of work and functioning of processes), but their role in the management of well-being at work and linkage to the other actors should still be clarified further.

Almost all of the qualities of what defines strategically managing well-being at work are present in the perception of manager A. He also says that "... only through making the process of managing well-being at work a part of the process of the overall
management of the business of the company, it can result in lasting change and be made a success factor." (Manager A 2011). This indicates manager A perceives well-being at work to be something that should be managed strategically.

Manager A links well-being at work to the company’s business strategy through four different categories Organizing work, Know-How, Functioning of processes, Good leadership, and feedback and rewards (see the categorization and cognitive map in Appendix 4). The four different categories result directly in the fulfilment of the strategy and obtaining the goals, instead of first resulting in organizational well-being and then after that fulfilment of strategy (as was visualized in the map of the interview). This could indicate that manager A does not think that the concepts related to well-being at work should in any way be separated from the things that normally are a part of running and managing a successful business. This interpretation can be strengthened also by what was discussed during the interview: having good managers has a straight link to successful business and following indicators that are related to well-being at work is done through the processes that are part of the usual management of business operations.

4.2.2. Manager B

For manager B, well-being at work seems to be an issue that is closely linked to the realization of business strategy, but manager B perceives it as something that has already been reacted to, not something that needs some immediate action. Manager B says that: "We have in the company worked with this issue for years, and it is not something that has now been invented for the first time, bloody well it is not!" (Manager B 2011). He emphasizes that the company invests in well-being at work and its processes related to it in order to increase the investments already made on human capital, i.e. to gain the best results out of the employees that have been recruited in to the company. With the help of fulfilling projects that have already been started, like the overall HR strategy, the talent management program, and the well-being at work program, the company can realize the benefits that well-being at work has to the company. Thus according to manager B, well-being at work is something that already is an important part of the company’s strategic goals and that the top management is already managing it strategically.

The concepts of well-being at work that manager B links to business strategy in the cognitive categorization and cognitive map exercise are Health, well-being, and coping,
Know-How, Strategic and operative management and leadership, Company culture and work atmosphere, and Follow-up data and background information. These categories are very much the same as the key issues that were identified from the interview, which supports the conclusions that can be drawn of the perception manager B has on well-being at work: well-being at work and the business strategy of the company are linked through the quality of the leadership the company has and the decisions the management makes. In the perception of manager B this also implies that the top management is committed to well-being at work and follow indicators. According to manager B, key issues for the business are also creating a healthy work community and getting individuals to feel good about being at work.

4.2.3. Manager C

Manager C perceives well-being at work to be a strategic issue both because of pulling factors like getting business growth through more satisfied customers and getting competitive advantage through building a good company image, but also pushing factors such as the competition of skilled employees and the demographical changes that push to prolong employment relationships matter. He sees the role of the top management important, creating processes of systematic analysis, having good leadership, and taking care of the different needs of employees as key issues for the business of the company.

Manager C is the first one who explicitly identifies competitive advantage as a goal of well-being at work. He perceives this to be an outcome of building a good company image, which is something the two other managers perceived to be important as well. A goal which neither one of the two preceding managers had taken up is the fulfilment of the employee promise, which is written in the strategy of the company. Creating well-being at work is in itself a strategic direction for Manager C, which he thinks is put forward through the support of the top management. Like the other two managers, also Manager C thinks that well-being at work is strongly linked to the business itself – it is a way to get the business growing. He reasons that creating a good level of well-being at work in the company will enhance the way employees serve customers. This in turn will make customers more satisfied and enables the growth of the business itself. Furthermore, he emphasises the importance of giving employees an opportunity to lead good and balanced lives while at work, in order to have them in the work life longer.
The way manager C perceives how well-being at work is linked to business strategy and the way it should be managed is pictured in the cognitive map he himself drew: In this circle of managing strategy well-being at work is seen as a part of the operations of the business. It is something that is done after *strategies are made and goals are set, know-how and resource requirements are set, the operations are organized and know-how is acquired and developed*. That people are managed and their well-being at work is taken care of is part of this management circle is a proof that well-being at work has an important place in the management of the business. However, it is something that comes as a part of the circle – it is not an issue which rules the whole process.

### 4.2.4. Manager D

Well-being at work is in manager D’s perception a broad area of components that range from HR to leadership, and occupational healthcare to atmosphere in the work community, but he perceives it to be essentially something owned by individuals and not something that an organization or its managers could own. Manager D is perhaps the only one of the seven managers, who clearly does not perceive well-being at work and its strategic management as a central issue for the company and its top management group. This makes it very interesting to compare his perception of well-being at work to that of the other managers.

The greatest difference between his perception and the other managers is that he does not identify the risks of poor well-being at work as being key issues for business strategy: *following sickness absences, the results of the employee survey, evaluating team work ability, and skills and performance* are all just part of regular management that superiors do, but not something for the top management to be concerned about. The opinion of manager D is that if problems are identified, management can decide on the interventions that are made, people can be fired if they do not meet objectives well enough etc. The link between poor well-being at work (for example problems with work ability, motivation problems that are due to bad leadership, or work-life balance problems) and how these could be enhanced do not come up in the analysis of the perception of manager D. Furthermore, the responsibility of developing well-being at work is seen as belonging to HR. He perceives that having well-being at work in his own organization is a result of having the right people and offering them the right amount of salary and other benefits.
Because manager D does not perceive well-being at work as a strategic issue he does not either identify that it should be strategically managed. He says that: "I feel that the main responsibility of well-being at work and its development on a Group level is in the HR ... because we don't have any own HR here in my organization ... this is perhaps one reason why it [well-being at work] as an issue is quite remote from everyday activities." According to him, the role of the HR is to make the decisions about what in the area of well-being the organization should focus on and be the developer of these processes and policies. Top management has a role as a supporter of well-being at work in the organization, but not much more. The role of superiors is important, although manager D does not directly link it to well-being at work, but more to developing the skills and competencies of the employees.

4.2.5. Manager E

The linkage between well-being at work and the business strategy of a company is in the perception of manager E part of taking care of human resources, which is one of the three prerequisites of having the business doing well. He says that "it [success] culminates in three components: that you have motivated people, that you have capital, and that you have systems and processes and that's it ... and that's why it’s essential for the human component that well-being at work is handled well." According to him, well-being at work is an important component of the company's ability to meet its objectives, which indicates that also manager E perceives well-being at work as a strategic issue.

