Creating a Values-Aligned Workplace

How to Work with Company Values in Growing Consulting Firms

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Creating a Values-Aligned Workplace: How to Work with Values in Growing Consulting Firms

by

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Skapa en värderingsdriven arbetsplats:
Att arbeta med värdegrund i växande
konsultföretag

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Abstract
Previous research implies that a common denominator for successful corporations is having shared values. Several research has studied the importance of leadership, communication and recruitment when working with values in organizations. However, there are no specific studies on how to work with company values in growing consulting firms. Therefore, it is of interest to explore the organizational barriers and enablers within growing consulting firms that need to be considered to create and maintain a desired culture based on the company values.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate and analyze how growing consulting firms should work with company values. To determine the specific circumstances for growing consulting firms, the barriers and enablers for such organizations were studied. The study was based on a case study made on a growing technology based consulting company. At the case study company, qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews.

The most important barriers found in this study were regarding leadership, communication, recruitment, follow-up and concretization challenges. The employees at the case company experienced flaws in leadership and communication. Furthermore, recruitment turned out to be a big issue when growing organically. Moreover, it was understood that no follow-up was made relating to the company values, which makes it hard to evaluate the organizations values-alignment. In addition, one aspect that was identified, that causes problems for the other aspects as well, was the importance of concretizing the company values. This study affirm previous research of how to work with values. However, this study contributes by emphasizing which aspects should be given more focus when working with values in growing consulting firms.

Key-words: Values, Company Values, Culture, Leadership, Communication, Values-alignment
Sammanfattning


Nyckelord: Värderingar, Värdegrund, Kultur, Ledarskap, Kommunikation
# Contents

List of Figures  
Foreword  
List of Abbreviations and Glossary

## 1 Introduction
1.1 Background  
1.2 Problem Formulation  
1.3 Aims and Research Questions  
1.4 Limitations and Delimitations  
1.5 Expected Contribution  
1.6 Presentation of the Case Study Company  
1.6.1 Our Connection to the Case Study Company  
1.7 Disposition

## 2 Literature and Theory
2.1 Existing Literature about Company Values  
2.1.1 The Impact of Having Company Values  
2.1.2 How to Work with Company Values  
2.1.3 Focus Areas in this Research  
2.2 Theoretical Framework  
2.2.1 Definition of the Terms Company Values and Culture  
2.2.2 Definition of the Term Leadership  
2.2.3 Definition of the Term Communication

## 3 Methodology and Methods
3.1 Research Setting  
3.2 Literature  
3.3 Data Collection  
3.3.1 Interviews  
3.3.2 Observations  
3.3.3 Written Documents  
3.4 Quality of the Study  
3.4.1 Validity  
3.4.2 Reliability  
3.4.3 Generalizability  
3.5 Ethics  
3.6 Methodology and Method Discussion

## 4 Empirics and Analysis
List of Figures

1.1 Number of employees at Company C ........................................... 4
1.2 Organizational structure at Company C ........................................ 5
1.3 Connection between clients, managers and consultants ............... 6
1.4 Disposition of the report ............................................................ 7

2.1 Areas to consider when working with company values ............... 15
2.2 An illustration of the linear model of communication ................. 19
2.3 An illustration of the convergence model of communication ....... 20

4.1 Communication pathway and interpretation of message .............. 38
4.2 Focus areas to consider when working with company values in growing consulting firms ....................................................... 51
Foreword

By submitting this report we fulfill the last part of our studies to acquire our degrees in Master of Science in Engineering from the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm, Sweden.

We would like to thank the company representatives for lending us their time by participating in interviews. Moreover, we would like to thank the management team at Company C and especially our contact person there, for answering questions and providing the necessary resources needed for our study.

We would also like to thank our Supervisor Åsa Johansson for her genuine interest in providing the help needed to improve our report, and for guiding us throughout the study.

Further thanks are given to Maria Lindhagen and Dominic Von Martens for providing expertize guidance, help and valuable literature that was relevant for our study.

During the project we have had the honor to meet helpful people, who have contributed to both our master thesis study and inspired use for the future. We therefore want to thank Mats Frid for interesting and inspiring discussions.

Johanna Frid and Frida Nordanás
Stockholm, May 2017
# List of Abbreviations and Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>Personal Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company C</td>
<td>The case study company, in which this study is performed</td>
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<td>Values-alignment</td>
<td>Acting in line with the company values</td>
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<td>Values-work</td>
<td>Work performed related to an organization’s values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Telling a story about a real-life event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Google Plus</td>
<td>An Internet-based social network used for communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consulting Firm</td>
<td>Company consisting of consultants doing assignments for the company’s clients</td>
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1 Introduction

Walking in to the office one morning meeting one of the new consultants in the door on her way out. She is going to start her first assignment. She seems exited about the position and is looking forward to work with her professional passion. One month later we meet her at the office again, telling everybody goodbye. The assignment had not been what was promised and she was disappointed in the dishonest promises made by the company.

1.1 Background

This thesis analyzes the circumstances for how growing consulting firms should work with company values. Barriers and enablers are identified to evaluate how growing consulting firms should handle values-work. The study is based on a case study made on a growing consulting firm. Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, observations and documents.

Many researchers emphasize the importance of having company values. Some research claims having company values helps organizations manage change, such as when a company is growing (Shimasaki 2014). Other researchers argue that having company values drive results, create high-performing cultures and enhance financial performance (Shimasaki 2014; Klein 2012; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Barney 1986; Collins and Porras 2004). These are the long-term results if the values together with the focus on business performance are integrated successfully (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). Besides, some research also claims that having company values increase employee commitment, satisfaction and engagement (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Frost 2014; Margulies and Raia 1988).

Several researchers provide approaches for how to implement and work continuously with an organization’s values to create a desired culture (Frost 2014; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Collins and Porras 2004; Kouzes and Posner 2007; Stockholm University 2015). The main focus areas mentioned in research when working with company values is leadership, communication and recruitment (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Lencioni 2002; Frost 2014; Kouzes and Posner 2007). Moreover, some research also claims concretization, follow-up and knowledge about personal values are areas to consider when creating an organization’s culture (Kouzes and Posner 2007; Lencioni 2002). As for the case study company, the leadership and communication aspect can be questioned since their promises towards their consultants are not always fulfilled.

1Firm is in this report equivalent to the expression company
Being a growing consulting firm implies having specific circumstances for working with values. One factor that distinguish consulting companies from other companies is that the majority of the employees at consulting firms do not work in-house, and therefore neither have a close relation to their boss nor to other colleagues. Not having regular interactions with other people in the organization restrains the communication. Furthermore, another aspect that aggravate the work with company values is when undergoing a change (Shimasaki 2014), such as growing in terms of hiring new people.

Even though having company values is a discussed subject there is no practical approach for how to work with values in growing consulting firms. One study mention how to work with values in companies that grow in terms of number of employees (Shimasaki 2014). Another study evaluates the work with company values in consulting firms, especially how to manage leadership (Alvesson and Kärreman 2004). What deviates this study from previous research is the investigation of how to perform values-work considering the specific circumstances existing in growing consulting firms.

1.2 Problem Formulation

Company growth implies change in the company structure and a structural change influences the company (Alvesson and Kärreman 2004), since new tasks and positions appear. Having company values helps organizations manage change, such as growth (Shimasaki 2014). Being a consulting firm influence the communication and might restrain the values-work since consultants are positioned with a geographical distance. To maintain a value-driven organization during these circumstances an approach of how to work with company values is needed. Therefore, the problem formulation is stated as following:

The organizational conditions in growing consulting firms makes it challenging to maintain the continuous work with the company values, which is important to maintain the desired culture in the company.

1.3 Aims and Research Questions

The purpose of this project is to evaluate and analyze how a growing consulting firm should work with company values based on such organization’s specific circumstances. Including exploring the challenges and opportunities when working with values in growing consulting firms.

To answer the purpose of the project the analysis is based on the following research question:

RQ: How should a growing consulting firm work with company values?
Chapter 1. Introduction

To answer the research question two sub research questions were formulated to easier evaluate the conditions for growing consulting firms to work with company values.

**SRQ1:** What are the barriers for a growing consulting firm when working with company values?

**SRQ2:** What are the enablers for a growing consulting firm when working with company values?

### 1.4 Limitations and Delimitations

This study has been limited due to several reasons. One of them was the time frame of the project, which was limited to 20 weeks. Furthermore, the study is focusing on a consulting company, in which the consultants are located at clients. This limited how interviews were performed, where some interviews were made by telephone because of the interviewee’s geographic location. Moreover, the study’s contribution was also limited from the amount of help achieved from the case study company. Such as whom to interview, what types of observations we could make, and the access to internal networks and documents.

Furthermore, the study was delimited by a few factors. To begin with the study was delimited to investigate the identified problem on one consulting firm. Therefore, the result and conclusion of the report is adaptable for the kind of companies that are similar to these type of companies. Companies with the same size and in the same field or industry might be able to adopt the same recommendations, which makes this project partly suited for a more general market. Moreover, the study was delimited to the market of Sweden, since the case study was made on a Swedish based organization. Therefore, the results of the study is in general more applicable to similar Swedish organizations.

### 1.5 Expected Contribution

The expected contribution of the study was to complement existing theory about how to work with values in growing consulting firms. This means to evaluate and define barriers and enablers for these companies when working with their company values.

The positioning of the study in relation to previous research is that the focus in this project is to investigate how growing consulting firms should work with company values regarding the identified barriers and enablers. Earlier studies have focused on values-work in general or values-work within consulting or growing companies. However, they have not investigate the circumstances for growing consulting firms and how to work with values is such organizations.
1.6 Presentation of the Case Study Company

Company C is a growing consulting firm that provides engineering services within the automotive industry. Company C was founded in 2006 by the current CEO. The company has three company values, which are:

- Express Passion
- Honest Relations
- Be the Best

Company C has recently gone from being a smaller organization, with 10 employees in 2013, to expand into a bigger organization with more than 40 employees, as shown in Figure 1.1 (Allabolag, 2016). Due to this organizational change Company C is experiencing difficulties in how to work with their company values according to the CEO and some of the managers. Therefore, they need an approach for how to manage the work of implementing company values. The CEO wants to make sure the values are spread within the organization, both to current and new employees, and how to constantly work with the values and make sure employees work in line with them. Earlier, when Company C was a smaller organization, the CEO had personal dialogues with the employees to spread the values and determine if everyone was working in line with them in their daily work. As the organization grew the CEO and the management needs a new structure for how to implement the work with the company’s values. The decrease in values-alignment is only an interpretation from the management team, but the statement is further confirmed by consultants who have worked at the company for a while.

![Company Growth](image)

**Figure 1.1:** Number of employees at Company C in 2012-2017

Today, 2017, Company C consists of 43 employees and their vision for next year, 2018, is to expand into becoming 70-80 employees. The growth of the company has
over the years contributed to an organizational structure where new management functions, section managers, have been added, as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

![Organizational Structure Diagram]

**Figure 1.2: The organizational structure at Company C**

The structure consists of the CEO, a financial accountant, a company coach, three section managers and the consultants. The section managers have responsibility for 11-12 consultants each. This structure took shape in 2016 after the company grew fast and became bigger.

At Company C section managers are selling labor to clients based on the clients demand. The labor sold is a consultant who is employed at Company C. When a consultant from Company C is working on an assignment for a client the consultant is positioned at the clients office and is responsible for delivering results to the client. This implies that the client has a demand, the section manager identify the demand and position a consultant on an assignment to fulfill the demand (Hammarström, Engwall, and Lagergren 2012). Finally the consultant fulfills the assignment and delivers result to the client. The process is illustrated in Figure 1.3.
Company C’s goal is to always have their consultants working on an assignment and thereby have all consultants positioned at the client’s office. However, during specific circumstances, such as the introduction process for new employees or if a consultant is temporarily between two assignments the consultant can be temporarily positioned at the company office. This is where the CEO, the management team and the financial accountant are stationed.

1.6.1 Our Connection to the Case Study Company

We first became acquainted with Company C during the career fair Moment ² at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) in Stockholm. After attending events hosted by Company C it became clear that the company’s mission and values were a central part of the organization. They mentioned their values at the events and explained how they were looking for people who shared their values. After starting our last year of our master studies at the department of Industrial Management and Technology at KTH we both agreed that we wanted to write our master thesis about how organizations work towards their mission, and with values as guidance. Working with personal values and mission had been an interest for us for the past years and we became interested of how to work with such things in groups of people and in organizations. Our understanding was that Company C was a values-driven company and decided to contact them to see if there was an opportunity to write our

² Moment is a Career Fair Week that aims to strengthen relations between students and employers. Website: www.momentkth.se
master thesis there. When contacting Company C and discussing the idea to study and work with the company’s mission and values, an opportunity came up to work on an internal project for the organization. This project included developing a structure for how Company C should work with their company values. From that opportunity our project was further developed to be suitable as a master thesis project at KTH. The aim was to have possibility to contribute to Company C’s operations and a possibility to contribute with new findings to the field of research.

1.7 Disposition

The remainder of the report is structured according to the illustration in Figure 1.4. The chapter literature and theory presents the literature and theories that are used in the study, as well as the theoretical framework for the study. Further, the methodology is presented, which includes descriptions of what methods are used to answer the research question and the sub research questions. The following chapter analyzes the empirical data and presents the results. Lastly, a discussion and conclusion is presented, including following recommendations for future studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>LITERATURE AND THEORY</th>
<th>METHODOLOGY AND METHODS</th>
<th>EMPIRICS AND ANALYSIS</th>
<th>DISCUSSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Problem Formulation</td>
<td>Expected Contribution</td>
<td>Barriers and Enablers within Leadership</td>
<td>Discussion of Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Formulation</td>
<td>Aims and Research Questions</td>
<td>Case Study Company</td>
<td>Barriers and Enablers within Communication</td>
<td>Conclusion of the Purpose of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and Research Questions</td>
<td>Limitations and Delimitations</td>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td>Barriers and Enablers within Recruitment</td>
<td>Contribution to Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Delimitations</td>
<td>Expected Contribution</td>
<td>Methodology and Method Discussion</td>
<td>Additional Barriers and Enablers</td>
<td>Future Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected Contribution</td>
<td>Case Study Company</td>
<td>Methodology and Method Discussion</td>
<td>Result of the Empirical Findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Company</td>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td>Methodology and Method Discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Methodology and Method Discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.4:** The disposition of the report
2 Literature and Theory

To provide an understanding of how this study profiles in relation to other research written in the area of working with company values, this chapter gives an overview of earlier research. Furthermore, the chapter provides the theoretical framework of this study.

The literature and theory chapter is divided into two parts. First, existing literature within the field of company values is presented and discussed. The discussed areas within written literature are: The impact of having company values; How to work with company values; The leaders’ role when working with values; The importance of communication; Finding the right individuals for the organization; Congruence between company values and personal values; Working with company values in consulting firms; and Working with company values in growing firms. Lastly, the theoretical framework for this study is explained, together with the specific definitions of expressions used in this study.

2.1 Existing Literature about Company Values

In this section, an overview is given of the main researchers within the field of working with company values. These researchers’ studies are discussed and evaluated to explain how our research can supplement previous literature.

2.1.1 The Impact of Having Company Values

Many organizations have company values, but an organization must know how to work with the values to create the culture they desire. The interest of the phenomenon company values and creating organizational culture emerged in the 1980’s and it has been a popular topic for the past 20 years (Alvesson 1995, p. 3). The interest in the subject is a result of technological, social and organizational change (Alvesson 1995, p. 5) and it has turned out to bring positive effects on organizations who include culture as a part of their corporate strategy (Frost 2014; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Collins and Porras 2004).

The importance of having company values is a discussed subject within literature. Many researchers claim that company values have a possible positive impact on companies and benefit organizations who live in accordance with them (Edwards and Cable 2009; Posner and Schmidt 1993; Collins and Porras 2004; Shimasaki 2014; Klein 2012; Schein 2010; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Barney 1986). However, different researchers highlight different aspects of what the possible positive impacts are. In literature, three main reasons for the importance of having company
values are highlighted. First, several researchers emphasize how a shared set of values can help organizations to manage structural change, growth or other changes (Frost 2014; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Shimasaki 2014; Hinings et al. 1996). Several studies underline how company values help organizations to endure difficult times (Klein 2012) and manage organizational change in a good way (Shimasaki 2014; Hinings et al. 1996). Secondly, other researchers describe the positive impact of how company values can drive results, create high-performing cultures and enhance financial performance (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Lovell 2007; Barney 1986; Stockholm University 2015). They claim that a competitive advantage is gained through a company’s culture and values, which in turn drive results and enhance performance (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Barney 1986). Thirdly, other researchers emphasize that the outcome of having company values is increased employee commitment, satisfaction and engagement (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Margulies and Raia 1988; Stockholm University 2015; Frost 2014). Even though these three aspects might be indirect related to each other, different researchers highlight different aspects of why having company values is preferable. Despite the various angles on the impact of having company values, all researchers seem to agree that having company values influence organizations and bring positive effects on those companies who embrace the common values. This study accede with previous research that having company values has a positive impact on organizations.

### 2.1.2 How to Work with Company Values

Many researchers only emphasize the importance of having company values and how to implement them (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Klein 2012; Collins and Porras 2004; Shimasaki 2014), but some claim that if the implementation of values is not done correctly it can harm the organization (Frost 2014; Lencioni 2002). If values are not implemented right, the communication of values can do more harm than good (Frost 2014). In fact, the communication of values can poison the company culture if done in the wrong way, and organizations should in this case avoid communicating them (Lencioni 2002). Even if most researchers emphasize the importance of the implementation process of values (Collins and Porras 2004; Kouzes and Posner 2007) few mention the negative effects of implementing a company’s values in the wrong way. To prevent the negative affects of communicating values in the wrong way, our study will provide an understanding of what the circumstances are for growing consulting firms to work with values.

It is essential to concretize company values and connect them to behaviors (Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003), but there are different opinions on who should be involved in the concretization. In literature, there are two distinct opinions on who should be part of defining the company values. Many researchers within the area claims that only the executives should be part of defining the company values (Lencioni 2002; Schein 2010; Stockholm University 2015). Lencioni (2002) argues that implementing values has nothing to do with building consensus. It is rather about creating a set of fundamental beliefs on a group of people. Even though it is good to engage employees it is not favorable to gather input from employee surveys and build consensus when it comes to
defining company values. This is a bad idea because it integrates suggestions from employees who might not belong in the company, and it creates a false impression that all input is equally valuable (Lencioni 2002). Moreover, Schein (2010) argues that only the people involved with solving business problems should be the ones defining the company values. In contrast, Rosenthal and Masarech (2003) argues that values should be defined by managers, together with employees, through focus groups and on-line surveys. Rosenthal (2003) claims that to achieve a broader consensus it is essential to include employees from around the company. Even if these researchers have different views on the best way to define company values, they agree that leaders should be part of the work. Partly, because change requires more than one leader to guide the desired principles (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003), but also because leaders have to believe in the values themselves to fully live them and manage to model the way for how to behave (Lencioni 2002). Within this research we agree with the argument that only the executives should be part of defining the company values. We believe that in order to manage change the values-work has to start with the leaders of an organization, since the leaders have to be the first ones to live the values and model the way for other employees.

The literature emphasizes different areas to consider when working with company values. Many researchers highlight the importance of defining and concretizing the values to make it clear what they mean (Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Schein 2010). Values need to be defined and connected to behaviors and attitudes for people to know what they mean and what is expected of them (Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). In addition, to defining values some researchers highlight the importance of communicating the values to the organization (Stockholm University 2015; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). Communication is a critical aspect for companies who are shaping their culture, and it is a key for strengthening and sustaining a company culture (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). Furthermore, a few researchers claim that recruitment is a central part for remaining the desired company culture (Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002). All job candidates, from CEO to receptionist, should be evaluated not only by their skill but also for their fit with the organization’s values (Lencioni 2002). Another aspect that many researchers agree on to be important when working with values is the leadership (Stockholm University 2015; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Frost 2014; Lencioni 2002; Kouzes and Posner 2007; Schein 2010). A leader in a company needs to model the way and show other employees how the values should be lived (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Kouzes and Posner 2007). The last thing researchers agree on to be important for maintaining a desired culture is to make the values-work a continuous task (Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). There need to be a continuous reminder of the importance of the company values so that the desired culture becomes long lasting (Stockholm University 2015).

Besides defining values, communicating them, consider them within recruitment and leadership, and work with them continuously there are few researchers who mention how to validate and measure how well the organization lives in accordance with the values. Lencioni (2004) claim that people should be evaluated against the company’s values to manage to base decisions about bonuses and decisions about
dismissing people. In general, most researchers mention leadership, communication and recruitment as part of important aspects when a company wants to implement and work with values (Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Frost 2014). However, the importance of following-up on how values-aligned a company is, is only highlighted by Lencioni (2004). One thing that all researchers have in common is that all of them explain how organizations in general should work with company values. None of them mention difficulties or focus areas within values-work based on the type of organization, such as how to manage values-work in consulting companies or growing companies. Therefore, this study will analyze specific focus areas when working with values in growing consulting firms.

The Leaders’ Role when Working with Values

One crucial aspect of managing a change or working with company values is the leadership. One study explains how leaders can motivate others to get extraordinary things done (Kouzes and Posner 2007). Kouzes and Posner (2007) present five practices of exemplary leadership that guides leaders to keep on the right track and steer others to achieve peak performance. These five practices of exemplary leadership are:

- Model the way
- Inspire a shared vision
- Challenge the process
- Enable others to act
- Encourage the heart

The credibility of this finding is strengthened by references from several studies made over time, either by the authors and by other researchers. These practices are not specific for leaders working with values, but rather how leaders should act in general. However, the study emphasize the importance of values when modeling the way and inspiring a vision (Kouzes and Posner 2007). Another researcher, Schein (2010), discusses the importance of leadership in his book about organizational culture and leadership. Schein (2010) emphasize the role of the leader and how leaders can create a good organizational culture by having strong beliefs in how to act and manage things. Culture is defined in his book as a pattern of shared assumptions, which is the result of having shared values and beliefs. Schein (2010) gives a good overview of how leaders should manage culture, and the research made by Kouzes and Posner (2007) explains the importance of the practices, including examples of how to live them. However, these two books are not addressed for leaders who work specifically with values-work and organizational change combined. Which is why our study focuses on challenges when working with values during a growth process in a company.
Chapter 2. Literature and Theory

The Importance of Communication

Working with company values is about creating a common culture, but to get a group of people working in the same direction communication is needed. Most researchers seem to agree that communication is a crucial aspect to consider when implementing and working with company values (Kouzes and Posner 2007; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002). Rosenthal (2003) claims that communication is critical for organizations who begin working with values, and it remains key to continuously strengthen and sustain the desired culture. An organization’s values need to be communicated and shared in the organization continuously to keep people values-aligned and to make sure everyone acts accordingly to the desired behaviors (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). The values need regular reinforcement to include them in the daily interactions within the company. Furthermore, another researcher emphasize the importance to periodically establish the state of how clear an organization’s values are since it renews commitment (Kouzes and Posner 2007). Previous research deal with the importance of having consistent communication and give examples of how company values should be communicated. However, they do not evaluate approaches for how to communicate values as a consulting company, where the employees are located with geographical distance. Therefore, this study will analyze the importance of communication in consulting companies and what possible barriers and enablers there are with communication.

Finding the Right Individuals for the Organization

Every individual contribute to the atmosphere and culture in an organization consisting of a group of people. This is an aspect that need to be considered when working with company values. Some researchers emphasize the importance that all individuals must share and embrace the company values (Klein 2012; Kouzes and Posner 2007; Lencioni 2002). Klein (2012) has profiled organizations that successfully have endured difficult economic times to five finding, where one of them is the importance that an organization’s values and beliefs are embraced by all individuals. A clear set of values only work if they are shared values. Moreover, another research agrees that every employee must share the belief of the importance of the values, and live the values themselves (Kouzes and Posner 2007). These researchers claim to become a values-aligned workplace all individuals in the organization must embrace and live the values themselves. On the other hand, not all literature emphasize the importance of having everyone in the organization sharing the values and adopt them personally (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). They do not argue for the opposite opinion but neither do they emphasize the importance of having everyone sharing the values.

Most studies agree on the importance of having everyone sharing the company values, but there is still a question of how organizations can ensure that company values are embraced and lived by all individuals. One study claims that if an individual does not have the intention to share the company’s values it will most likely affect the company culture negatively (Collins and Porras 2004). This indicates that individuals who already have intention to share the company’s values must be identified and brought into the organization. Another researcher highlights that having
skilled candidates is not enough. Instead, organizations need skilled candidates who share the company values (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). This is important to ensure that the benefits from working with individuals who share the company values are utilized. Some researchers highlight the importance of the recruitment process to finding skilled candidates who share the company values (Stockholm University 2015; Lencioni 2002; Shimasaki 2014). Organizations need a recruitment process where ideal members, who share the company values, are identified and brought into the organization. Recruitment of individuals that do not share the company values may result in a non-values-aligned behavior by these individuals (Shimasaki 2014). Another researcher also claim that one aspect for creating an organization consisting of the right people is to let people, who does not share the company values, go (Lencioni 2002). Not many researchers discuss the issue of firing people on the basis of not sharing the company values, but all seem to agree that values should be a part of the recruitment process.

**Congruence Between Company Values and Personal Values**

When working with company values it can be discussed if the understanding of personal values is an important aspect to consider. Some researchers claim it is of high importance to become aware of your personal values when working with organizational values (Kouzes and Posner 2007; Posner and Schmidt 1993). Kouzes and Posner (2007) describes the importance to “model the way” and argues for the importance of exploring and living personal values. Having knowledge and clarity about personal values increases engagement. These individuals are more likely and better prepared to understand and decide if an organization’s values fit their own (Kouzes and Posner 2007). On the other hand, several researchers within the field do not discuss the aspect of exploring personal values as a part of working with shared values. These researchers do not oppose the argument for exploring personal values, but they rather exclude a discussion about it. The approach of looking at how personal values can influence the work with company values could be both relevant and important. However, this aspect will not be discussed in this project. Even if personal values would benefit the values-work it is not considered as a crucial part for making an initial strategy for implementing company values in a growing consulting firm.

**Working with Company Values in Consulting Firms**

Being a consulting firm with consultants working outside of the office could be challenging when it comes to working with company values. A study on technology-based consulting firms in Sweden was made to analyze the leadership challenges within these kind of firms (Hammarström, Engwall, and Lagergren 2012). Two of the main challenges that were found were: (1) to lead and communicate; and (2) to develop leaders, company culture and diversity. Hammarström et al. (2012) argues that management is much about leading and communicating the course of the company. The report emphasizes the importance of modeling the way as a leader, replacing leaders whose behaviors are not in correlation with the company and having well elaborated introductions for newly employed (Hammarström, Engwall, and Lagergren 2012). No other specific literature is written about how consulting firms should work with company values. Even though Hammarström et al. (2012) gives
examples of how to manage certain leadership challenge in consulting firms, we believe our study will supplement their findings with possible additional barriers and enablers for consulting firms to manage values-work.

**Working with Company Values in Growing Firms**

Working with company values in a growing firm implies having to manage change, as the company grows. It can be hard to communicate the desired values and behaviors that the organization has. In an article about company growth and company culture by Shimasaki (2014) the importance of knowing when an organization is transitioning through different growth stages is discussed. Knowing the change will help leaders affect the culture and guide the company through the growth. A successful transition is influenced by the leaders and the management’s ability to implement process changes (Shimasaki 2014). Furthermore, the article discusses how organizations should work to retain the company values. This includes: translating company values into guiding principles; select company partners, service providers and employees that share the company values; and knowing when to let people go (Shimasaki 2014). Shimasaki explains key factors that must be taken into consideration when working with company values. Growth of small businesses requires change and handling of crises. Change can be managed and crisis can be minimized if managers and leaders plan for the future growth (Scott and Bruce 1987). One researcher provides frameworks and models for how to manage change in organizations. The researcher discusses both strategic models for change and culture changes (Carnall 2007). The growth of an organization is a kind of change where change management tools can be implemented. For example, Kotter’s 8-step model for change provides guidance for how to manage change in organizations. However, only Shimasaki (2014) considers the organizational circumstances for managing values-work within growing firms. Therefore, our study will supplement these findings with possible additional barriers and enablers for growing firms to manage values-work.

### 2.1.3 Focus Areas in this Research

Aspects to consider when working with company values are in this study to some extent shared with what previous research say. Existing literature has identified approaches for how to work with company values. However, these approaches cannot be applied directly on how to work with company values in growing consulting firms. The approaches do not consider specific conditions and differences between organizations. Therefore, this research cannot be assumed to be applicable on growing consulting firms who want to work with company values. For example, not having daily interactions with colleagues might affect the conditions for how to communicate. However, four critical aspects when working with company values have been identified from previous research. These aspects are: leadership, communication, the individuals in the company, and personal values. The aspect of personal values has not been considered in this research. The other three aspects have been considered and evaluated to identify opportunities and difficulties that exist in a growing consulting firm.
With theoretical foundation in previous research three areas of relevance was decided to be further investigated in this research: leadership, communication, and recruitment. These areas are mentioned by many researchers and will act as a base for this study. In addition to those three areas, other areas to consider could be of interest to consider for growing consulting firms when managing values-work. However, these aspects are not affirmed yet but will be discussed throughout the study. The aspects of interests and the potential aspects to consider is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

The figure is an illustration of areas of interest to consider when working with values in growing consulting firms. From literature it has been established that leadership, communication and recruitment are areas crucial to consider. Further, it is of interest to evaluate and analyze if there are additional areas that need to be considered.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This section gives the theoretical framework for this study. It includes a presentation of this study’s chosen definitions on key terms, such as company values, culture, leadership and communication.
2.2.1 Definition of the Terms Company Values and Culture

The expression of values and company values differ in literature and are defined in various ways by different researchers. Individuals use personal values to guide their decisions and actions while organizational values provide norms that specify how employees should behave and how the organization’s resources should be allocated (Edwards and Cable 2009). The term value is defined by Edward and Cable (2009) as general beliefs about desirable behaviors. Additional definitions of organizational values are that they are defined as the proposed course of action (Posner and Schmidt 1993) or as Collins and Porras (2004) refers to organizations’ core values as a set of general guiding principles. Even though there are a variety of definitions of the term company values, the literature agrees for it to be connected to beliefs, actions and norms that an organization follows.