Analysing the categorization and cognitive mapping exercise made by Manager E himself supports the interpretations that can be made about Manager E’s perception of well-being at work and its strategic linkages (see the empirical results in Appendix 4). The concepts linking well-being at work to business are divided into four categories: Leadership, Motivation, Work ability, and Brand are the four different category labels that link aspects of well-being at work to company business strategy. A theme that he emphasized perhaps more than the other manager’s, was the importance of well-being at work on the brand of the company and enhancing the company profile. Motivation and workability are clearly enablers of individual employees' well-being at work and the strategy with which to reach goals. They both need to be managed and they also have an impact on the company’s brand. In the perception of manager E, management, the superiors and the employees can be seen as the actors who are involved in the
management of the company. Productivity and efficiency are then the results that need to be managed, and development talks and measurement are the tools to do this.

When talking about the key issues of well-being at work for the company's business, manager E emphasises the physical health of the employees much more than the other managers. During the interview he talked quite emotionally about, how he thinks promoting employees' physical health should be a key issue in the company. He thought that if there were employees who would not take care of their physical health it could perhaps even be something that should be sanctioned, although he did realize that this would never in reality be something that would be possible to do. Taking care of employee’s physical health related also to work ability and coping and being able to develop the knowledge pool of the company: if the existing employees were not able to do their jobs or did not cope in their work, it would be impossible to develop them or the knowledge pool that already existed. Manager E’s perception of the linkage of well-being at work and business strategy is characterized by the way he perceives well-being at work as a phenomenon: it is more a property of an individual, which can be managed through organizational means, than something of an overall organizational health and well-being.

4.2.6. Manager F

Manager F says that "people are our greatest asset" and that is why he argues that well-being at work is an issue that is current and important continuously in the running of the business. He perceives that to ignore taking care of well-being at work would be a serious threat to the realization of the strategic goals that the top management has set. He also sees well-being at work to be an enabler for realizing strategy in the long run. He says:

"The success of this business comes through our people, if we don't take care of their well-being we wont reach our goals ... or we might do it in the short run, but if we don't take care of that we have enough resources and people when our operations grow, and drive our people into burnout, the success will be quite short." (Manager F, 2011)

Manager F sees well-being at work as a central element to employees’ productivity and the company’s success. According to him, well-being at work is linked to business strategy especially through the work of the superiors: superiors need to have enough time for leadership and discussion with their subordinates, time for supporting their
employees in their work and responding to their different needs. Furthermore, crucial to the success of the business is according to him to be able to notice peaks in the workloads and respond to them. Thus, manager F sees the role of the top management, the decisions they make, and the reporting systems they have available a very important part of the strategic management of well-being in the company.

After the well-being at work analysis made by Pohjola Health was reported to the management group, the actions that Manager F identified as being linked to the management of well-being in the organization were enhanced: Before, he did not have a clear perception of how the different actions linked to well-being at work could be managed in a systematic way. He identified that managers have a key role in the management of well-being at work, and their responsibilities and resources to manage it should be defined. Also the top management had a clear role in building well-being at work through their decisions, but other actors and their responsibilities were not identified at all. In the cognitive categorization and mapping exercise on the contrast (which was made after the well-being at work analysis had been reported to the top management group), he has identified the role of occupational health care, safety organization, and the insurance company and been able to map in a large number of different concepts related to well-being at work.

4.2.7. Manager G

The way manager G perceives well-being at work as part of business strategy is ultimately linked to recruiting the best talents and motivating the employees to do their best. Although manager G sees well-being at work as an important part of the company image, the way it should be managed according to him is quite non-strategic: factors that affect well-being at work are part of ordinary organizational life, but not particularly a strategic issue that should be taken up on the top management's agenda.

Furthermore, he does not perceive poor well-being at work as a serious threat to business or the negative factors of poor well-being at work important for the organization: work ability problems, ergonomics, or bullying are all concepts, which he does not perceive to have links to well-being at work in the context of fulfilling strategic goals. He does not relate the concepts of well-being at work into any bigger frame which he could identify to be a part of responding to either external or internal threats or opportunities as some of the other managers did: He does not link well-being at work to for example the discussion about prolonging work life. Employees need to be
motivated in order for the strategy of the company to be fulfilled, but the well-being at work phenomenon is not something of a strategic issue that the top management should particularly focus on in the perception of manager G.

Manager G perceives coping at work and good leadership as key issues for enabling well-being at work in his organization. Good leadership is important for the business because it ensures that employees have the chance to cope with their work, but other individual factors play a role too – competency, high motivation and ambition level, and level of education are important factors that are crucial for the individual to function well and handle his or hers job. In the perception of manager G, motivation acts as the link between business strategy and well-being at work. With the help of well-being at work the company can motivate employees to do their best and also recruit the best and by doing these fulfill their strategic goals.

4.3. Desirable changes in the managers' perception for enhancing the strategic management of well-being at work

The analysis of the seven managers' perception of what well-being at work is and how it is according to them linked to business strategy gives a good starting point for further comparing their perceptions to the conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work. The conceptual model presented in the summary of the literature review represents an ideal model of how well-being at work can be strategically managed. In the following section I will, in accordance to the fifth stage of the SSM research process, identify desirable changes that could be made in the managers' perception in order to enhance the strategic management of well-being at work in the company. The changes that are proposed are based upon a comparison of the ideal strategic management of well-being at work presented in the form of the seven stage conceptual model and the reality identified through the analysis of the managers' perception and the field material gathered on the well-being at work processes and policies of the company.

4.3.1. Make sense of the phenomenon and interpret what it means for your organization

The first stage of the conceptual model for the strategic management of well-being at work is to make sense of the well-being at work phenomenon and interpret what it means for the organization in question. The analysis of the perceptions of the seven top
managers revealed that five out of seven perceived the well-being at work phenomenon to be a strategic issue for their company and this way something that should be managed in a strategic way. The top management group had decided to conduct a well-being at work analysis in order to be able to better understand what areas of well-being at work the company should focus on. The results of the analysis were considered very important by several managers who anticipated it to inform on what the managers would need to focus on. This was clearly pronounced through Manager A’s statement:

"We have never before made an analysis like this and that is why it is so important ... I really eagerly wait for the results. We will be going through these results in the executive board of the group and the reward committee, so that is as high up as possible ..." (Manager A, 2011)

The definition of strategic management of well-being at work (Aura et al. 2010) implies that the top management of a company considers the well-being and health of the employees to be important factors of the overall business and understand it in a holistic way. Furthermore, it has been argued that labeling an issue a threat or opportunity affects the way decisions are made upon it (Dutton and Jackson 1987). Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the top managers have made sense of the phenomenon and interpreted what it means for their organization. However, there existed quite a few differences in these interpretations of which the biggest were that at least two out of the seven top managers did not perceive well-being at work as a strategic issue. The question that remains is that despite the fact that an analysis like this is made in the company on a group level, will it have consequences for change if the whole top management group does not consider well-being at work a strategic issue that should be managed strategically? This is something that can not be answered through this research, but should be considered when judging if changes in the perception of at least some of the top managers would be desirable so that well-being at work would be managed strategically in the case company.

### 4.3.2. Make strategic decisions about what to focus on

The conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work implies that based on an analysis of the current state of well-being at work, the processes and policies involved in it, and how they function, managers have better possibilities of making strategic decision about what the company should focus on. It is also essential that top managers are able to link the development of well-being at work and the
investments that are made to the specific business they are operating in and the strategic goals they have.

One of the strategic directions so far in the company has been the development of knowledge capital, but besides the decision to conduct the analysis, no other strategic measures have been taken to focus the well-being at work of the company to be aligned to its goals. The managers identified several different issues that should be made key areas of focus during the interviews. A proposition for desirable change is that, based on the well-being at work analysis that was made, the top management group decides what the areas of focus should be in the company and links these tightly to the strategic goals of the business.

There were several key issues that the company should focus on in the near future that were presented by the managers: Manager E emphasized the importance of creating broad measurement tools and frequent measurement for being able to manage well-being at work more systematically in the organization. As was noted by manager A, who had the same perception, this was a very valid and timely point of view in the organization. Also manager F takes up the issue that for example changes in the work load of employees should be noted early and interventions taken upon these. A prerequisite for this is that there are proper reporting systems, which indicate these changes so that managers can make decision about increasing or decreasing the amount of people and resources when needed.

Comparing this to the results of the employee questionnaire in the well-being at work analysis, almost 60% of the employees disagreed with the statement that “resources are assigned according to the work load” (Well-being at work analysis report 2011). Based on the information that was gained during the process of the well-being analysis, it became evident that the work load of employees varies very much between different organizational units in the company. This makes the case for proper measuring and reporting tools even stronger and the perception of the managers relating to the importance of measurement tools legitimate and valid.

Another key issue that among others managers E and F identified and emphasized was supporting the physical health of employees. Reflecting on this in the light of what could be interpreted from the field material it must be noted that supporting the physical health of the employees is something that is already done quite extensively in the corporation as a whole (the corporation supports sports facilities financially), but it
was not a key issue in the corporation’s well-being at work plan at the moment. Thus, it should be questioned whether this issue really is something the top management should focus on.

Several managers identified that the greatest obstacle for managing well-being at work in a strategic way was the clarification of the roles of different actors and their responsibilities: a lot of actions that need to be done are identified—good leadership, measuring indicators, have targets, support health, create development opportunities— but who is responsible, that remains to be defined. In order for the management of well-being at work to be strategic, the roles of different actors should be clearly defined, which based on the analysis of the managers’ perception of the issue and in the light of other field material was not the case. Thus another proposal for desirable change would be that the top managers clearly define what the roles of different actors related to the well-being at work in the organization is.

4.3.3. **Create processes and policies for enhancing and developing well-being at work**

The third activity in the conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work is creating processes and policies for enhancing and developing well-being at work. There are already several processes and policies in place in the case organization: flex in working time is encouraged through HR policies (field notes 2011) and the health of employees is supported by providing preventive occupational healthcare and good sports facilities (Well-being at work analysis report 2011). The company invests a great deal in employee training and gives different kinds of possibilities to enhance skills and know-how through career opportunities etc. Superiors have also their own training programs, but they lack a systematic way of sharing their knowledge and best practices with others in the same position (Interviews with the top managers 2011). The state of the processes and policies in place is well exemplified in a quote by manager B, who stated:

"We have been working with these issues for years, but at the moment we are perhaps for the first time seeking to unify our policies on a corporate group level ... we are seeking for common elements and structures to do this, so that different superiors and persons, in spite of their different background and qualities, would approach this uniformly ... to create a sort of company norm and quality standard." (Manager B, 2011)
All the top managers identified processes and policies already in place that enhanced well-being at work as the ones already mentioned, but there were also many areas that they thought were lacking: *Systematic ways for superiors to share their best practices* (Manager F), *superiors getting more support from HR for managing their subordinates well-being at work* (Managers E and D), *clear policies for responding to the needs of employees in different life situations* (Manager C). Their perception of ways to enhance well-being at work can thus be found to be quite extensive. Considering this in the light of finding feasible changes for a better and more strategic way of managing well-being at work in the company leads back to the previous stage in the conceptual model, to make decisions about what the company wants to focus on. Based on the well-being at work analysis made in the company the focus areas of policies and processes to enhance well-being at work should be to *define roles and responsibilities of different actors related to well-being at work, strengthening the role of superiors by giving them the needed resources and training, and creating functioning channels for different business lines and their employees to participate in the development of the activities* (Well-being at work analysis report 2011).

Based on the analysis of the top managers' perception of how to enhance well-being at work it can be concluded that their knowledge of different measures that can be taken is good. The proposition for change is therefore for this activity in the conceptual model to be even more strongly linked to the previous stage i.e. to decide what to focus on and unify the intentions within the top management group, so as to realize the actions that need to be taken. It is crucial that the management understands the importance of not only trying to prevent problems that are caused by a lack or poor well-being at work, but instead enhance and develop it through focusing on the positive sides of well-being at work to realize the benefits of it.

**4.3.4. Create processes and policies for preventing and responding to problems and Measure and follow up**

The conceptual model advocates having processes and policies for both enhancing and developing well-being at work, but also for preventing and responding to problems. Both of these are in turn linked to measurement and follow-up in order for the management to be able to make decision upon the matters and manage well-being at work strategically. This implies that the management understands what things need to be measured and followed up and create the needed processes to respond to these.
During the interviews, the managers raised up problems that they perceived to result from a lack of well-being at work and which were a pressing concern in the company. These were for example burnout because of too much work and not sufficient resources (manager A and F), poor leadership or bullying resulting in bad atmosphere (manager B), unhealthy life habits or sickness (such as alcoholism) resulting in work inability (manager E and D). The most important problem area that according to several managers needed better processes was the way the company could respond to changes in work load:

"I think we have a great pressure to grow and especially in the customer interface and customer service the pressure is high and this is now seen in that the processes have been delayed and everything is not as it should be with the employees... and so I think this is a situation when the top management should take action." (Manager C, 2011)

"We should be very careful with noticing and taking care that resources keep up with the demands, when the business grows ... to not wear people out ... I think sometimes we cause the rush a little too much just by ourselves." (Manager F, 2011)

As already mentioned, almost all managers identified that having indicators that well in advance inform about problems related to well-being at work are important and should be developed more in the company. However, there were also managers that did not see measuring well-being at work important: As a manager of a small organization it makes sense that for example manager G perceives that he is able to get accurate and up to date information of the well-being at work in his organization just by talking to people.