Company values, organizational values and core values are terms used in research in a non-consistent manner, but they are used to define the same expression. What other researcher have defined as company values, organizational values and core values is in this research referred to as company values. Many varied definitions are given to the expression company values and in this report a combination of Edward and Cable (2009) and Collins and Porras (2004) definitions describe company values in a way that is embraced in this study. Company values are defined as the set of guiding principles and general beliefs about desirable behaviors. This means that the company values guide the employees and show them how to achieve the desired behaviors.

Moreover, culture is an expression mentioned in this report. Company culture is defined in this report in the same way as Denison (1984) claims is the definition for corporate culture. Culture and company culture is in this study defined as the set of values, beliefs and behaviors that are shared in an organization. Hence, the term company culture is in this study is referred to as the desired effect of having company values.

2.2.2 Definition of the Term Leadership

The definition of leadership and who was suitable to lead has changed over the years. In the early 20th century leadership started to develop towards the direction of leaders being chosen depending on merits, rather than pre-modern bases where leadership depended on inheritance (Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff 2010). The development implied that individual personality traits became more important than being related to key people and leaders (Wood 2005). However, further theories started to appear about what the definition of a suitable leader was (Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff 2010).

Burn (1978) gives a presentation the concept of leadership to be divided into two types: transformational and transactional leadership. Bass (1990) used the work of Burn (1978) to provide a model based on transformational leadership. Bass (1990) distinguish transformational and transactional leadership by explaining transactional leaders as:
“They explain what is required of them and what compensation they will receive if they fulfill these requirements... The leader gets things done by making, and fulfilling, promises of recognition, pay increases, and advancement for employees who perform well. By contrast, employees who do not do good work are penalized.”

Bass (1990, pp.19-20)

This kind of leadership, which is based on transactions between manager and employees, is called Transactional Leadership (Bass 1990). In addition, Bass (1990) explains the other form of leadership, Transformational Leadership as:

“Superior leadership performance - transformational leadership - occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group.”

Bass (1990, p.21)

Furthermore, he highlights the benefits with transformational leadership rather than transactional leadership and describes how transformational leaders can make the difference between success and failure (Bass 1990). According to Bass, transformational leaders achieve results by either inspire followers by being charismatic towards them, and/or intellectually stimulate them (Bass 1990). In this research we have chosen to embrace Bass’ theory about transformational leadership when referring to leadership in this study. That a leader is someone who elevate the interest of the employees and generate awareness of the purpose and mission of the group.

Transactional leadership is not considered to the same extent in this study as transformational leadership. In our study we do not refer to transactional leadership when talking about leadership since we believe this type of leadership is not the desired leadership when working with values. Leadership in this study is not refereed to as leaders who only explains tasks, but rather as leaders who influence a group and creates awareness.

In addition to Bass’ theory of leadership Northouse (2012) has identified four central components for the phenomenon of leadership. These components are that leadership is: a process, involves influence, occurs in groups, and involves common goals. Hence, the definition for leadership is that: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse 2012).

We believe the four components identified by Northouse (2012) is related to transformational leadership. According to Bass (1990) transformational leaders generate awareness of the purposes and mission of the group and Northouse (2012) agrees that leadership occurs in groups. Furthermore, transformational leaders help employees to look beyond self-interest to benefit the group, which is in line with the component that leadership involves creating common goals, defined by Northouse (2012). Finally, both Bass (1990) and Northouse claim that leaders achieve result
Chapter 2. Literature and Theory

by influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. We believe all of these phrases express that leadership is about involving a group of individuals to work together toward common goals rather than individual performance. Despite Bass (1990) and Northouse (2012) theories about leadership we embrace Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) beliefs of how exemplary leaders act. Which is to: model the way, inspire a shared vision, and enable others to act (Kouzes and Posner 2007). Conclusively, leadership is in this study referred to as a process where the leader influence a group of individuals to achieve common goals, by modeling the way and enable the group to act towards a shared vision.

2.2.3 Definition of the Term Communication

Various interpretations and definitions about what communication is and how communication takes place are available in previous research. We have chosen to define communication from the theories presented by Dimbleby and Burton (1998). They describe how communication can imply a variety of things by dividing communication into categorize within different areas. By using two of the areas discussed by Dimbleby and Burton (1998), the meaning of communication and who is involved in the communication process will be defined in this research. Furthermore, theories about how the communication process is performed are discussed to define what is important within the communication process.

Dimbleby and Burton (1998) define three different means of communication: form of communication, medium of communication and the media. Form of communication is a way of communicating as speaking, writing, or drawing. Medium of communication is how communication is combined by different forms, such as written text and pictures published together. Finally the media refers to mass communication, which have come to be a distinct of their own (Dimbleby and Burton 1998, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, Dimbleby and Burton (1998) divide communication into four categories depending on the number of individuals involved in the communication process. Intrapersonal communication is communication made within and to oneself, such as thoughts. Interpersonal communication is the communication that takes place between different people, such as two individual’s interaction face to face. Group communication refers to communication within groups of people and by groups to others. Finally, mass communication is communication used or received by larger number of people. The number of people involved are much bigger than anything we would refer to as a group (Dimbleby and Burton 1998).

In this research, communication refers to the means of communication: form of communication, and medium of communication. The research is placed in the categories interpersonal communication and group communication. This implies that communication refers to one mean of communication or by combining two or several means of communication (Dimbleby and Burton 1998). Thus, communication can be a conversation or an email in which the communication takes place either by speaking or in written text. Moreover, communication in this manner means the message can consist of a picture or a written text. In this case, where communication is performed by combining different means of communication an example could be a picture and
a written text published together at a company’s internal network. Furthermore, interpersonal communication and group communication implies that the means of communication are communicated between individuals, between groups of people or within groups of people (Dimbleby and Burton 1998, pp. 7-8).

Various theories about how the communication process within an organization can be performed exist in previous literature. The process of communications is complex, but there are simplified models to illustrate the process. Fielding (2006) preset two models of the communication process: the linear model and the convergence model (Fielding 2006, p. 18-28). In 1948 Shannon published an early model of the communication process that has been developed to the linear model (Shannon 1948). In the model, the communication process is seen as a one way process where a message is sent from a sender to a receiver (Dimbleby and Burton 1998). The process is illustrated in a simplified way in Figure 2.2.

![Figure 2.2: An illustration of the linear model of communication](image)

The process illustrated in the linear model of communication can be used to illustrate mass communication as communication through television or radio commercial where a simplified message is sent from a sender to a receiver. Mass communication is not a relevant way of communicating in this research and therefore this model is not appropriate to use as a description of the communication process for this study.

In 1954 Schramm presented a model to describe the communication process (Bowman and Targowski 1987). In this model, communication is described as a two way process where both the sender and the receiver act as sender and receiver. Furthermore, the model stress the importance that individuals must share the same meanings for words, concepts, and ideas to communicate successfully (Fielding 2006, p. 18). The model where the process is illustrated is often called the convergence model and is illustrated in Figure 2.3.
When a receiver receives a message the receiver interpret the message before answering the message or sending it forward. How to answer a message or sending it forward depends on how the message is interpreted by the receiver of the message. Which in turn depends on each individuals interpretation of words, concepts or ideas.

“Ideally, in the most effective communication, the message sent should be the same as the message received. However, this rarely happens.”

Fielding (2006, p.19)

Both the model illustrated in Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3 are simplified and can be described in a more complex way. However, the convergence model of communication is used to describe the process of communication in this research. In this research, a communication process is referred to that communication is a two way process and that successful communication acquires that people share the same meaning for words, concepts and ideas.
3 Methodology and Methods

This section presents the methods that were used to conduct the study. Initially, the research design with the chosen methods will be described. Further, the quality of the study is discussed and motivated through the concepts validity, reliability and generalizability. Following, the ethical aspects considered in this study will be presented. Finally, a discussion of the methods is presented.

3.1 Research Setting

This study is based on a qualitative case study performed at the case study company presented in Section 1.7. The case study company, Company C, is a consulting firm providing engineering services within the automotive industry. In this study, employees at all positions in the hierarchy at Company C were interviewed, to get a deeper understanding of what the barriers and enablers are within a growing consulting firm when working with company values. The main objective was to express how a growing consulting firm should work with company values, which in earlier research only have been discussed in more general terms, and not specifically for growing consulting firms.

The project time frame was approximately 20 weeks. Within this time the barriers and enablers identified at Company C were analyzed in depth to gather an understanding of how a growing consulting firm should work with company values. In the beginning of the process a wide literature study was carried out to provide a deeper understanding of why and how company values are important. At the same time, discussions with the management team at Company C was held to understand how Company C have developed the company’s values and how well that process goes in line with what theory says.

3.2 Literature

The literature review aims to give knowledge about existing research within the area of company values. Focus has been on analyzing prior research within the three areas: the importance with company values, implementation of company values and continued work with company values. Initially, a broad perspective about company values was in consideration in the search for literature. Moreover, the Ph.D. Student Maria Lindhagen and the teacher Dominic Von Martens at the institution of Industrial Engineering and Management at KTH were consulted to explore further literature within the area. Maria Linhagen’s area of research is how middle managers can
balance performance, leadership and values in technology-based consulting firms. She discussed the subject of company values with us and provided a valuable article about leadership challenges in consulting firms. Dominic Von Martens is educating within Behavior Management Control, Self-Leadership and Values. He provided articles and literature about values and value-based leadership.

Moreover, Google Scholar and databases provided by KTH, such as Primo and Scopus were used to search for scientific articles and reports. The search strings were built upon words and phrases as: values, company values, culture, organizations, leadership, and communication. Furthermore, the sources referred to in books, articles and reports were evaluated and searched for to find additional literature about the research area.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Multiple sources of empirical data were used to gather relevant information, including interviews, observations and written documents. This allowed triangulation to be made, in which information from one source can be correlated with, and its reliability tested against, information from other sources (Jack and Raturi 2006).

#### 3.3.1 Interviews

Interviews were conducted at Company C to provide an understanding of the fundamental condition for the company to work with their values. Interviews with employees at Company C were suitable in this research since a deeper understanding how employees at Company C describe the values-work was of interest. The primary aim with the interviews was to get an understanding of what the barriers and enablers are in a growing consulting firm. This includes challenges in areas such as leadership, communication, and recruitment. Interviews with the management team at Company C were made to provide an understanding of how Company C is currently working with company values. To capture the reality of the situation, employees at all levels of the hierarchy at Company C were interviewed to understand how the work with values is executed. Moreover, new employees were interviewed as well as established consultants, section managers, and the CEO. By interviewing individuals within all of these positions, an understanding of how Company C aims to work with the company values and how the work actually is performed were possible to achieve. However, the selection of who to interview within each group could not be selected randomly because of specific circumstances. To begin with, all managers had to participate since the management team consisted of a limited number of people. Moreover, the contact with consultants were established through the consultants managers, which implies the section managers made the decision on who was to participate in the study. To secure that the sample of consultants participating in the study represents the entire selection of consultants at Company C the three section managers were asked to choose two consultants each
within their group of consultants to be a part of the study. Finally, the newly recruited who participated in the study were people how happened to be temporary positioned at Company C’s office.

The interviews were semi-structured, which means a dialogue organized around a set of topics and open questions were held between the interviewer and the interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Based on these set of topics, interview guides were created to act as guidelines during the interviews. The interview guides are found in Appendix A. As the study evolved and the understanding increased, the interview guides were reviewed and improved. This means that questions were reformulated, partly to make sure the questions were of a more open character so the questions would not guide the interviewee in a specific direction. The interviews were around 30-45 minutes long, with the exception for the newly employed, whose interviews were around 15 minutes. These interviews were shorter due to the shorter interview guide, since not all questions were relevant for employees who had been at the company less than a week. The quality of an interview is affected by to what extend the interviewer is able to create a welcome and open conversation (Blomkvist and Hallin 2015). To create a welcome and open conversation the intention was to arrange all interviews to be personal meetings, face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, by arranging the interviews in that way it was possible for the interviewers to interpret both what the interviewee says and the interviewee’s body language. However, three of the interviews were conducted as telephone interviews due to the geographical position of the interviewee.

During the interviews, two interviewers always participated. One interviewer held the dialogue with the interviewee based on the formulated open questions in the interview guide and the other interviewer documented the interview. Documenting included audio recording and taking notes. After the interview the two interviewers analyzed and discussed the notes taken during the interview. The audio recording from the interview was only used when the notes were unclear, when a citation was needed, or when the two interviewers had different interpretation of the answers.

Analyzing Data from Interviews

When analyzing qualitative data, there are several steps to take to categorize the findings. The first step is to identify themes and categories that emerges in the data. In the second step, themes and categories that emerges in the first step are brought together to erase duplications and to set overlaps to one common category. (Burnard et al. 2008) In this research, each interview was “coded” immediately after it was conducted, to sort out information that was of topic and therefore not of relevance. Furthermore, notes were made to summarize the interview. When all interviews were conducted, coded and summarized, the summarization from each interview were brought together and categories were created based on overlaps within the summarizations. Finally, the notes from each interview were reviewed again to sort out more data which fits under each category. With these steps, the results from the interviews were categorized and analyzed in a structured way.
3.3.2 Observations

Observations were made throughout the whole study. The observations were mainly done at Company C’s office by observing informal gatherings and “small talk” with new employees temporary positioned at the office. Furthermore, observations were made by observing the company’s internal network, Google Plus, to gather information about communication methods and values-work. Finally, an observation was made on an interview with one of the company’s managers and a possible candidate for employment. The main purpose of the observations was to provide an overview of how the values-work is performed and how the values are included in Company C’s daily work.

During observations field notes were taken to document the gathered information. While documenting it is important to separate first and second order of construct, which means to differentiate between what you see and hear and what your own reflections are (Blomkvist and Hallin 2015). When observing, the main focus was to write down the first order of construct that represents what happened. Completing, second order of construct was added afterwards. However, it is arguable whether or not it is possible to capture the objective reality of the situation. The notes might not represent the whole truth since feelings and body language cannot be transcribed. Likewise, the complementing notes does not represent the whole truth either since our interpretations might be based on individual preconceptions and interpretations.

3.3.3 Written Documents

Internal documents regarding Company C’s work were used and studied within this study. The main purpose of studying documents was to deepen the understanding of the values-work that Company C does. Documents that were used during the study included information about; the company values, recruitment interview guides, employee surveys and templates for internal work within company C.

3.4 Quality of the Study

When evaluating the quality of the scientific work in the research, three aspects were considered: validity, reliability, and generalizability. Below, each of these qualities are evaluated and discussed. Validity describes how well the research measures what it is meant to measure while reliability describes if the study is done in the right way. Lastly, the generalizability describes if the case study can be applicable to other cases (Blomkvist and Hallin 2015).
3.4.1 Validity

The use of credible sources and search engines increase the validity of the study. Only literature that was published by credible research organizations and associations were used in this study, to ensure that the validity of the publications was high. Moreover, credible search engines helped increase the validity. Multiple sources and triangulation also contributed to an increased validity of the collected data.

The validity was decreased since the findings in this research were based on a case study done at one company. Empirics and primary data were collected at this case company in form of observations, documents and interviews with employees at the case company. The data might therefore be influenced by the organization and the information can therefore be biased.

The reconstruction of the interview guides after a couple of interviews increase validity. It can be disused if the development of the interview guide during the case study influence the validity since all the interviewees did not answered the same questions. However, we argue that the development of the interview guides increased the validity of the research since the aim was to make sure that the asked questions resulted in answers that would be relevant for this study.

Furthermore, the validity was increased since the interviews made at Company C was conducted with employees at all levels in the organization. Both the management team and consultants were interviewed to secure that the validity of the phenomenon was captured. By getting different perspectives on the values-work at Company C a more objective viewpoint was given.

3.4.2 Reliability

Reliability was increased by selecting the interviewees within Company C considerably. To get a representative group of interviewees, employees at all levels in the company were interviewed. At the management level, all personal were interviewed. At consultant level the interviewees were; two consultants from each section managers group of consultants, three newly employed consultants and one consultant who left the company and is now working for another firm. However, the selection of who was interviewed could have decreased the reliability to some extent. Limited access to contact with consultants led to each section manager at Company C choosing two consultants each within their team, to participate in interviews. The fact that Company C only had three section managers, all managers had to participate in interviews, to increase the anonymity. The only participants that were randomly selected were newly employed, of who we interviewed based on who was located at Company C’s office when it was time to perform interviews.

The reliability of this study is judged as limited due to the nature of qualitative semi-structured interviews and the handling of anonymity. Semi-structured interviews have a possibility to give variated results if someone else would repeat the study. This is due to the fact that semi-structured interviews are built around topics or questions that are discussed during the interview. This could result in different
discussions if the study was remade. The results from the interviews would most probably differ in a possible future study since the case study in this research, Company C, is a growing firm, who will have different employees being interviewed in a future research. Moreover, all interviewees are anonymous, which decreases the reliability and reduces the repeatability. Due to the nature of the interviews and the fact that interviewees are anonymous the reliability was decreased.

3.4.3 Generalizability

Based in the fact that every organization is unique and that this research aims to answer how Company C should work to implement their company values in their organization the generalizability is low. On the other hand, it is possible that other organizations of the same size as Company C and with the same working manner (consultants working at clients) could use the same strategy for implementing values.

3.5 Ethics

An ethical aspect considered in our study is the ethical policy for KTH. KTH’s ethical policy has been reviewed to map the ethical aspects to be consider in this research. Concluding, the study should: be conducted without plagiarism and other improprieties, reflect over social and environmental consequences of the result, and respect autonomy and personal integrity (KTH 2016). Plagiarism has been carefully considered and all texts have been interpreted, rewritten or cited. Since no materials or industrial processes were used during the study the results did not lead to any negative environmental consequences. However, the social aspect and the personal integrity of individuals were considered by letting all interviewees be anonymous. An ethical dilemma about anonymity was encountered since some positions in the company are represented by a small number of individuals, which implies that their identity can be disclosed. This was handled by explaining the situation for these individuals to make sure they still wanted to participate. With careful consideration, the ethical policy for KTH was attained.

To make sure ethical aspects were dealt with properly the most common ethical code within social sciences in Sweden, The Swedish Research Council, was considered. The ethical code includes four principles: the information requirement, the consent requirement, the confidentiality requirement, and the good to use requirement (Blomkvist and Hallin 2015). The information requirements entail that the people studied are informed of the purpose of the study. The consent requirement that people studied has agreed on being studied. The confidential requirement refer to collected material is being treated confidentially and the good to use requirement ensure that collected material only is used for the stated purpose (Blomkvist and Hallin 2015). In this research, all four requirements were considered in all contexts where people were studied. This included mainly observations and interviews in this case study. Before participating all participants were; well informed about the
purpose of the study, asked if they agreed to be studied and be a part of the study, and informed about that they were to be anonymous and if they at any time during or after the interview wanted to withdraw their participation they were welcome to do so and the material would not be used in the research.

When material and data was collected, it was treated confidentially. Only the authors of the study have had access to the collected material. To ensure that the collected material, like audio recordings, was not easy accessed it was only stored at one external disk. Moreover, the material collected was only used for the purpose stated when collecting the material. It will not become a public document that will be shared neither with KTH or the case study company. Furthermore, we have taken personal responsibility about the gathered data by not spreading information outside the company, and by deleting data gathered from the company after the study was done.

### 3.6 Methodology and Method Discussion

The chosen methods of this study provided a good and credible base to answer the purpose of the study. However, due to specific circumstances the study sometimes had to deviate from the desired way how the methods were used. These circumstances were: limited possibilities to contact employees at Company C, limited possibility to perform observations, and difficulties in securing individuals anonymity.

**Interviews**

The interviews sometimes deviated from the original interview method because of geographical distance and limited access to employees at Company C. A consequence of the geographical distance resulted in three interviews being performed over telephone instead of a face-to-face meeting. Furthermore, limited access to contact consultants at Company C and the limited number of individuals at some positions affected how the selection of interviewees was performed. For example, managers at Company C decided which consultants who should participate within interviews. Moreover, all managers at Company C had to participate because of the limited number of managers within the organization. The only participants who were selected randomly were the new recruited consultants. It could be argued that not having a random selection affects the empirical material. Since someone else, the managers at the company, choose the candidates who we could interview there could be a risk that not all perspectives on Company C were brought forward. However, we believe the selection of who participated in the study was done appropriately considering the circumstances. Since the selection of candidates was distributed to all section managers.

Furthermore, to make sure the interviewees were anonymous we decided to only distinguish between interviewees as consultants and managers. No difference has been made between new consultants and consultants in this report, since the number of interviews on new consultants were too few to keep the anonymity. It would probably be of interest to distinguish between interviewees in other ways, such as
age, gender, or how long time an individual had worked at Company C. However, considering the amount of interviewees the anonymity was hard to keep if further distinguishes had been made. Therefore, we decided to only distinguish between consultants and managers to secure the participants’ anonymity.

When doing interviews as there is a choice to transcript the interviews. However, we did not believe transcription was necessary in this study to perform the analysis in a suitable way. During all interviews, two interviewers participated. If the interviewer did not have time to write down the whole conversation or if we wanted to cite an interviewee the rerecorded material was turned to. Therefore, we believed there was no need for transcribing the interviews even though some valuable information might be lost.

Observations

During the study we have continuously worked at Company C’s office in order to observe the daily work there. We had unlimited access to Company C’s office and therefore unlimited access to perform observations of the daily work that takes place there. On the other hand, we only had possibility to observe one interview with a possible candidate for employment at Company C. It had been desirable to observe more interviews so that the gathered data would have been more reliable. However, the amount of interviews to observe was not decided by us since all interviewees did not want us to participate. Each candidate had to confirm that he/she was comfortable with us participating at the interview. Unfortunately only one candidate approved our participation. Therefore, only one interview was observed. Due to lack of data collected from observations of interviews the data could not be used to draw conclusions within this study. However, the data collected was used in the study to confirm other empirical findings gathered from other sources.

Written Documents

Company C use different internal documents to perform internal work. Mostly, access to necessary documents has been available during the study. Therefore, the documents have contributed to the understanding on how the values-work is being performed. However, not all documents were accessible for us with respect to personal privacy, such as the consultants’ individual development plans. Due to this privacy issue, documents were interpreted and compared to data gathered from interviews and observations.
4 Empirics and Analysis

In this chapter the findings from the empirical data will be analyzed. The data includes field notes from observations (found in Appendix C), documents from Company C (Appendix D), and interviews with employees from Company C (Appendix B). Finally, the findings are used to analyze what barriers and enablers exist in growing consultant firms.

From previous research, communication, leadership and recruitment have been identified as important areas to consider when working with company values. The findings identified within these areas, when working with company values in growing consulting firms, are presented in this section. Furthermore, additional findings for growing consulting firms have been identified. The additional findings are: the importance of concretize the company values and the importance to have follow-up on values-alignment. Barriers and enablers within these areas are also presented and analyzed.

4.1 Barriers and Enablers within Leadership

Leadership is a broad concept, present in many situations and in organizations. Leadership can be a challenging task but thus important for influencing individuals and managing change. Leadership is therefore a crucial aspect to consider when working with and implementing company values.

How Introduction of New Managers Affects the Company

The growth of a company in terms of an increased number of employees is a factor that affects the organizational structure and the roles needed within the company. Several employees at Company C share this belief. At Company C, three section managers and a financial accountant were introduced as the organization grew bigger. It is understood from several interviews that the introduction of new positions and a shared responsibility between leaders have had a positive impact on the organization. Before Company C introduced these managers, and only had the CEO as manager, one consultant experienced a successive decrease of focus on the individuals as the workload escalated for the CEO.

"Before, I had checkups with the CEO. But as the company grew, more focus was put on other things, rather than me as a consultant. After the introduction of new section managers there is more focus on me and on follow-up."

Consultant at Company C
This comment indicates that the introduction of new managers was a positive change for the company. Furthermore, another consultant said that with a shared responsibility, it is easier for the managers to focus on their own consultants and the consultant’s personal development. In addition, one manager claims that the reconstruction to three groups of consultants with one section manager respectively has made it easier to go back to the familiar feeling, which is important for Company C. Moreover, another consultant means that with the introduction of section managers more things started to happen, whereas before it was hard to influence the organization and get your thoughts and ideas through to the management. On the other hand, these comments only emphasize how the introduction of new managers improve follow-up and the focus on the individuals. It does not imply all aspects within leadership are improved, such as how well the new managers live the company values. However, from the interviews we understand that the structural change with more managers was a positive aspect, seen from the consultants view on how much focus and support they get. Despite the consultants’ view, one of the managers claims that the ability to involve employees has decreased with the increased number of employees. We believe this tells us something about what happens at a company during a growth process. A decreased focus on the individual is the result of a company that is growing fast and hiring many new people. The conclusion may be obvious, that an increased number of employees increase the workload and the amount of responsibility, but the interesting question is how the company is affected by the growth. Having the same amount of management positions as the company grows, create less focus on every employee and on the work tasks. Therefore, new positions are needed.

Even tough the employees at Company C experienced the introduction of the section managers as an improvement, many employees seem to agree that the focus on values has decreased. Several consultants agree that the CEO acts as a role model and live the company values, but not many consultants agree that their closest manager is aligned with the values. One consultant claims that the CEO is driven and acts as a role model for how people within the organization should behave. Furthermore, one of the managers expresses a feeling that the CEO has a great passion for the company. In addition, it has been observed that the CEO continuously shows his enthusiasm and shows that the company values are important by supporting others to live according to the company values. One example is a post from the CEO on Company C’s internal network saying:

“What is your passion? Express it! That’s where it starts”

CEO at Company C

It is clear that the CEO at Company C encourage the employees to express their passion, as seen from the comment above. However, it can be questioned if this is a good way to do it. It might not be clear to everyone what is meant by this comment. What does the CEO mean with Passion? How should I as an employee express it? Even though the comment is meant as an encouragement it might be confusing for employees if it is not clear what passion means and what it means to express it.
We believe that the introduction of new positions had a positive impact on the organization and that it was necessary for the company to grow. However, new people at leadership positions increase the amount of people who must act as role models when it comes to living the company values. Therefore, effort has to be put into engaging the new managers and make sure they are values-aligned. Because, one of the most important aspects when working with values is for the leaders to model the way (Kouzes and Posner 2007; Frost 2014; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003).

How the Leaders’ Values-Alignment Affect the Employees

With new managers, comes new relationships, and new people to relate to. Several consultants have expressed a doubtfulness about if their manager is working in alignment with the company values. One consultant mentioned a situation where he/she believed the value Honest Relations was not lived by his/hers manager. The consultant was at one time promised a new assignment, but when the consultant started working within the project the assignment did not match the expectation from what the consultant was promised from the beginning. He got a feeling of dishonesty from his manager about what the assignment was really about. Another consultant expressed a lack of follow-up from his manager after having a discussion about something that the manager promised to do. Not following-up as promised can be interpreted as not being aligning with the company values because being honest in what you promise could be connected to the value Honest Relations. Due to these statements and situations, we argue that when Company C grew and the CEO decided to introduce new positions and let new managers lead employees, the ability to lead in a values-aligned way decreased. On the other hand, these situations does not have to mean the managers are not values-aligned, but it can rather be a question of what the values really mean for different people. For example, if keeping your promises and being transparent in your communication is not connected to the value Honest Relations, this act does not define to what degree a person is values-aligned. Either way, being aligned with the company values as a leader is crucial for creating the desired culture (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Frost 2014). As Rosenthal (2003) explains, the leaders must demonstrate visibly the shared values. If the leaders do not demonstrate and live the values themselves, the values will not take hold, or in worst case, cause distrust. We therefore argue that having leaders not living the values is a barrier for working with an organization’s values.

However, we believe that the real problem for Company C might be the different interpretations of what their values mean. Regardless of how employees personally interpret the company values and how aware they are of what they mean we have seen that all individuals do not work aligned with the company values as they are interpreted today. We, together with some employees at Company C, agree with previous researchers that managers must model the way by living the company values themselves (Kouzes and Posner 2007; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Frost 2014). As one of the managers mentions:

“We must start with the management team and then spread it forward.”

Manager at Company C
We believe this manager think it is the management’s duty to make sure the values are anchored within the management team before the values are spread and communicated to the rest of the company. This aligns with what research say about involving people at leadership positions when starting the work with values (Lencioni 2002).

**How Concretization Creates a Common Understanding of the Company Values**

Having unclear definitions of a company’s values creates possibilities for individual interpretations. During the interviews, all employees were asked to tell us about and explain the meaning of Company C’s values, such as what is expected of you as an employee. The result of how well employees know what the company values were compared to the employees’ understanding of what the values mean. Not all employees could mention all of the company values and even fewer could define the values and explain the meaning of them. Most consultants and managers could mention the value *Passion*, while the other two values *Honest Relation* and *Be the Best* was only known by a few. These are comments from consultants:

“One of the values is passion, then it is the will to be the best and then we have a third, which I never remember.”

Consultant at Company C

“As far as I know Company C respects your passion, and they want you to work with something that you really like.”

Consultant at Company C

Both of these comments indicates that the consultants do not know all of Company C’s values. Both seem to agree that passion is one of the values while the other values are not as clear. This is the case for many consultants, most of them know about the value *Passion*, but can only mention one of the other two. On the other hand, these consultants’ knowledge about the values might be the result of how long they have been working at the company. For example, all managers and some consultants knew all the company values.