But as a member of a top management group of a big corporation, it can be asked, whether he should also be focusing more on the systematic measurement and follow up of indicators of well-being at work.

The well-being at work analysis revealed that there are very few indicators of the state of well-being at work that are followed regularly in the top management. The results of the employee survey, which is conducted once a year is the most important indicator, but apart from it, only sickness absences are followed and also these very infrequently (Well-being at work analysis report 2011).

"We have an overall problem with the HR department, with the follow up data and how systematic it is ... well if you think about that you would be forced to manage these businesses with equally insufficient information as those, then we could be quite poorly off." (Manager E 2011)
As was the perception of among others manager E, the processes of measurement and follow-up of indicators of well-being at work were very manual and unsystematic in the company, and to be able to manage well-being at work on a strategic level it should be a key issue to develop this process in the organization. Following indicators and reacting to them was seen as one the most important future changes that needed to be made in the near future by several managers.

However, the managers’ perception of how to respond and prevent the problems of a lack of well-being at work seemed to be limited to just indicators. What the actions should be when measurements of well-being at work indicate something tended to be quite scarce. Some of those coming up in the interviews were: *superiors getting more support from HR* (managers D and F), *changing superiors* (manager A), and *cutting of work load* (manager C). Only managers B and C could give concrete examples of how individuals with problems with work ability could be helped through *rehabilitation measures*, or work communities or superiors could use *couching and mentoring services* from HR or occupational healthcare.

The perception of the top managers to develop new and better ways of measuring and following up indicators of well-being at work, such as work load, skills and motivation, work ability etc. was highly relevant for enhancing the strategic management of well-being at work. Their perception of the actions that could be done in order to respond to problems indicated by the measurement tools could however be increased. Although top managers do not need to be experts on the best practices of different processes and policies that can be used to prevent and respond to problems of lack of well-being at work, they need to have a sufficient knowledge of these in order to be able to make informed decisions on what policies and processes should be put in place in their organizations. A proposal for a feasible change in the perception of the top managers would thus be to increase their knowledge about the different processes and policies that have been found to function well in preventing problems and responding to those already realized so that they could make better and more informed decisions on what to develop and invest in.

### 4.3.5. Make adjustments to processes and policies based on the information gained

The sixth activity in the conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work, which builds a feedback loop to the previous stages, is adjusting the policies and
processes already decided upon based on the information gained from measurement and follow up. Analyzing the current state of well-being at work in an organization gives guidance to the management of a company to make decisions about what to focus on. However, well-being at work is not something static, but a dynamic phenomenon that is changing all the time: the business environment of companies change, the demands in the content of the work, the tools with which the work is done, and employees themselves and their life situations. All of these and many more impact on the well-being at work of individuals and organizations as a whole all the time. Thus it is not enough that an analysis of the state of well-being is conducted just once and managers manage their organizations only based on this information. No, adjustments need to be made continuously based on measurements and follow ups.

The top managers had a good perception of the importance of this activity. Manager C states that:

"The most important thing for developing well-being at work is how we can stay on the pulse all the time, how superiors can observe constantly what the state of well-being is in their work communities and among the individuals as well ... and then we should pay notice to that when we should take issues up and somehow help if things are going to the wrong direction ... "

Although the top managers perceived that making adjustments to processes and policies based on the information gained is important, based on the analysis, it could be interpreted that their knowledge of how to react and improve them was quite limited. This leads to the same recommendation as before, that in order to enhance the strategic management of well-being at work it would be advisable to increase the top managers' knowledge about the different processes and policies that can be developed to prevent problems with well-being at work.

4.3.6. **Realize competitive advantage**

The seventh and last activity of the conceptual model is to finally realize the potential competitive advantage created by the benefits of well-being at work of both individuals and organizations as a whole. An assumption can be made that if the previous stages of the conceptual model are fulfilled successfully the last stage can be realized. Although there is not enough research evidence yet that well-being at work would be a source of competitive advantage, the theoretical basis of this assumption which leans on the
resource-based perspective on the firm (Barney 1991; Wright & McMahan 1992) gives a good ground for this assumption.

Gaining competitive advantage through focusing on well-being at work could be identified in several top managers’ perception. Competitive advantage was seen to be a result of many things. The themes that were the most repeated were among others *external and internal company image, advantage in recruitment, higher productivity, prolonged working lives, and more satisfied customers* which were all, in the perception of the managers, related or a direct result of high level of well-being at work. Those managers who perceived well-being at work to be a strategic issue were generally also of the opinion that competitive advantage could be enhanced by focusing on it. The recommendation for feasible change would thus only target the two managers who did not consider well-being at work a strategic issue: only through a change in their perception will enable them to manage well-being at work more strategically and that way be able to realize increased advantages it has to their businesses.

### 4.4. Summary of the findings

The purpose of this research was to explore how top managers perceive well-being at work and its links to business strategy, through exploring if it seen as a strategic issue. By comparing the top managers’ perception to the conceptual model of the strategic management of well-being at work I have sought to shed light on the ways in which it could be enhanced in the case company. The analysis of the interviews with the seven top managers using the cognitive mapping technique and the support given by the categorization and cognitive map exercises revealed the way the managers perceived well-being at work as a phenomenon and its linkages to business strategy.

The way the managers perceived well-being at work as a phenomenon and the factors related to it differed and were united by three themes: the type and breadth of factors or aspects of well-being at work they took up, the way they perceived the ownership of well-being at work in the organization, and how they understood the way well-being at worked could be managed in the organization.

The breadth and complexity of the well-being at work phenomenon was clearly visible in most of the managers’ perception. Compared with the concepts discussed in the literature review, the managers had an extensive perception of what well-being at work is, what factors are related to it, and how it is linked to the business strategy. A
distinguishing feature in the perception of the managers was whether they emphasized the well-being at work of an individual or whether they saw the phenomenon more as an attribute of an organization as a whole.

The way the individual managers categorized concepts related to well-being at work varied very much and this is also seen in the way the managers perceived how it should be managed: one manager saw it as something which is managed as an entity of its own after targets and goals are set and the required resources acquired (see the cognitive map drawn by manager C), another one saw it as two distinct blocks that should perhaps be managed throughout the realization of the strategy (see the cognitive map drawn by manager D), and a third one sees it as something where all parts are connected to each other and none of them has a superior position compared with the other (see the cognitive map drawn by manager B).

The managers tended to focus on a few important things related to well-being at work that were to be managed (such as motivation and work ability according to manager E) or perceiving well-being at work as a phenomenon something that should be managed as a tightly integrated part of the overall management of the company (manager A, B, and C). Employee motivation, atmosphere in the work community ("feeling"), coping at work, quality of leadership, top management decision making and involvement, and measurements and follow up were key issues that characterized the top managers’ perception for enabling well-being at work in the organization.