Despite the fact that many employees can mention the values, they seem difficult to explain by both managers and consultants. The values are vague and it is not obvious what the values mean. For example, one of the consultants expresses himself/herself as:

“It is hard to know what is meant by the word *Passion*. It is a good intention to have it as a value but it is not clear what the definition is.”

Consultant at Company C

Furthermore, one of the managers is also confused about the meaning of the value *Passion*. The manager seems to know there is ambiguity about the word and knows there might be personal interpretations of it.
“About passion. I believe there is ambiguity about what the value mean. Is it my personal passion or is it my professional passion? For me it is absolutely my professional passion, but it is not really specified within the company.”

Manager at Company C

Both the consultant’s and the manager’s comments indicates ambiguity about the value Passion. The consultant believe in the value but cannot explain what it means and the manager is not sure of the meaning either but has a clear view of what it means for him/her. Besides, the manager also explains that there are no specified definitions of the values, which might be the reason for the ambiguity. As for the other two values, the confusion was not as apparent during interviews. Some employees could mention the other two values, of which most of them only knew one of them. Moreover, many employees expressed confusion about the meaning of the other two values as well.

A conclusion drawn from interviews and these comments is that Passion is the value most known among employees, but the hardest to define and explain the meaning of. The reason for this could be either that Company C thinks Passion is the most important value, or it can be the result of what value is communicated the most. This indicates that there are no common understanding of what the values mean exactly. On the other had, just because no definition could be given by some consultant it does not mean they have different interpretation of the value’s meaning as the management and the company in general. Many employees might have similar definitions of the values, but as long as the values are not defined they will be hard to communicate in the right way.

Due to the lack of awareness of what the company values are and what they mean we argue that it is impossible to evaluate the employees’ values-alignment. Moreover, it is difficult to model the way and communicate the values in the right way. At the moment, an evaluation of the values would depend on every individual’s understanding of what the company values mean. The fact that all of the company values are not well known within the organization and the ambiguity of what Passion, Honest Relations and Be the Best mean affect every employee’s perception of how well their other colleagues are values-aligned. Furthermore, we think the awareness of what behaviors are connected to the company values affect employees possibility to align with the company values themselves. Because if you do not understand the meaning of a value it is hard to know what is expected of you. We think the unawareness of the company values and what they mean is the main reason of why the management team at Company C is not always perceived to be aligned with the company values. What we think is of interest, and what is explained in literature is the importance to concretize the company values. The values must be connected to measurable behaviors to make it easier for employees to works towards a values-aligned state (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Lencioni 2002).

Identified Barriers and Enablers within Leadership

Our conclusion regarding the aspect of leadership when working with company values is that the managers’ ability for living the values are affected by two factors. First, company growth and introduction of new managers affect the organizational
structure and who’s responsibility it is to spread the company values. Therefore, we want to stress the importance of being aware of how to handle organizational growth and how to develop an organization during growth. This is in line with what previous research says, that it is of importance to be aware of when an organization is transitioning through different growth stages to be able to handle the change that growth implies (Shimasaki 2014). Secondly, we want to emphasize that the managers’ ability for living the values are affected by the understanding of what the values mean. Which is a factor that many previous researchers mean is important. Company values must be clarified and connected to measurable behaviors so that it is clear how the employees should act to become values-aligned (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003; Lencioni 2002).

4.2 Barriers and Enablers within Communication

When working with company values communication is a central part. Words need to be interpreted in the same way and thus the communication needs to be clear and efficient.

How Lack of Structure Affects the Communication of the Company Values

Communication within an organization can be performed by different means of communication. As mentioned in section 2.2.3 the means of communication included within the term communication in this research are form of communication and medium of communication. This implies that one or several means of communication, such as speaking, writing, or presenting visually, can be used respectively or combined to communicate (Dimbleby and Burton 1998).

Our interpretation is that it is not clear for employees at Company C what means of communication should be used to communicate the company values. One manager said that there is no "by the book" of how to communicate the company values. This is in line with what the CEO explained, that there is no specified way of how the company values should be communicated. The CEO continues to explain that it is included in the manager’s job description to encourage consultants who express what they are passionate about. Furthermore, the CEO said that it should be more concretized how this should be done. We believe these statements tell us that the management team at Company C do not perceive that it is clearly stated how the company values should be communicated. Neither is there a concretized way of how to communicate. However, we believe this does not imply that individuals within Company C do not communicate the company values. It is just not clear how the values should be communicated. However, the managers seem to agree that it is their responsibility to communicate.

“It is my responsibility to communicate the company values.”

Manager at Company C

Our understanding is that the manager believes that it is every manager’s responsibility to communicate the company values. We believe this can be connected to what
the CEO expressed, that it is included in the manager’s job description to encourage consultants who express their passion. Since *Passion* is one of Company C’s values, this implies that the CEO’s expression means that it is included in the manager’s job description to encourage consultants who acts in line with the value *Passion*. Therefore, we interpret that both the manager and the CEO believe it is each individual’s responsibility to communicate the company values, regardless if there is a specific way of how to communicate the company values or not. We believe Company C does not have a structured and collective way of how to communicate the company values. How the company values are communicated is instead the responsibility of each individual. Which could lead to inconsistency in communication and inconsistency in treatment of consultants.

Furthermore, a lack of structure of how to manage values-work and communication makes it hard for newly introduced managers to work with the company values in an easy way. Therefore, not having a structure of how to work with values is a barrier for growing firms who must introduce new positions. With a structure the growth process could be easier and new managers could easier adapt to their job assignments.

**Communication Channels for Communicating Company Values**

Within Company C, several communication channels are used to communicate the company values. One manager mentioned several forums and occasions, in which the company values are regularly communicated. For example, during the recruitment process, at internal meetings and gatherings, and on the company website. However, the most common view of how the company values are communicated is that they are communicated by storytelling through Company C’s internal network, Google Plus. On Google Plus stories are told about what individuals have achieved and performed in relation to what their interests are and what they are passionate about, which is related to one of Company C’s values. During our observations we have identified several communication channels where the company values are communicated. As multiple employees confirm, we have observed that the company values are mostly communicated through Google Plus where colleagues or managers share stories about themselves or others, which are related to the company values. When a consultant tell a story connected to the company values it is acknowledged by the managers, to highlight the essence of working in line with the values. An example of an acknowledgement made by a manager is a comment from the CEO made on a post where a consultant told a story about one of his passions.

“You’re an amazing colleague, Christoffer! Living our values in such way that I sometimes think they are yours.”

The CEO at Company C

This comment from the CEO is very encouraging. It creates a clear message of what type of behavior is desired at Company C and it encourage other employees to behave accordingly. On the other hand, this comment does not say how an employee should managed to express their passion. It might be unclear if it is the consultants personal responsibility or if there is any help provided for those who have a passion they want to express.
Furthermore, during interviews we were told stories about employees at Company C who communicated the company values by sharing their passion with one of the company’s client. One consultant was passionate about running and therefore started a running community at the client’s office. The client’s employees started to join the running community and associate Company C with "the guy who runs". Through the running community the value Passion was communicated and associated to Company C. We believe that this act communicated that consultants who work at Company C live their passion, which is aligned with Company C’s values.

Moreover, we have observed that the company values are communicated through a number of different channels, such as during the recruitment process, through social activities arranged by employees, and at informal and formal gatherings such as the Christmas party. From our observations and from interviews with employees at Company C it was identified that Company C’s values are communicated through:

- The recruitment process
- Social activities
- The company website
- Consultants who shares their passion
- Internal meetings
- Formal and informal gatherings
- Company C’s internal network, Google Plus

Several communication channels were identified but there are still different ideas about where the company values are communicated. We believe it varies on an individual level where and how the company values are preferably communicated. Hence, different managers most probably communicate the company values to employees differently. For example, one manager said:

“The values are communicated mostly through Google Plus. Other than that, I do not believe there is much focus on communicating the values. ”

Manager at Company C

On the other hand, another manager mentioned several forums and occasions, in which the company values were regularly communicated. For example, during the recruitment process, on internal meetings and on the company website. Therefore, the way of communication depends on who an individual has contact with, for example who their closest manager is. To make sure the values are communicate to all employees we suggest the communication channels should be used in a structured way. To secure that the company values are included in the daily interaction with employees. Which is consistent with what previous research highlights of the importance to include the company values in the daily interactions with employees (Kouzes and Posner 2007).
On the other hand, we have observed that employees at Company C have limited daily interaction with colleagues and managers because the consultants are positioned at the client’s office. Therefore, we could argue that there is a decreased possibility for individuals at consulting firms to daily interact with each other. However, we do not believe that the limited daily face-to-face interactions decrease the possibility to communicate the company values. There are still several alternative communication channels that can be used to make sure employees are aware of the company values. Instead, we believe that the main challenge is to create a structure for how the company values should be communicated in a growing consulting firm like Company C.

**How Ambiguity of What the Company Values Mean Affects the Communication**

Personal interpretations of what the company values mean affects the communication of the values. To achieve successful communication a common understanding of the meaning of words, concepts and ideas must be created (Fielding 2006). If two individuals understand a word differently the message will most probably be interpreted differently by the two people communicating, the receiver and the sender. Company values often consist of words or phrases that can be interpreted in different ways. Not all interviewees at Company C could mention the company values, neither could everyone explain the meaning of them. Ambiguity about what words, as company values, mean, make successful communication hard to achieve (Fielding 2006). To illustrate how different interpretation of words can affect the communication process we have made a case where the value *Passion* is communicated in a specific context, such as between colleagues at Company C. If the sender, illustrated to the left in Figure 4.1, asks a colleague *What are you passionate about?*, the answer depends on how the colleague, the receiver, interprets the word *passion*. The answer will be based on the receiver’s interpretation of the word. If there is a shared opinion of what the word means, the possibility of the message being interpreted as intended by the sender is increased. However, lets say in this case, the receiver believes *Passion* implies personal passion and therefore answers *I am passionate about food!* The original sender, on the other hand, referred to passion as the colleagues professional passion. The sender coded what he/she wanted to say into the message *passion* and the receiver decoded the message *passion* into his/her own interpretation.
The dilemma here is what the sender communicated is not what the receiver interpreted, which leads to difficulties in communication. If a common view of what passion stands for, professional passion, private passion or both, had existed it is more likely that the communication would have been successful. This example is, as mentioned, not based on a true story. It was made up simply to illustrate the importance of a shared view of what words mean to achieve successful communication. However, we believe that this is a problem experienced at Company C. Some consultants and managers express a confusion of what the values really mean.

"The company values are quite vague and it is not clear what they mean. Like passion or honest relations, what does it really mean?"

Consultant at Company C

Comments like this have been told during interviews at Company C, which confirms that not everyone understand the meaning of the values. On the other hand, some employees seem to be sure what some of the values mean, which implies ambiguity does not have to be the case for everyone in the organization. However, even though some employees know the meaning of the values the ambiguity of the values in the rest of the organization creates barriers for the company when working with, and communicating the values.

An important aspect for achieving successful communication is to create a common interpretation of the meaning of words, concepts and ideas (Fielding 2006). Therefore, it is important to translate company values into behaviors (Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). We claim that company values should be translated into behavior to make sure there is a common view of what they mean. Besides, we believe behaviors are easier to interpret and thereby easier to communicate.

**Communication of Company Values Could Harm the Organization**

Communication can both enable and harm an organization. Being informed about the company values and the meaning of them is necessary to communicate the company values. Otherwise, the communication of the company values can harm an organization and poison the company culture if it is not done properly (Frost 2014;
Lencioni 2002). In our research we identified situations where a value that has been communicated was not reflected within the organization. For one consultant the value *Be Best* was communicated early in the employment. The consultants related the value *Be Best* to having access to the needed knowledge. When starting the employment at Company C knowledge and education could be obtained by senior consultants within the company. When the consultant desired more knowledge it could not be given to him/her. This was not in line with what the consultants expected from the value of being the best, which resulted in dissatisfaction. Today, this dissatisfaction has decreased since Company C introduced an internal educational platform for consultants. This platform helps Company C fulfill the consultant’s belief of what the value *Be Best* means. The reason this example is highlighted is not to claim Company C’s values were not reflected within the organization before. We rather want to emphasize that the communication of company values can harm an organization if not done in a good way. Our point is that we believe that if the behavior in the organization would have reflected the values better, dissatisfaction could have been avoided. Values should not be used as a selling strategy during a recruitment process since it can create misleading expectation on the company. Kouzes and Posner (2007) highlights that talking about the common values is not enough. Leaders’ actions and behaviors are more important than their words when showing how serious the leaders are about what is said. Words must be consistent with behaviors. This is done by living the values trough daily actions and setting the example of how things should be done (Kouzes and Posner 2007). We believe this should be embraced even during the recruitment process. Therefore, we argue that the values should mainly communicate themselves through behaviors seen in the organization rather than being orally communicated.

There are other cases where a communicated value was not reflected within the organization. Some consultants expressed a feeling that Company C did not live up to the promises they had made. This creates an impression of dishonest relations, which could be discussed as if not being aligned with the value *Honest Relations*. One consultant expressed an interest for working in a specific field. The consultant was offered a position within this field at one of Company C’s clients. After starting the assignment the consultant realized the position was not ready yet, which meant the consultant had to work with other tasks while waiting to start working within his/her field of interest. The consultant said:

“Company C could have been more open to me about what was going on at the company and with my assignment. Sometimes information appeared afterwards.”

Consultant at Company C

We argue that this kind of behavior can make consultants question the honesty of the management at Company C. The organization can be harmed if the values are communicated but not always lived. On the other hand, another consultant expressed a satisfaction of how the company helped him/her find a position within the consultant’s area of interest. Company C works with a personal development tool to help the consultants reach their professional goals together with their manager. Our interpretation of the situation at Company C is that there is a clear structure of how to
help the consultants reach their professional goals. However, when there are obstacles in finding the right assignments the openness and honesty is being challenged. Therefore, we believe that the expectation of the communicated value *Honest Relations* is not always fully met, which has sometimes harmed the organization. The argumentation is based on just one example when the value *Honest Relations* is not lived. But we still believe the example is important, because even if the company value *Honest Relations* is lived in almost all situations the few situation when it is not it may harm the organization.

We have noticed the importance to translate the company values into behaviors before communicating them, to make sure there is a common view within the organization of what the company values mean. Moreover, the communicated values should be fully lived and embrace within the organization to ensure the communicated values do not harm the organization. Because it is important that the company values are communicated the right way (Frost 2014; Lencioni 2002).

**Identified Barriers and Enablers within Communication**

To conclude, there are two barriers within communication when working with values in growing consulting firms. First of all, the challenge is to know how and what to communicate. This implies to have a structure of how to communicate the company values as well as to make sure the communication of the company values do not harm the organization. Secondly, ambiguity of what the company values mean can affect the result of the communication. Therefore, before communicating the company values they should be concretized and defined to make sure all individual within an organization are aware of what the values mean. This secures that the communicated value is interpreted by the receiver as correctly as possible.

### 4.3 Barriers and Enablers within Recruitment

When working with company values in growing firms the recruitment becomes a central part. When hiring many new people, there is an opportunity to recruit based on the company values. However, this could be a challenging task.

**The Values’ Role During Interviews**

When growing organically, hiring becomes a central activity in the organization. To remain a value driven organization, new employees need to share the company values. At Company C, the recruitment process focus mainly on personal qualities and personality. They search for people with a personal drive and passion. However, it is observed that not much focus is put into exploring the candidates’ personal values, which would be interesting to evaluate the fit with the company values. Even though the company values are discussed during interviews, values is a topic that is explained rather than asked about. Explaining the company values is a good way of clarifying the company culture, but it could also be misleading if the culture is not lived up to after the employment. Therefore, it can be discussed whether or not explaining the values and culture should be a part of the interview. We believe that it is good to explain the values but we think that more focus should be put into
figuring out how well the candidate’s personal values fit the organization. To focus on how well a candidate’s personal values fit with the company values is in line with what previous research highlights, that all individual must share and embrace the company values (Klein 2012; Kouzes and Posner 2007; Lencioni 2002). Another challenge for company C, ever since the introduction of new section managers, is that the recruitment interviews are made by different people. There is no structure for how to interview and therefore the interviews can deviate between the different people. However, it is our understanding that all managers seem to agree that the focus during recruitment is to find someone who fits in the company on a personal level. One of the managers explains that to find someone’s passion questions around that subject are asked.

“Usually we ask the candidates to describe their background and their life. Sometimes you notice that they have a specific interest. If not, you have to ask more questions and dig deeper, and focus on questions about the past and what the candidates enjoyed during their studies”

Manager at Company C

This way of trying to figure out someone’s passion seems pretty hands on. The difficult part might be to evaluate to what extent honest relations and being the best is important for a candidate. Not having a structured way of interviewing makes it hard to decide if the candidate shares the company values. We believe, to hire the right people and to avoid confirmation bias, a structured way of interviewing is preferable. Looking for specific traits of characters when interviewing leads to a recruitment of people who fit in the organization and share the company values. In contrast, not looking for specific traits of characters can lead to recruitment of people who do not fit in the organization. We believe Company C focus on these things during interviewing. Nevertheless, a structured interview could be beneficial to make sure the right people are hired (Smart and Street 2008). Trying to affect individuals who do not tend to share a company’s values, to start and share the values, is difficult, if even possible. Therefore, individuals who already tend to share the company values must be identified and brought into an organization (Collins and Porras 2004). For a growing consulting firms it is crucial to secure that new employees brought into an organization share the company values. This becomes even more important when a company is growing rapidly.

Finding the Right Individuals for the Organization

Finding the right individuals for an organization could be a challenging task. It is a balance between how well the person share the company values and how good a person’s performance is. At Company C, it is our understanding that knowledge is important when recruiting since they are a technology based company. However, the managers say that a good fit with the company values is as important. Previous research highlights the importance that all individuals within an organization share and embrace the company values (Klein 2012; Kouzes and Posner 2007; Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). We agree with previous researchers’ belief that it is important for organizations to have employees who share the company values. The question is how it can be secured. Previous research indicates that
the recruitment process is an opportunity to find skilled candidates who share the company values (Lencioni 2002; Shimasaki 2014). We agree with Lencioni (2002) and Shimasaki (2014) and believe that if only individuals who share the company values are brought into an organization, the organization will only consist of employees who share the company values. Growing organizations, such as Company C, are constantly hiring new employees. From 2017 to 2018 Company C plans to expand from 40 employees to 70-80 employees. Thereby, they have the opportunity to bring already values-aligned individuals into the organization.

Creating a Good Introduction Program

When starting a new employment many companies have an introduction process to introduce the new employee to the organization. At Company C, the introduction consists of a one hour meeting talking about the company, how assignments work and how the company works to live in accordance with the company values. After the introduction the consultant is personally responsible for preparing for future assignments. An introduction process could open up for the possibility to discuss the company values in more detail to make sure all new employees understand what is expected of them. One consultant claims that not much focus is put on explaining the company values and the desired culture. We get the impression that the company values are not a big part of the introduction process, since the newly employed consultants cannot remember there being a focus on values. Furthermore, this is confirmed by the fact that no one of the newly recruited employees that were interviewed could name all three values. Everyone could mention the value Passion but only one of them described the values further and mentioned words that could be connected to the value Honest Relations. One could argue that newly recruitments do not need to know the company values because they will understand the culture when they have been in the organization for a while. On the other hand, it is arguable that the culture and the values should be shown early after the new consultants start working. Furthermore, to spread the culture to newly recruitments a more extensive introduction process might be needed.

Identified Barriers and Enablers within Recruitment

Our conclusion regarding the recruitment process’ part in a company’s values-work is that even though it is a challenging task, a growing company has great possibilities to recruit new people who already share the company values. Therefore, we believe that Company C needs to find a structure for how to secure that the right individuals are hired. Partly, to sustain the company culture, but also to prevent people from leaving the organization. Furthermore, a more extensive introduction process might be a good way to introduce what the company values are and what behaviors that are encouraged.

4.4 Additional Barriers and Enablers

Besides the findings within leadership, communication and recruitment, additional barriers and enablers were identified when working with company values in growing consulting firms. Such as: prioritizing values-work, having a geographical
distance between employees, lacking follow-up on values-alignment, lacking approaches for managing values-work, and how to use internal resources.

The Importance to Manage and Prioritize Values-Work During Company Growth

When a company is growing organically and the number of employees increase, the number of personalities and opinions in the organization increase too. Both management and consultants at Company C have experienced that it is hard to get everyone involved and work towards the same direction when the company is growing. Furthermore, the CEO explains that when the company was smaller the values were expressed to a greater extent than they are now, after Company C grew bigger. When more people get involved it becomes harder to work with the company values and make sure everyone is aligned with them. We believe this indicates that more time needs to be spent on working with company values. If an organization really wants to become values-aligned the values-work needs to be prioritized.

As previous research highlights, it is importance to include the company values in the daily interactions with employees (Kouzes and Posner 2007). The management team at Company C put effort in focusing on working with the values. For instance, they hired us to help them evaluate approaches on how to work with the company values. This explanation was given on their internal network Google Plus:

“As we are currently focusing a great deal on our values, and how to be clear in our communication about them with you, we have given Johanna and Frida the opportunity to do their master thesis at Company C. They will focus on our continuous work with our values by developing a structure and guidelines on how to actively make sure we are aligned with them.”

Manager at Company C

Even though Company C intend to put effort into improving their values-work it is not prioritized enough. At the beginning of this project we got the impression that the management team would work simultaneously with defining and concretizing the company values, which is something that has not been done yet. Managers at Company C say the increased number of employees has decreased the amount of time spent on the work with company values. Even though the the values-work is said to be something Company C focuses on we believe that there is not enough effort put into it. We get the impression the CEO wants to work on the values without external help, which is something we believe should be considered, especially when concretizing the values. Not considering external help could be a sign of not prioritizing the values-work, which is needed if improvements are to be made. In conclusion, managing an increased number of employees in a good way is an aspect to consider to make sure organizations have the ability to go through growth without risking to loose their values-driven organization (Shimasaki 2014). Furthermore, if the values-work is going to be improved it needs to be prioritized.

Deciding Who Should Formulate Company Values

Not being part of formulating the company values can create a feeling of exclusiveness and a lack of engagement. Company C’s values have been the same since the creation of the company and there is no current plan of changing them in the
nearest future according to the CEO. To not have been involved in the process of formulating and identifying a company’s values can create a feeling of decreased engagement says one of the managers. Therefore, it could be argued that all employees should be engaged and be given the chance to review the values and the meaning of them. By opening up for all employees to participate in defining the values we believe a possibility to be engaged is created. Employees should be engaged in the process of defining the company values to reach a broader consensus about the values within the company (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). However, we have interpreted that engaging all employees in defining and formulating values can create confusedness. The CEO at Company C says that sharing documents that are under construction might make the employees confused when the documents are reconstructed later on. Furthermore, previous research claims that only the executives should be part of defining the company values (Lencioni 2002; Schein 2010). Lencioni (2002) argues that implementing values is about creating a set of fundamental beliefs on a group of people. Even though it is good to engage employees it is not favorable to gather input from employees and build consensus when it comes to defining company values. This is a bad idea because it integrates suggestions from employees who might not belong in the company, and it creates a false impression that all input is equally valuable (Lencioni 2002). Moreover, Schein (2010) argues that only the people involved with solving business problems should be the ones defining the company values. We agree with these researchers’ theory and believe that when working with values, the leaders within the organization should be committed first, to manage acting as models for the rest of the organization. A following challenge is therefore to make the rest of the organization understand and feel committed to the values.

How Geographical Distance Affects the Values-Work

At a consulting firm where most consultants are stationed at clients the daily communication with colleagues becomes limited. At Company C, one of the managers feels like there is an understanding about how to work in alignment with the values at the office, but the same understanding is hard to mediate to the consultants positioned at clients. To create cohesion around the values within the company social activities are organized, where all employees gather and do an activity together. Company C is a Stockholm based company with most consultants positioned there. Therefore, the social activities take place in Stockholm. Some consultants are positioned in other geographic areas and have therefore limited possibility to participate in these activities. The limited possibility to participate in arranged activities affect the personal connection to the company and the company values, since these individuals do not meet their co-workers as often. However, many consultants do not see the geographical distance as a problem, but rather express a feeling of being part of the culture at Company C, even though they have to adapt to the culture at the client as well.

“It feels like I am a part of both the client’s and Company C’s values.”

Consultant at Company C
We believe that the monthly activities, after-works and other arranged activities as the yearly ski-trip are great contributors for creating cohesiveness within Company C, since employees get the chance to come together and meet their co-workers.

"Company C arrange after-works and other activities. As consultant you are not always close to your co-workers. Therefore, it is great with arranged activities."

Consultant at Company C

Many consultants feel like a part of the company culture, but there seems to be ambiguity about what the values mean. Therefore, we believe Company C needs to be clear about the values and what the desired behaviors are. We believe the geographical distance could be a problem for creating cohesion about the company values and creating a common culture in growing consulting firms. However, Company C has managed to create a cohesiveness within the company by continuously arranging after-works and other activities. However, these activities do not have the direct aim to create a common understanding of what the values mean, even though this might be a result if the company becomes values-aligned.

Follow-Up on the Individuals’ and the Organizations’ Values-Alignment

Follow-up on employees can be made through surveys, to evaluate the employees and the company. At Company C, follow-up work is done through a yearly employee survey, which includes questions on how well the employees are satisfied with their work and with Company C as their employer. Parts of the survey focus on questions regarding the company values. Moreover, there are questions about how well the employees are satisfied with the company and their assignments. In addition to the employee survey, an evaluation of the consultants is made every year, by the section managers together with the consultants manager at the client. The section managers meet with the consultants manager at the client and evaluate the work of the consultants to see that everyone performs and delivers as expected. Additional follow-up is made with the help of a Personal Development Plan (PDP), which the consultants develop together with their manager. The PDP helps the consultant to set goals for his/hers professional life. We interpret the PDP to be connected to Company C’s values Passion and Be the Best because it helps the consultant both to work towards their passion and to develop themselves within their profession to be the best. Despite these follow-up systems, many consultants and managers at Company C agree that there is no systematic follow-up related to the company values. A consultant expressed that:

"No follow-up is made on values, maybe during the salary discussion. Within the salary discussion it is included how well you work aligned with the values. This is quite subjective, since it is based on your managers feeling about how each individual is living the values."

Consultant at Company C

We believe this implies that the consultant interprets that no regularly follow-up on if you are values-aligned exist, but still, the values-alignment is used to motivate employees paychecks in the salary discussion. Previous research highlights
Chapter 4. Empirics and Analysis

that an organizations values should be integrated into every employee related process (Lencioni 2002), such as salary discussion and goals formulation. Employees at Company C perceive that no systematical follow-up is used to measure values-alignment. However, we believe that values-alignment to some extent is measured within the PDP, where each consultant has the opportunity to formulate professional goals and make a plan of how to reach the defined goals. As previous research, we believe that the values should be integrated into every employee related process. Therefore, we believe it is great that Company C has included the values within the salary discussion. However, the values should be integrated into every process. Therefore, we argue that additional integration of the values needs to be made. A step in right direction is to introduce follow-up on values-alignment, to make sure the company and its employees are values-aligned. If the values are integrated into every employee related process we believe it is easier for the management team to motivate individuals paychecks during salary discussion based on values-alignment without risking that employees feel that the assessment of values-alignment is based on each managers’ personal perception. Furthermore, we embrace previous research saying that values-work is an steady ongoing process that needs to be constantly overseen (Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). By follow-up on values-alignment it can be identified what is working well and where there is potential for improvement.

Approaches for how to Manage Values-Work

Literature provides different approaches and guidelines for how to work with company values. However, the management at Company C agree that there is no strategy for how to work with values in their daily work. Without guidelines we believe it is difficult for the leaders to manage the values-work in a similar manner. Moreover, follow-up is hard to make if there are no specifications for how the values-work should be made. For example, when it comes to recruitment, we have understood that there is no specific guide for how to evaluate a potential candidate or compare candidates against each other. Besides, both managers and consultants made us understand that there is no guide for how to provide feedback that are connected to the company values. Furthermore, no approach for how to improve leadership is provided. Despite the lack of structure and guidelines at Company C for how to work with company values our impression is that the values are spread and communicated at the company. This is shown at the internal network where managers encourage employees who has acted in accordance with the values.

“Consultant X is really a role model when it comes to expressing his passion in relation to other colleagues and towards the assignments he will have during his years at Company C.”

CEO at Company C

Even though our impression is that the values to some extend are being communicated, Company C needs a better structure for how to continue the values-work as the company is growing bigger. Lack of practical guidelines when working with company values make the work inconsistent and difficult to execute. Therefore, we
believe that to be able to continue the values-work during growth there is need for a clear structure for how to manage the company’s values-work.

**Use Resources within the Company to Secure Values-Alignment**

Having groups focusing on improvements is an opportunity that could help growing consulting firms working with values. Company C has an Improvement Group that consist of three consultants. These people are responsible for social activities, continues improvements and the education and courses that are needed for consultants to improve their skills. The group meet every month together with other consultants who want to join and talk about the organization. The group also have meetings every second month with the management team at Company C to talk about possible improvements and about the company values. An example of positive impact from the Improvement Group at Company C is that the group presented a list of 84 possible improvements for Company C. The list was presented for the management team and helped Company C to become more values-aligned. For example, one of Company C’s company values is *Be the Best*. The consultants agreed upon that education would help them to *Be the Best*. The only opportunity to educate yourself as a consultant was from senior consultants or web-based courses provided by Company C. When the list was presented to the management team at Company C they started to create opportunities for consultants to educate themselves. Today, Company C has an internal Internet platform for education with assignments and courses available for all consultants. This means Company C is more values-aligned, which is a result from the possible improvements presented by the Improvement Group. Employees are an source to ideas and thoughts of how an organization can be improved. Suggestions and ideas from employees of how the organization can get better should therefore be seen as a possibility to develop and always be paid attention. Having an assigned group for working with development and improvement creates an opportunity to discuss how well the company and its employees are aligned with the company values. Furthermore it creates an opportunity for employees to express if the organization is not performing according to the values which also increase the organization’s possibility to be values-aligned.