Well-being at work was identified as a strategic issue by five of the seven top managers whose perception of well-being at work was explored in this research. Thus, five of the seven managers identified well-being at work as something the top management of the company should be concerned with and focus on as a strategic direction to fulfill the goals of the business. Furthermore, three of the managers identified focusing on well-being at work to be something with which to respond to a possible threat to achieving business goals. There were multiple reasons for why the managers saw well-being at work as a strategic issue. The main points that could be distinguished from them all were:

- Fulfilling strategic goals was enabled in the long run through well-being and efficient employees
- Well-being at work resulted in better company image enhancing recruitment
• Well-being at work could be used as a mean to engage employees and make sure they stay and cope with their work

• Competitive advantage through all of these employees

The two managers who did not perceive well-being at work as a strategic issue considered the phenomenon to be something that was owned by an individual employee or naturally a part of good organizational life, rather than something that should actively be developed and managed by the top managers themselves. The managers did identify key elements of what the other managers perceived and in this thesis is seen to be a part of managing well-being at work on an organizational level (such as motivating and developing the skills of employees), but they perceived these to be more elements of human resource management that are distinct from management of the business itself.

The comparison of the managers’ perceptions (supported by the field material) with the conceptual model for the strategic management of well-being at work revealed that there are many things already in place for the strategic management of well-being at work to be possible in the case organization. However, there were also a few crucial things that could be targets for feasible change: The top management group as a whole should perceive well-being at work a strategic issue, which was at the moment not the case. The top management needs to make informed decisions on what the important areas of well-being at work are that the company wants to focus on. In order to do this they need to link the results of the well-being at work analysis to their business goals, enhance their knowledge and understanding of different policies and processes related to well-being at work, and this way make better and more informed decisions that direct the investments that are made.
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This last part of the thesis will present how the study has contributed to the formation of new knowledge of well-being at work and its linkages to strategy, what practical implications the results of this research could have for the case company, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and some suggestions for future research, and finally in the end concluding the study with some final remarks.

5.1. An enhanced understanding of the link between well-being at work and strategy

The aim of this study was to explore the linkages between well-being at work and its strategic management by analyzing the perception of seven top managers. The managers' perception was explored by drawing on the cognitive school of strategy research. I investigated the managers' perceptions through an interview which was mapped using cognitive mapping technique, and having the managers do a cognitive categorization exercise and draw an own cognitive map. By studying the labels of concepts relating to well-being at work and the relationships that these different concepts had to each other, I was able to draw analyse the top managers' perception.

My main research questions were: “What is well-being at work?”, “Is it a strategic issue?”, and ”What is the link between well-being at work and the business strategy of the company?”. Wellbeing at work was seen to be comprised of both individual and organization level issues. Important areas of well-being at work were employee motivation, atmosphere in the work community ("feeling"), coping at work, quality of leadership, top management decision making and involvement, and measurements and follow up. Five out of seven managers perceived well-being at work as a strategic issue for the company. The linkages between well-being at work and the business strategy of the company were seen in terms of fulfilling strategic goals in the long run through well-being and efficient employees, a better company image enhancing recruitment, as a means to engage employees and make sure they stay and cope, and competitive advantage through all of these.

My findings showed that the understanding of the well-being at work phenomenon and its linkages to the company's business was overall on a good level in the top management of the case organization compared to the complexity of the phenomenon as presented in the literature review. But also differences existed, as has been
presented, and these were very valuable for the changes that could be proposed to be made in the top managers' perception. The implications of these differences in the perceptions of the top managers are presented in the next section.

The linkage between well-being at work and strategy has been studied from the standpoint of how these two are connected in the perception of top managers. Following what has been proposed in previous studies on strategic issues (Dutton & Jackson 1987), in order for something (in this case well-being at work) to be a strategic issue in a company, top managers need to interpret it in that way. I have grounded this research on the assumption that strategically managing well-being at work implies that the top managers have good understanding of the phenomenon, because this understanding directs their actions (e.g. Barr et al. 1992).

Leaning on the soft operations research school on researching complex socially constructed phenomena I combined several different data gathering and analysis methods, while at the same time structuring the research according to the soft systems methodology research process. In order to clarify the area of the research problem and to be able to evaluate the top managers' perception on the strategic management of well-being at work, I created a conceptual model that represented my understanding of the ideal way of strategic management of well-being at work. This model was then compared to the real world represented by the seven top managers' perception.

Based on the research on strategy formation through cognitive processes (Daft & Weick 1984; Dutton and Jackson 1987) I argue that studying the perception and cognitive frames of managers is essential in order to be able to derive at solutions to enhance the way well-being at work is managed in organizations. My SSM research process enabled me to identify and stimulate ideas about desirable change in the perception of the managers. Comparing a conceptual map of the strategic management of well-being at work (representing a systems thinking of the world) to the real world situation, it was possible for me to identify changes that would be desirable for the top managers to be able to enhance the way they managed well-being at work. In this case the real world was built up from empirical results drawn from the interviews, the cognitive categorization and cognitive map exercise, and supported by field material.

Previous research on the way top managers perceive well-being at work is scarce. The aim of this study was not to test a hypothesis, nor was it to build a theoretical model of what the strategic management of well-being at work is about. In its essence, the
purpose of this research was to be able to structure a highly complex phenomenon to be able to understand it better. The value of the findings that were presented is therefore in dependent on the way they contribute to an enhanced understanding of how top managers perceive well-being at work to be linked to business strategy.

5.2. Implications for the case company

Most of the members of the top management group had identified well-being at work as a strategic issue in the company and change initiatives to make well-being at work a lasting part of the success of the organization had already been launched: a well-being at work program had been started the same year, a well-being at work analysis to find out what the key issues the company should focus on had been ordered and was conducted during the research process, and the management group had had particular sessions on well-being at work during their strategy-days. Despite this, there were two managers who had not adopted the idea of well-being at work as a strategic issue for the company and there was considerable differences between the managers on how they perceived that well-being at work should be managed in the company.

In order to be able to manage well-being at work strategically in the company, the top managers need to form a clear perception of how environmental and internal factors affect the way business goals can be reached: What is the impact of demographical changes in society? How do governmental actions such as law amendments impact? What are the employee needs that results from the type of people that are recruited to the organization? What are the requirements of the market environment they are in? By exploring and analyzing these they will be able to make decisions on what aspects of well-being at work are important to focus on. Part of this is also to define what kind of role different actors have in relation to well-being at work in the organization: what is the role of top management, superiors, partners, and employees themselves? By making these definitions the top management is able to make better strategic decisions about what to focus on and how to manage well-being at work in a strategic way.