**Identified Barriers and Enablers from Additional Findings**

Our conclusion regarding additional barriers is that there are both barriers and enablers when working with company values in growing consulting firms. Firstly, the geographical distance is a barrier that consulting firms must address to make the values-work feasible. Secondly, not having follow-up on values-work is a barrier for companies working with values. A third barrier is the lack of structure when managing values-work, which needs to be handled for improving the values-alignment. Lastly, an identified enabler when working with values is to use internal resources to improve the values-work.

**4.5 Result of the Empirical Findings**

The empirical findings contributed to the understanding of what barriers and enablers exist in growing consulting firms when working with company values. In
general, when working with values in all firms, there are obstacles to overcome for the values-work to run smoothly. In our analysis we identified these general barriers, but we also evaluated which of these are specific for growing consulting firms. Likewise, some of the enablers found in the empirical analysis were specific enablers for growing consulting firms.

4.5.1 Identified Barriers for Growing Consulting Firms when Working with Company Values

Within the three areas: Leadership, Communication, and Recruitment there are several barriers. In addition, more barriers were identified. Concluding, these are the identified barriers when working with company values:

- Having different understanding of what the company values mean
- Introduction of new managers
- Recruitment of new employees
- Geographical distance
- No structured way of how to manage values-work

Having different understandings of what the company values meaning is not just a barrier for growing consulting firms. This is a barrier that many companies experience and is therefore a crucial aspect to consider when working with company values. Likewise, a general barrier for most companies is the lack of structure for how the work with values should be done. Additional barriers that are more specific for growing firms is the recruitment of new people and the introduction of new positions, in particular introduction of new managers. Moreover, a specific barrier for consulting firms is the geographical distance between the employees.

4.5.2 Identified Enablers for Growing Consulting Firms when Working with Company Values

The enablers when working with company values in growing consulting firms are few, but still important for acknowledging an organization’s strengths. Theses are the three identified enablers:

- Recruiting the right people
- Introduction of new managers
- Use of internal resources

Being a growing company creates an opportunity to recruit many new people, and find people who fit into the organizational culture. This enabler is also general for most companies who recruit people, but it is even more important when an organization is growing fast. Another enabler, which in some ways is a barrier to, is the introduction of new managers in the company. It is an enabler because it creates a
good structure for the company and creates more time to focus on the consultants, rather than on organizational tasks. On the other hand, it is a barrier since the new managers, with leader roles, need to commit to the company values and act as role models. A general enabler for all companies is the use of internal resources to manage and improve values-work.

4.5.3 How Growing Consulting Firms Should Work with Company Values

With the theoretical foundation from previous research, the three areas of relevance to investigate in this research were: leadership, communication and recruitment. Our findings from the analysis of the empirical data from our study indicates that two more areas are critical to consider when working with company values: concretization, and follow-up. These two areas are no new findings, both have been discussed subjects in previous research, however not in a detailed way. When studying the real situation at a company we came to understand that these areas were crucial to overcome all the barriers.

The results of this study strengthen what many previous researches say are important when exercising values-work. However, the result of our study implies that the different focus areas are important in different stages of the values-work. Some barriers need to be handled before other barriers are addressed.

The barrier Having different understanding of what the company values mean is something that constrain all focus areas. When the values are unclear they can be interpreted in different ways, which leads to confusion. When it comes to leadership, not having clear values makes it hard to know what the desired behaviors are, which makes it difficult for leaders to model the way. Moreover, when communicating values it is also crucial to have a common understanding of the meaning of the values. Otherwise, expectations are created based on the individuals understanding of the values, which could lead to dissatisfaction that could harm the company. Furthermore, when hiring new people, it is important to recruit someone who shares the company values. If there is no consensus of what the values mean the recruitment becomes difficult. Lastly, when evaluating the company’s and the employees’ values-alignment the values must be connected to measurable behaviors for the evaluation to be feasible. Because of these obstacles in all the focus areas, the first area that should be considered when working with company values is Concretization. Which means to concretize the values and translate them into measurable and concrete behaviors.

After having concretized the company values it is essential to create cohesion around the values within the leadership team. The leaders in an organization are the first to work on becoming values-aligned. This must be done before the concretized values are communicated, before the values are used as a selling-aspect during interviews, and before any follow-up is made on employees. We believe in the saying "People don’t do as you say, people do as you do". Therefore, the values-work should begin within the management team. They should create a shared understanding of what
the company values mean and create a structure for how the values-work should be performed within the organization. Furthermore, by starting the values-work in the management team we believe the barriers introduction of new managers and no structured way of how to handle values-work can be eliminated. By, in an early stage eliminating the barrier no structured way of how to handle values-work, better circumstances to perform values-work within all of the remaining areas is created. Because of that, and because it is important to model the way as a leader, Leadership should be considered in an early stage when performing values-work, after the values have been concretized.

The remaining barriers Recruitment of new employees and Geographical distance are obstacles experienced in the daily work. Likewise, the remaining focus areas Communication, Recruitment, and Follow-up are areas that need to be considered continuously. Therefore, after the concretization of the values and after the management team have worked on their leadership, the other areas can be implemented. The values can be communicated to the rest of the organization and continuously be communicated in the daily work. Furthermore, recruitment can start to focus on hiring employees who embrace the company values. Finally, through surveys and in the daily coaching the organization have to do follow-up on how the values-work is going.

To conclude, our findings point in the direction that values-work should start with the area Concretization, followed by Leadership. After these areas have been managed, the other areas can be implemented. The order of priority when working with company values is illustrated in Figure 4.2.
The area to concretize the company values is the only area that does not have to be considered continuously. All the other other areas have to be a part of the constant work in an organization. However, the concretization of values can be reviewed after some years if the company consider it to be necessary.
5 Discussion

This chapter includes a discussion of the findings to create an understanding of what could have affected the result of the study or what aspects could make the results less generalizable.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

Since the purpose of this study was to investigate how a growing consulting firm should work with company values, this section discusses the relevance and reliance on the barrier and enablers identified at the case study company. Moreover, the study will be evaluated and discussed to determine how applicable the study’s findings are for growing consulting firms in general.

5.1.1 Ambiguity of What the Company Values Mean

One main aspect and result in this thesis has been the act of concretizing values. It was found that an ambiguity of what the company values mean is a contributing factor to several barriers identified within multiple areas, such as leadership and communication. Therefore, it can be questioned how the ambiguity of what the company values mean has affected the findings of this study.

If the study had been performed within a company where all employees had a common view of what the company values meant, we believe that other barriers and enablers could have been identified. For example, we asked employees during interviews how well they believe their closest manager was living the company values. Since Company C has no clear definitions or behaviors connected to the values the interviewee’s answer to the question depends on to what extend the interviewee is aware of the company values as well as what the values mean for that individual. Therefore, it is possible that each individual’s answer on some questions was affected by the individual’s view of what the company values mean. Which, later on can have affected the findings of this study. Therefore, we want to clarify that the findings in this study, that are based on the collected empirical material from interviews, depends on each individuals interpretation of the company values. One possibility during the interviews could have been to explain the values in the interview, and based on that asked questions about if the consultants manager lived the values. By informing each interviewee about what the company values mean we would have made sure all interviewees would have answered the same questions with the same interpretations during interviews. On the other hand, if all interviewees had been informed about what the company values meant, we believe our possibility to capture the reality of the situation, how the values-work is performed
at Company C, had been limited. We believe the identified impact of the ambiguity of what the company values mean had not turned out as clearly if we would have explained the values during the interviews. Therefore, we do not believe one way to perform the study is more right than the other. However, we believe it is important to be aware of the choice not to inform interviewees about what the company values mean may have affected the findings of this study.

As a result, we believe there is reason to question whether the employees’ view of Company C’s values have limited this study. This study might only be valid for growing consulting firms where there is ambiguity of what the company values mean. On the other hand, the importance of translating the company values into behaviors and implementing them right is highlighted by previous research (Lencioni 2002; Rosenthal and Masarech 2003). Therefore, we believe that the impact of the ambiguity of what the company values mean is an interesting result that strengthen previous researches findings and highlights the importance to perform the values-work right from the beginning, to avoid future barriers. However, it is possible that other barriers and enablers exist and that was not discovered in this research.

5.1.2 Not all Organizations Introduce More Leadership Positions as a Result of Organizational Growth

One main focus through this thesis has been the importance of leadership when working with and spreading a company’s values and creating a desired culture. Through literature and analysis of the empirical material the leadership aspect when working with values turned out to be a crucial part. In particular, it is an aspect important to consider when new leaders are introduced in a company. The result suggest that all leaders must live the company values and model the way for other employees to understand the desired behaviors that are connected to the values. Moreover, the result implies that in a growing company new leadership positions are required to manage the growth. The understanding from interviews about Company C regarding leadership is that the introduction of new managers was a positive change. However, it also became a challenge since the new managers must work actively with the values and be values-aligned themselves.

The challenge of introducing new leaders is something that might be experienced by many growing firms. However, introducing new leader positions as a result of growth does not have to be the case in every company. It may be the traditional way of managing growth but not all organizations introduce new managers as the company grows. Some companies are influenced by a new way of structuring organizations and a new way of managing, which is described by Frederic Laloux’s in his research and book Reinventing Organizations. The suggested organizational structure described by Frederic Laloux is, in contrast to traditional organizations, based on less focus on hierarchical levels and more focus on self-management (Laloux 2014). Hence, companies who are inspired by this way of building organization do not necessary introduce new leaders positions as the company increase in number of employees. Therefore, it can be questioned whether or not the leadership is such a crucial aspect when working with company values as the findings in this study
implies. How to work with company values from a leadership perspective can be a question of how the organizational structure should look, rather than how leaders at all levels should live the shared values.

However, many organizations have leaders of some kind, who handle the executive tasks and communicate the vision of the company. Therefore, even though it can be questioned or not if new managers are needed as an organization grows, the leadership aspect has to be considered when working with values. Moreover, not all growing consulting firms have the same amount of leaders and the same amount of hierarchical levels, which also might affect the importance of leadership and whom to involve in a values-work. Regardless of the leaders importance, the organizational structure type should also be an aspect to discuss when creating a values-aligned organization.

5.1.3 Courage and Honesty during Interviews

How to communicate, and how communication affect the work with company values has been one of the main focuses in this thesis. The result from this study implies that the communication of the company values in some cases have harmed Company C. Through a few interviews it was understood that the desired values have not always reflected the organizational behavior. On the other hand, it may just be a result of not having behaviors connected to the values. The result therefore suggests that what is communicated has to be clear and consistent.

The view given by interviewees on how the managers communicate values through behavior varied. However, not many interviewees who thought their manager did not live in accordance with the values, gave specific examples of why and how. We believe, during interviews made by an external part, with someone that you do not know, the interviewees might think twice before sharing too much. It may be uncomfortable for some employees to answer question about their manager and the manager’s alignment with the company values. The fact the the interviewees were aware that their managers knew whom was being interviewed might have affected the willingness to be open during the interview as well. Some examples have been told, that implies that the implementation of the company values has harmed Company C. However, we believe there is a possibility that not all employees were comfortable to share information with us about the situation in the company. Therefore, it is possible that the result of the study has been limited of the individual’s courage and willingness to share sensitive information.

Despite the doubt about interviewees not sharing information, we think we were given an overview of the situation in the company. Even though all interviewees may not have shared an entirely truthful information, some employees did, which gave us a better understanding of some of the barriers in the company. For example, two of the interviewees shared specific stories of when they perceived the values not to be lived. Moreover, a combination of the view given from interviews and the general view given from spending time at the company we believe the study’s result is valid.
5.1.4 The Handling of Non Values-Aligned Employees

One of the findings from our study was the importance to recruit the right individuals who already share the company values. The result indicates that the values are not always lived in the organization and a way to ensure the values-alignment of the employees is to work with recruitment. Moreover, the result show that not living the organizational values can harm the company and make people question how things are handled. The values must be clear and employees must be provided help and guidance in how to become values-aligned themselves. Simultaneously, as an organization grows, new people must be hired, which is a great opportunity for hiring the right people from the beginning.

However, even though new recruitments share the company values, a remaining question is how to handle those in the organization who does not live in accordance to the company values. According to Lencioni (2002), one of the aspects of securing having values-aligned individuals in the organization is to know when it is time to let someone go. This is an aspect not discussed in this study. Nevertheless, an aspect important to consider when working with, and implementing company values. If an organization wants to become values-aligned everybody must be willing to adopt the new behaviors, in particular people at leadership positions.

Letting people go, or firing people, is a sensitive topic. In Sweden the possibility to fire people is regulated by the Swedish law. The Swedish law of protection of employment says that the employer must have a reasonable basis for firing someone. A reasonable basis implies job scarcity or misconduct such as; crimes, unauthorized absence, or refusal to work (Sveriges Riksdag 2017). Moreover, there are ethical and moral aspects to consider when letting people go, such as how to handle the employee during the process. These sort of aspects have not been considered in this study and the result therefore do not declare how such situations should be handled. Dismissing people who does not share the company values is an aspect to consider. However, it can be discussed if it is more important to secure that the right individuals are brought into an organization, to avoid having to deal with the ethical and moral issues of firing someone.

5.1.5 Follow-Up and Values Surveys

The result from the interviews showed a confusion around the values and a lack of follow-up on how well the consultants and managers are living the company values. Several employees at Company C had a difficulty to explain the company values, which in turn make the values hard to live. If there is no clearance of what the desired behaviors are, it is difficult for employees to work towards becoming values-aligned. Furthermore, if no feedback is given related to the values it is hard to improve your own behavior. Therefore, a values survey can help evaluate the employees to make it easier to determine what areas each individual need to work on.
On the other hand, a values survey does not necessarily have to secure a company’s values-alignment. A survey works as a tool for evaluating the company and its culture, but it is no guarantee to become a values-aligned company. It can be discussed if a survey is necessary at all and if the focus should be shifted to other aspects instead. Moreover, it cannot be secured that all employees fill out company surveys and it can thus be hard to draw conclusions on the results. Furthermore, there might be other, better, ways to evaluate a company’s values-alignment. For example, only having regular meetings with a manager, in which feedback is given on values-alignment.

However, given the results and the understanding given through interviews, we consider a survey to be a good option for Company C. To begin with, Company C already has a yearly survey, in which the new survey could fit. In addition, when being a company undergoing growth a survey could be a great tool for evaluating new employees and managers.

### 5.1.6 Influence of Unconscious Bias

Regarding all findings and results in this thesis, there is always a risk for unconscious bias to influence the result. Everybody has biases, conscious or unconscious. When doing this study our biases may have influenced the results and the analysis to some, if even minor, extent. To avoid biases we analyzed data from interviews by finding key words or expression and by gathering data together to evaluate results. Even though precautions have been made, there is a risk for bias to influence the result.
6 Conclusion

In this chapter the conclusion of the study will be presented based on the research question and the connected sub research questions. Further, this study’s contribution to knowledge will be presented, as well as suggestions for future studies.

6.1 Conclusion of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis was to evaluate and analyze how a growing consulting firm should work with company values based on such organization’s specific circumstances. Including the existing barriers and enablers a growing consulting firm experiences. To answer the purpose of the thesis the main research question was formulated:

How should a growing consulting firm work with company values?

To answer the main research question, two sub research questions were formulated from the main question. In the following section we present a conclusion of how the sub research questions were considered and what the main findings were. Afterwards, the main research questions is addressed and reviewed.

6.1.1 Sub Research Questions

Through secondary data and literature, three areas were identified as important to consider when working with values:

- The leaders’ role to model the values
- The importance of communicating values in a good way
- Finding individuals who share the company values

These areas were concluded into three focus areas for this study: leadership, communication and recruitment. With base in these three areas the study at Company C was performed. An interview guide was developed to perform interviews with employees at Company C, observations were made and internal documents were gathered. By analyzing the collected empirical material the two sub research questions could be answered.

The first sub research question was:

“What are the barriers for a growing consulting firm when working with company values?”
The result was five identified barriers. However, not all identified barriers exist as a result that an organization is a growing consulting firm. Some barriers are more general and their existents can not be connected to whether an organization is a growing company or having consultants work at clients. The five identified barriers are:

- Having different understanding of what the company values mean
- Introduction of new managers (Specific for growing companies)
- Recruitment of new employees (Specific for growing companies)
- Geographical distance (Specific for consulting companies)
- No structured way of how to manage values-work

The first barrier is the problem of having different understandings and perceptions of what the company values mean. We believe this barrier is a general challenge for all companies regardless of being a company undergoing growth or being a consulting firm. Because the problem of not having consensus of what the values mean is a problem that can occur anywhere, within any organization. The barrier of having different understandings of the values meaning has been mentioned by a few researchers. However, our study accentuates this barrier and emphasize that the company values must be concretized prior to focusing on the other aspects of working with company values.

In contrast, the second barrier, introduction of new managers, is connected to growing companies. Previous researchers emphasize the importance of leadership when performing values-work. Being a growing organization implies that more leadership positions are introduced. Therefore, more individuals have to become leaders. Previous research emphasize the importance of leadership, which our study strengthens. In addition, our study indicates that leadership is important during growth due to another reason. When introducing new managers, not only appointed managers are supposed to lead. Newly appointed managers should manage to lead in accordance to the values too. Therefore, introduction of leadership is a barrier in growing companies.

Furthermore, the third barrier, recruitment of new employees is a specific barrier for growing companies. All organizations that employ should focus on recruiting individuals who share the company values. However, in general, growing companies recruit a larger amount of individuals. Therefore, this barrier is specifically important for growing companies to consider. The aspect of recruiting the right employees who share the company values has been explained in previous research. Thus, our study affirms previous researchers, but emphasizes the importance to focus on recruitment when hiring many new people.

The fourth barrier, geographical distance, is a barrier experienced by companies having consultants working at clients. Challenges exist due to geographical distance between the individuals in the organization. It limits the managers possibility to be involved in the employees work. Moreover, the possibility for all individuals in the organization to daily interact face to face with each other becomes limited.
This circumstance affects how communication is handled since much of the com-
munication of values is made through living the values yourself. With no daily
interactions the employees do not get reminded as often.

Lastly, not having a structured way of how to manage values-work is a barrier in
all types of organizations when working with company values. Previous research
mentions areas important to consider when performing values-work. The areas we
consider in this study are: leadership, communication and recruitment. Our study,
just as previous research, indicates that these areas are important to consider when
performing values-work. Furthermore, our study indicates that a structured way
of how to manage values-work is necessary to be successful with the values-work
within each area.

The second sub research question was:

“What are the enablers for a growing consulting firm when working with com-
pany values?”

The result was three identified enablers, of which some of them are specific for grow-
ing consulting firms. However, not all of the enablers are connected to these kind of
organizations. Moreover, some of the enablers are also barriers, depending on how
they are viewed. The three identified enablers are:

- Recruiting the right people
- Introduction of new managers
- Use of internal resources

The first enabler is the possibility to hire the right people. All organizations have the
possibility to recruit individuals who share the company values. However, growing
companies recruit a larger amount of individuals and have a greater possibility to
bring more individuals who share the values into the organization. Therefore, the
possibility to hire the right people is a specific enabler for growing companies.

The second enabler is the introduction of new managers. This is both a barrier and
an enabler since introducing new leadership positions is challenging. However, it
enables the organization to grow since more tasks evolve during the growth pro-
cess. No previous research mention the introduction of new leadership positions in
studies about values-work. Or study, on the other hand, shows that there are both
positive and negative affects on introducing new managers.

Lastly, the use of internal resources is an enabler for all organizations, not just grow-
ing consulting firms. By listening to employees and follow-up on values-work or-
ganizations have the possibility to constantly get better and demonstrate the im-
portance of value. No previous research discusses the internal resources role in
values-work in detail. Therefore, our study supplement previous literature.

Our conclusion of these two sub research questions is that many barriers and en-
ablers are general challenges for all sorts of organizations. However, some of them
are specific for either growing companies or consulting companies. There are no bar-
riers or enablers that are specific for growing consulting firms alone but all findings
together conclude what challenges and opportunities a growing consulting firm has.

### 6.1.2 Main Research Question

By combining the findings from the two sub research questions, the main research question

> "How should a growing consulting firm work with company values?"

could be answered. The two sub research questions had impact on how the values-
work should be performed, however the first question more than the second. There-
fore, the answer on the main research question is based on the identified barriers.
This study suggests that growing consulting firms should work with company val-
ues by considering:

- Concretization: Concretize the values and connect them to behaviors
- Leadership: Address leadership challenges and model the way
- Communication: Continuously communicate the company values
- Recruitment: Recruit people who share the company values
- Follow-up: Follow-up on the organizations and employees values-alignment

The barrier of having different understanding of what the values mean is handled
by concretizing the values. The values should be connected to measurable behav-
iors to make sure they will be interpreted in the same way. Moreover, the challenge
of introducing new managers should be handled by both concretizing the values
and working with leadership to make it easier for new leaders to model they way
on how the values should be lived. The barrier of recruiting new employees is ad-
dressed by focusing on recruitment and communication. Recruitment should be
considered to make sure new employees share the company values and communi-
cation is important to make sure the organization really acts in line with the stated
values. In addition, the geographical distance is a barrier handled by having a good
leadership, well working communication and a structure for how to work with val-
ues. Lastly, the barrier of not having a structured way to manage values-work is
addressed by defining how an organization should: concretize the values and
connect them to behaviors, address leadership challenges and model the way, con-
tinuously communicate the company values, recruit people who share the company
values, and follow-up on the organization’s and the employees’ values-alignment.
6.2 Contribution to Knowledge

In previous research, the importance of implementing the company values in a proper way, and how a poor implementation of company values can harm an organization is emphasized. The result of this thesis strengthen previous theory. The focus areas; leadership, communication, recruitment, concretization and follow-up were highlighted as important within value-work in previous research and it is confirmed by our study, that these focus areas are important to consider. However, previous research do not evaluate the circumstances for growing consulting firms to work with company values. Therefore, the result of this study emphasize which aspects should be given more focus due to the fact of being a growing consulting firm.

6.3 Future Studies

This study was performed by focusing on specific areas identified as important when working with values. In future research these areas could be studied more in depth. For examples, further studies could be made to identify additional barriers and enablers within each area. Qualitative and quantitative data could be combined to create a better understanding of the phenomenon. We believe the aim should be to get an deeper understanding of how to work with the identified barriers and enablers in growing consulting firm. For example, we understood from Company C's management team that it was challenging to concretize the company values into clear and measurable behaviors. Going into detail with this issue, more barriers and enablers could be found, which could help companies who would like two work with the issue of concretizing values. Furthermore, from the findings in this study we believe it would be of relevance to investigate how managers should lead within growing consulting firms and how it can be secured that the right individuals, who share the organizations values, are bought into the organization. Research within all these specific areas exists but we believe it would be interesting to evaluate the areas along the specific circumstances for growing consulting firms.

An additional future study could be to analyze how other growing consulting firms work with company values. This study would capture a broader perspective and possibly describe how other companies have worked with company values in a successful way. Furthermore, such study would provide a more general view of the barriers and enablers of growing consulting firms when working with company values. A combination of our study together with a broader perspective on how to work with company values could make the results more generalizable.

Another interesting question that came to mind during the development of our study, is the fact that consultants are positioned at clients, who have other company values. We have highlight the importance to attract employees who embrace the company values and leaders who are living the values. This thesis is studying company values and values-work from the consulting firm’s preceptive. If values-work
instead were to be studied from the clients perspective it could be furthered investigated if it is as important for clients to involve external consultants to embrace their company values. Despite this question, it could be interesting to analyze what is most important: that employees at consulting firms embrace the clients values or the consulting firms own company values? Or is both as important?

In this research we decided not to include the aspect and importance to be aware of your own personal values when working with an organizations values. It would therefore be of interest for future studies to investigate if being a values-aligned organization is more important than having values-driven individuals inside the organization. With values-driven, we refer to being driven by your own personal values, despite what the people in your surrounding value. It would be of interest to investigate to what extent it is important that every individual in an organization knows about their own personal values.
Bibliography


Stockholm University, Department of Psychology at (2015). Kultur och värderingar, en framgångsfråga [Culture and values, a question of success]. Tech. rep. Wildfire.

Appendix

A.1 Interview Guide - Section Managers

We will record the interview and you will be anonymous in this report. If you at any time after the interview want to withdraw your participation you are welcome to do so and we will then not use the information for our report.

Introduction

• What is your role at Company C?
• How long have you been working here?
• What did you do before you began your employment at Company C?

Values

• Why do you think it is important to work with company values?
• Can you explain Company C’s values?
• How do you view the work with Company C’s values?
  – What is going good?
• Can you personally identify yourself with the company values?
• What behaviors are connected to the company values?
• In what way, does/does note your colleagues work in line with the company values and desired behaviors?

Communication

• How does the communication work around the company values?
  – Is it clear how the values and behaviors should be communicated?
• How do you communicate values to your consultants?
  – Do you believe the communication is clear?
  – In what way, could it be better?

Leadership

• How do you know if you as a service manager work in line/not work in line with the company values?
• How do you follow-up if your consultants work in line with the company values?
  – Is feedback given if they have the desired behavior?
  – How often is the follow-up made?

Recruitment

• To what extent do you make sure that new recruitments share the company values?
• How does the daily work and work with values get affected when hiring many new people?
A.2 Interview Guide - Consultants

We will record the interview and you will be anonymous in this report. If you at any time after the interview want to withdraw your participation you are welcome to do so and we will then not use the information for our report.

Introduction

- What is your role at Company C?
- How long have you been working here?
- What did you do before you began your employment at Company C?

Values

- Can you explain Company C’s values?
- How do you view the work with Company C’s values?
  - What is going good?
  - Where do you see potential for improvements?

General

- What difficulties do you experience due to your position at the client?
  - Do you feel like a part of Company C’s culture?
  - How do you think you would feel more connected to Company C?

Communication

- How does the communication work with your boss work?
  - How often do you meet/talk?
  - Where do you meet?
  - What do you talk about?
  - How does the communication work around the company values?

Leadership

- In what way does your boss works in line with the company values?
- How do you know if you as a consultant work in line/not work in line with the company values?
- How is the follow-up made on working with the company values?
  - Is feedback given if you have the desired behavior?
  - How often is the follow-up made?
  - If there would be a follow-up, how would you like the follow-up to be handled?

Recruitment

- How much of the interview focused on the company values?
  - Examples on questions?
- How does the introduction process look like?
  - Your first day?
  - Introduction program?
A.3 Interview Guide - New recruitments

We will record the interview and you will be anonymous in this report. If you at any time after the interview want to withdraw your participation you are welcome to do so and we will then not use the information for our report.

Introduction

- What is your role at Company C?
- How long have you been working here?
- What did you do before you began your employment at Company C?

Values

- Why do you think it is important to work with company values?
- Can you explain Company C’s values?
- Can you personally identify yourself with the company values?
- What behaviors are connected to the company values?

Recruitment

- How much of the interview focused on the company values?
  - Examples on questions?
- How does the introduction process look like?
  - Your first day?
  - Introduction program?
In this section the 13 individuals who participated within the interviews and when the interviews were conducted are presented. To secure the anonymity of the participants all interviewee are refereed to by their current role professional role at the time the study was conducted.

**Interviews**

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C Appendix

In this section relevant field notes from the observations of interviews, Company C’s internal network, and the daily work at Company C’s office are presented.

C.1 Observation of Interview

Date: 2017-03-15

Observed: Interview with a candidate for employment.

*The interviewer begins the interview with some small talk.*

*The interviewer inform the candidate about Company C. (Values are not included)*

5 minutes into the interview:

*The interviewer explains that the company culture is important for Company C.*

*The interviewer explains that Company C works with their 3 company values.*

*The interviewer connects Passion to Company C’s Personal Develop Plan.*

*The interviewer says that Company C is searching for passionate individuals.*

*The interviewer connects the value Honest Relations with presence to the closest manager and Company C’s arrangement of internal social activities.*

9 minutes into the interview:

*The interviewer asks the candidate about his/her previous work and about his/her role.*

*The candidate mentions he/she is passionate about project management.*

*The interviewer asks questions about what is interesting with project management. (Asks questions related to the value Passion)*

13 minutes into the interview:

*The interviewer asks the candidate about what industries the candidate prefer to work with, and what is the candidates area of interest is. (Asks questions related to the value Passion)*

The observers reflection

When talking about values it is mostly the interviewer who explains Company C’s values and culture. Two questions connected to the company value, Passion were asked during the interview.
C.2 Observations of Company C’s Internal Network

Date: 2017-02-10

Observed: Company C’s internal network Google Plus

A Comment on a post done by an employee: You’re an amazing colleague! Living our values in such way that I sometimes think they are yours.

The observers reflection

The CEO has written a post at Google Plus to highlight a consultants behavior and action that are aligned with the company values.

Date: 2017-04-03

Observed: Company C’s internal network Google Plus

What is your passion? Express it! That’s where it starts

The observers reflection

The CEO has written a comment on a post at Google Plus to highlight behaviors and actions that are aligned with the company values.
C.3 Observations of the Daily Work at Company C’s Office

Date: 2017-03-06

Observed: The daily work at Company C’s office

Employees Present: The CEO, three section managers, financial accountant and three newly employed consultants.

Date: 2017-03-13

Observed: The daily work at Company C’s office

Employees Present: The CEO, three section managers, financial accountant and three newly employed consultants.

Date: 2017-04-10

Observed: The daily work at Company C’s office

Employees Present: The CEO, three section managers, financial accountant and one newly employed consultants.

Date: 2017-04-24

Observed: The daily work at Company C’s office

Employees Present: The CEO, three section managers and the financial accountant.

Date: 2017-05-08

Observed: The daily work at Company C’s office

Employees Present: The CEO, three section managers, financial accountant and one newly employed consultants.
D Appendix

In this section Company C’s internal document used in the study are presented.

Internal documents