The definition of strategic management of well-being at work was that the wellbeing and health of the employees of an organization are considered to be important factors of the overall business of the organization and its human resource objectives. That there are actions that are systematic and well planned, resources have been assigned to them, they have defined targets for which there are liable persons, and that the results are regularly measured both on an organizational and an individual level. The strategic
management of well-being at work has a clear effect on employee productivity and through that on the profitability of the organizations business.

For the management of well-being at work to be strategic in the organization, they still need to develop the systematicality of the processes that are linked to well-being at work and to create proper ways of measurement and follow-up of the indicators. Furthermore, they need to define more clearly the responsibilities of different actors and create targets, so that well-being at work will become a part of the core of managing the overall business. The question of whether the differences in the perceptions of the managers’ is an obstacle for making well-being at work a competitive advantage in the company is perhaps most of all a matter of internal politics or group dynamics and whose opinions or perceptions are the most politically powerful. This is an interesting field of further research, but is out of the scope of this thesis.

A suggestion I would make to the case organization is to organize a strategy workshop, where the top management could together negotiate and form a common perception of how they would want to manage well-being at work linked to the business strategy. The cognitive maps drawn by the managers themselves give concrete elements to work with that visually support the processing of the different perceptions of what well-being at work is and how it could be managed. The material gained and analyzed for this thesis make a good base for a strategy workshop like this (Eden & Ackermann 2001) and could be further developed through forming a common understanding through the active participation of the members of the top management group.

5.3. Limitations of the study

This study is a case study and is thus limited to exploring the perceptions of what well-being is and its linkages to strategy from the point of view of the seven managers that are the participants in the research. The results of the empirical part of the research are not generalizable on other companies and the value of this research lies more on the way it creates new knowledge of a discipline that has not yet been researched in this way (top managers’ perceptions on well-being at work) and in the implications it has for the case company.

I have consciously chosen to study well-being at work extensively on a large scale instead of focusing on a specific discipline or area of well-being at work. This poses some limitations to the depth of the research and concepts linked to well-being at work
are not studied in ways that would go deep into the details of a single concept. However, I think these limitations are justified by the fact that the purpose of the thesis is to be able to explore the well-being at work phenomenon as a whole and understand particularly how top managers perceive its strategic management. Furthermore, this choice is supported by the fact that also top managers themselves need to try to make sense of the well-being at work phenomenon as a whole, and not just some particular area, in order to be able to manage it. I believe this choice also increases the practical value of this research.

Other limitations of the research are due to the time and resource constraints that are part of a master's thesis: the research on the subject could easily be extended to cover an area of a doctoral dissertation. Also extending the time scope of the study for being able to explore changes in the perceptions of the managers and reflecting on them with regard to the organizational changes taking place would have been very interesting, but could not be done for the reasons already mentioned.

There is almost no previous research on well-being at work exploring the perception of top managers on the issue and its linkages to strategy and therefore the value of this research is in the insights it contributes to new knowledge. In order to be able to further the research on the subject one has to start somewhere – starting from the big whole instead of a small niche of the subject area, gives a good starting point to be able to narrow down my own research interests in the future. The limitation that this study however has is that due to its case study nature it is not very generalizable. By studying the perception of what well-being at work is and what its linkages to strategy are in a single case company does not allow me to draw conclusions that these would be applicable on other managers as well.

5.4. Future Research Directions

This study focused on exploring the perceptions on well-being at work of seven individuals in a top management group of a big Finnish corporation. This research setting with these research objectives has not been (according to my knowledge) used before and provides a valuable starting point for future research on the issue. Well-being at work is still a hot topic despite the latest economic uncertainty and lifting it up to the top management level is hopefully becoming more and more popular. The results of this research and its research design can be used as an example and a platform for further research on the topic of well-being at work and its linkages to strategy. The
results of the study can also be used in the case organization to develop the strategic management of well-being at work. Although some elements of action research were present already in this study (since it was partially an element of the well-being at work analysis made in the case organization), developing it to be a proper action research would require that for example workshops, such as the ones already suggested, would be organized and concrete next steps that the company would begin to do would be outlined.

The theory on the strategic management of well-being at work could be extended repeating the study and interviewing managers from different industries and sizes. This would give interesting knowledge about how the perceptions of managers in different companies differ, and if this has implications or correlations to the kind of results they make. It would also be interesting to study if well-being at work truly is a source of competitive advantage if it is strategically managed.

5.5. Final Remarks

This study found that the way managers perceive well-being at work in the case company is characterized by three themes: The type and breadth of the top managers perceive to be related to well-being at work, the emphasis the put on either the individual or the organization (ownership) as an actor influencing well-being at work, and the way they perceived well-being at work should be managed. Key issues that several managers perceived to be important for the well-being at work of their organization were: employee motivation, atmosphere in the work community, coping at work, quality of leadership, top management decision making and involvement, and measurement and follow-up. These areas are very broad in themselves, and in order to understand which of them are important for the company and in what further analysis would be needed.

Quick & Macik-Frey (2007) note that:

"It is crucial for our current thinking to keep health in its larger framework, and remember that the single responsibility of the leader and manager, regardless of the assumptions they make about people at work is to manage the enterprise."

This is an important point, which reflects the essence also of this study: the way managers link well-being at work to their business should be through the strategic objectives of their company. The majority of the managers had been able to make sense
of a complex issue and perceived it to be a strategic issue for the company. The links between well-being at work and strategy were found in the way focusing on well-being enhances the ability of the company to reach its strategic goals through the employees, through their ability to make better results, through the way well-being at work saves costs, and through the way well-being at work is reflected in the company image. Researching these links further would be an important following step to understand the specific needs of the top management group and the case organization in question.

Using cognitive mapping as a way to explore the managers perception about a phenomenon that was characterized by its breadth and by the fact that it had not clear definitions was challenging, but also very rewarding in the end. Perhaps the greatest insight that this research strengthened is that the well-being at work phenomenon and its strategic management is realized through the way the persons making decisions about it perceive it and is essentially dependent upon the unique situation and environment in which a particular organization operates. I believe that the research approach of soft systems methodology that was chosen to guide the study functioned well and opened up an interesting opportunity to research a subject that has not been studied almost at all. Hopefully I will be able to continue with the case company in this study with continuing research projects. I also hope that this study will inspire others to further the research on the subject of well-being at work and its role in business strategy.
Introduktion

Välbefinnande i arbetet är något som det talas om dagligen både i media och i organisationer. I västvärlden och speciellt i Finland har man de senaste åren varit oroliga över de demografska förändringarna i vårt samhälle, de anställdas ökande sjukfränvaro och det höga antalet unga som gått i sjukpension (Kauppinen et al. 2007). Global konkurrens och de samhälleliga förändringarna har lett till ett allt större behov av att satsa på arbetstagarnas välbefinnande och hälsa, engagera individer och arbetsgrupper i arbetet och på så sätt skapa mera innovationer och höja på produktiviteten.

Välbefinnande på arbetet handlar inte bara om den enskilda arbetstagarens välmående och hälsa utan är kopplat till hela organisationens framgång. Arbetsgivare speciellt i Finland är mer och mer villiga att satsa på välbefinnande i arbetet i sina organisationer för att vara mer konkurrenskraftiga (Vilen 2010). Att kunna hantera konsekvenserna av uteblivet välbefinnande i arbetet och att kunna utnyttja potentialen i ett större välbefinnande är något som varje företagsledare också borde vara intresserad avmed tanke på både hot och möjligheter som är associerade med välbefinnande i arbetet. Jag argumenterar för att välbefinnande i arbetet är något som kan vara en strategisk fråga för företag och med detta också något som borde ledas strategiskt.

Arbetshälsovård är ett lagstadgat ansvar som företagen har gentemot sina arbetstagare, men utöver detta finns det en mångfald av olika slags service som erbjuds åt företag kring välbefinnande på arbetet: analyser och mätningar, kurser och seminarier, personlig träning och rehabilitering, couching m.m. Företagsledare som vill satsa på arbetstagarnas välbefinnande kan ha svårt att veta vad det lönar sig att investera i och vad som är viktigt just för deras organisation.

För att kunna leda fenomenet strategiskt, måste företagsledare förstå och tolka vad fenomenet betyder för deras eget företag och hurdana specifika behov av välbefinnande i arbetet deras organisation har. Fenomenet i sig själv är mycket komplett och har ingen entydig definition eller begränsning: Därför beror det väldigt mycket på hur olika individer uppfattar och tolkar det om det är en strategisk fråga eller inte.
I denna sammanfattning kommer jag att presentera hur välbefinnande i arbetet skulle kunna ledas på ett strategiskt sätt och jämföra detta med hur sju toppledare på ett finskt börsnoterat bolag förstår välbefinnandet i arbetet som en strategisk fråga. Jag börjar med att presentera existerande forskning som behandlar välbefinnande i arbetet och dess kopplingar till organisationers prestationer. Efter detta presenteras ett strategiskt synsätt på välbefinnande i arbetet som baserar sig på ett resursbaserat perspektiv på företaget och hur ett strategiskt sätt att leda välbefinnandet i arbetet beror på toppchefers kognitiva processer.


**Motivering av studien och syftesformulering**

Problemställningen i detta arbete baserar sig på att välbefinnande i arbetet har blivit väldigt lite forskat ur strategisk synvinkel. Fast välbefinnande i arbetet i sig själv och dess olika delar är något som det forskats väldigt mycket i under de senaste 20 åren är forskning i hur toppledare uppfattar och tolkar fenomenet väldigt begränsat. Syftet med denna avhandling är att förstå vad välbefinnande i arbetet som ett fenomen handlar om och hur det är kopplat till affärssstrategi. Foskningsfrågorna är härledda ur detta syfte och är därmed följande:

**Vad är välbefinnande i arbetet och hurdana faktorer är relaterade till det?**

**Uppfattar toppledarna välbefinnande i arbetet som en strategisk fråga?**

**Vad är kopplingen mellan välbefinnande i arbetet och företagets affärssstrategi?**

Dessutom kommer toppledarnas uppfattningar jämföras med den konseptuella modellen av att strategiskt leda välbefinnande i arbetet, vilket presenteras i slutet av litteraturgenomgången.

**Presentation av tidigare forskning**


**Välbefinnande i arbetet som ett fenomen – tvärvetenskaplig synvinkel**

Välbefinnande i arbetet är ett komplext fenomen och kan definieras på många olika sätt, vilket har gett skäl till att jag i denna avhandling valt att angrippa fenomenet från ett tvärvetenskapligt perspektiv. Dannen och Griffin (1999) har i sin mycket citerade översiktsartikel format ett ramverk för tvärvetenskaplig forskning i hälsa och välbefinnande på arbetsplatsen. Ramverket omfattar grunderna eller föregångarna för välbefinnandet (eng. antecedents) själva välbefinnandet i arbetet i sig själv och hur det framter sig, samt konsekvenserna av välbefinnande både på individuell nivå och för organisationen i stort.

Grunerna för välbefinnande i arbetet har att göra med bl.a. den fysiska arbetssituationen och organiseringen av arbetet, den individuella arbetstagarens personliga egenskaper samt sociala och psykologiska aspekter av arbetet så som arbetsklimatet, roller i arbetet, karriärutveckling och livsbalansen mellan jobb och hem. Välbefinnande i
arbetet framträder på många olika sätt och har forskats genom t.ex. att se på belåtenhet i livet och arbetet eller fysisk och psykisk hälsa. Konsekvenserna av välbefinnande i arbetet syns i de individuella arbetstagarnas fysiska och psykiska hälsa och beteende och som kostnader eller ökad produktivitet i organisationen (Danna och Griffin 1999).

Eftersom den individuella arbetstagarens välbefinnande i arbetet har konsekvenser också på organisationsnivå så är det något som företagsledare måste ta ställning till och hantera på ett sådant sätt att det gynnar deras affärsverksamhet. Jag hävdar att för att kunna göra detta så måste de som fattar beslutet förstå fenomenet (ha en omfattande bild av fenomenet) och tolka vad det betyder för deras organisation. I sammanfattningen av den teoretiska referensramen presenterar jag kort de olika aspekter av välbefinnande i arbetet som behandlats i avhandlingen för att ge läsaren en mera detaljerad bild av vad välbefinnande i arbetet betyder.

**Den individuella arbetstagarens välbefinnande**


Välbefinnande i arbetet i sig själv och hur det framträder har forskats mest från två olika synvinklar: arbetstagarens mentala välbefinnande vs. stress i arbetet och engagemang i arbetet. Hart och Cooper (2001) hävdar att individens välbefinnande i arbetet är byggt upp av både känslomässiga och kognitiva komponenter: Individen reagerar på olika sätt när det inte finns en balans mellan de individuella behoven och arbetets krav (Danna & Griffin 1999). Långa arbetsdagar, ny teknologi, fysiskt krävande arbetsomgivning, rollkonflikter, osäkerhet i jobbet, och chefens ledarskapsstil är bara några av de faktorer som påverkar stress i arbetet (ibid.). Dessa syns i både hennes hälsa och beteende: negativa känslor som oro, ilska, sorg samt summan av negativa erfarenheter är faktorer som hotar individens välbefinnande och skapar stress i arbetet i motsats till känslor som energi, entusiasm och stolthet samt positiva erfarenheter i

**Organisationens hälsa**


**Kopplingar till prestationssömnäga**

Tidigare forskningsresultat indikerar att välbefinnande i arbetet har positiva effekter på individernas och organisationernas prestationssömnäga (Danna och Griffin 1999; Cotton och Hart 2003; Ahonen och Näsman 2008; Page och Vella-Brodrick 2008; von Bonds dorff et al. 2009). Studierna hävdar att välbefinnande i arbetet förbättrar arbetstagarnas prestationer både genom att minska på de faktorer som försämrar på effektiviteten och arbetsresultaten, men också genom att förstarka faktorer som gynnar en större produktivitet (ibid.).

Strategisk ledning av välbefinnande i arbetet


Det är allmänt accepterat att västvärlden idag tävlar på den globala marknaden enbart genom att satsa på effektiviteten, innovationer och resultaten som mänskliga resurser åstadkommer genom kunskapskapitalet. Baserat på litteraturgenomgången av välbefinnande i arbetet hävdar jag att det är en viktig komponent i företagens framgång och kan bli en hållbar konkurrensfördel om den leds strategiskt. Detta gör att det är intressant och viktigt att studera hur toppledare formar strategier och fattar beslut för vad som investeras i och hur resurserna i företaget fördelas. För att fokusera avhandlingen har jag valt att se på strategiformning som en kognitiv process och speciellt fokusera på hur toppledarna i ett fallföretag uppfattar välbefinnandet i arbetet som en strategisk fråga.

Utformningen av strategier som en kognitiv process


**Konceptuell modell för strategisk ledning av välbefinnande i arbetet**

Baserat på litteraturgenomgången och den förståelse för strategisk ledning av välbefinnande i arbetet som jag format under forskningens gång har jag skapat en konceptuell modell som reflekterar min egen förståelse av ett idealt sätt att leda välbefinnande i arbetet. Modellen byggs upp enligt Soft Systems metodologins (Checkland 2000) riktlinjer: Efter att man format en grundlig förståelse av problemområdet, i detta fall välbefinnande i arbetet och dess strategiska ledning, identifieras rotdefinitionerna med hjälp av en teknik kallad CATWOE. Tekniken går ut på att man identifierar kunderna, aktörerna, transformationsprocessen, världsbilden, ägarna och omgivningen kopplade till välbefinnande i arbetet och dess strategiska ledning. Efter detta bygger man en konceptuell modell, en s.k. ideal värld, av fenomenet direkt från rotdefinitionerna som presenterar olika aktiviteter ihopkopplade i ett diagram med sju steg.

Utgående från detta har jag format en konceptuell modell för strategisk ledning av välbefinnande i arbetet:
Forskningsmetod och material


I den empiriska undersökningen kartlägger jag sju toppchefers uppfattningar av välbefinnande i arbetet och dess koppling till affärsstrategi, genom att utföra semi-strukturerade intervjuer och en modifierad kognitiv kategoriseringsuppgift (Kamppinen 1995; Söderholm 2010). Cheferna var alla medlemmar av toppledningen i ett stort finskt börsbolag, vilket gör att forskningen är en fallstudie. Förutom intervjuer samlade jag in kvalitativt data från andra källor och jag använde triangulering av metoder för data-analysen för att förbättra kvaliteten och tillförlitligheten av analysen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Work ability</th>
<th>Brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top management</td>
<td>Work motivation and meaning</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Employer image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiors</td>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Career planning</td>
<td>Sickness absences</td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Participation of the employees in development</td>
<td>Overtime work</td>
<td>Recruitment policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development talks</td>
<td>Knowledge management</td>
<td>Preventive occupational health care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement and follow up</td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual health improvement programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Strategy**  
**Goals**

**Brand**  
**Motivation**  
**Work ability**  
**Leadership**
**Resultatredovisning**

Resultaten visade att fem ut av de sju toppchefer som studerades uppfattade välbefinnandet i arbetet som en strategisk fråga som företagets högsta ledning måste leda. Chefernas uppfattning av välbefinnande i arbetet var brett: motivation, arbetsförmåga, ledarskap, topp ledarnas beslut och engagemang samt mätning och uppföljning av välbefinnandet i organisationen framstod som de viktigaste aspekterna av välmående i organisationen. Cheferna kände igen många av de viktigaste inslagen i den strategiska ledningen av välbefinnande på jobbet, men individuella skillnader fanns, vilket är en potentiell måltavla för utvecklingen i framtiden.

Välbefinnande i arbetet ansågs bestå av både individuella aspekter och aspekter på organisationsnivå. Viktiga områden för välbefinnande i arbetet var de anställdas motivation, atmosfär i arbetsgemenskapen ("känsla"), ork i arbetet (eng. coping), kvaliteten på ledarskap, högsta ledningens beslutsfattande och engagemang, och mätningar och uppföljning. Sambanden mellan välbefinnande i arbetet och affärsstrategi sågs i termer av att uppfylla strategiska mål på lång sikt genom välmående och effektiva arbetstagare, en bättre image för företaget för att öka rekryteringen, som ett sätt att engagera anställda och få dem att stanna längre i arbetslivet, samt konkurrensfördelar genom alla dessa.

**Konkluderande avslutning**

Välbefinnande i arbetet måste alltid ses utifrån specifika behov och krav som varje enskild organisation har för att kunna nå målen för affärsverksamheten. Majoriteten av toppledarna som intervjuades hade kunnat förenkla och tolka ett komplext fenomen och uppfattat det som en strategisk fråga för företaget. Kopplingarna mellan välbefinnande i arbetet och företagets strategi beskrevs genom att den ökar företagets förmåga att nå sina strategiska mål med hjälp av anställda som är bättre motiverade och produktivare, genom det sätt välbefinnande i arbete sparar kostnader, och genom det sätt välbefinnande i arbetet återspeglas i företagets image.

Jag har medvetet valt att studera välbefinnande i arbetet på en bred skala istället för att endast fokusera på ett specifikt ämne eller område av välbefinnande i arbetet. Detta innebär vissa begränsningar för hur djupt i olika specifika begrepp jag har haft möjlighet att gå i undersökningen. Men jag tror dessa begränsningar är motiverade av det faktum att syftet med avhandlingen var att kunna studera hela fenomenet av
välbefinnande i arbetet som en helhet och att speciellt försöka förstå hur toppledare uppfattar den strategiska ledningen av välbefinnande i arbetet. Dessutom stöds valet av det faktum att även de högsta cheferna själva måste försöka förstå och tolka välbefinnande i arbetet som en helhet, och inte bara ett visst område, för att kunna hantera det. Jag är övertygad om att detta val också ökar det praktiska värdet av denna forskning.
REFERENCES


Magazines: