A dinosaur in a fast-changing environment
- exploring employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change

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Abstract

In a fast-changing environment, companies need to be flexible to change. Task-oriented change, e.g. change working tools, are in risk of becoming obsolete before employees have adapted to them. The purpose of this study was to explore what and how underlying dynamics influence employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change in fast-changing environments. A single-case study was conducted with a company within the Swedish FMCG-industry. 15 semi-structured interviews with 800 interview quotes were analysed into four aggregated dimensions; Commitment to change, Competence, Relationships and Psychological conditions and three additional emerging themes; Reflection, Time and workload and Change characteristics influencing employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change.

Competence was perceived as the most important dimension together with its construct of Understanding reason and Understanding effects of change. In addition, Stress as a construct of the dimension psychological condition was found to not be influencing the employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change as much as suggested by previous research on organizational change. Constructs of underlying dynamics was also found to interrelate with each other within the same dimension and others across dimensions.

Key words: Task-oriented change, Adaptivity to change, FMCG-industry, Commitment to change, Competence, Relationship, Psychological condition
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1. Introduction

“In the new world, it is not the big fish which eats the small fish, it is the fast fish which eats the slow fish” Klaus Schwab (2015), founder of World Economic Forum. With this citation, one can draw parallels to the increasingly competitive and fast-changing business landscape (e.g., Griffin et al., 2007; Hurn, 2012; Bourne, 2015). Smaller and more flexible companies are challenging the oldest multinational companies (MNCs). However, the oldest MNCs are still the market leaders (Zahra & Hayton, 2008) but can be seen as dinosaurs in fast-changing environments. For organizations to survive in these fast-changing environments, they need to be flexible in order to allow their employees to stay innovative and creative (Burnes, 2004; Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997).

Change has become unavoidable as organizations have accepted, in theory at least, that they either must deal with change or die (Beer & Nohria, 2000). Fast-changing markets put pressure on companies to change their old business models and become more flexible in their ways of working (McKinsey, 2018). Flexible ways of working are resulting in rapidly changing technologies in organizations, which are impacting employees’ task-oriented daily work-routines. As a consequence, employees within organizations who act in these fast-changing environments need to adapt to task-oriented change faster than ever before in order to adapt to new internal processes or tools that are introduced at their workplace. Task adaptivity is argued to be a relevant work performance domain where task adaptivity reflects the degree to which employees are able to respond to these task-oriented changes (Griffin et al., 2007).

Change in organizations is a well-studied phenomenon for the past decades (Stouten et al., 2018) have identifying ways to make a meaningful and sustainable change is a challenge. One reason for this challenge is that scientific literature often lacks consensus regarding change processes (Bamford & Daniel, 2005; Pettigrew et al., 2001). As a result, change practitioners are facing a challenge relying on scientific evidence when making a change (Stouten et al., 2018). Moreover, the outcome of change is often not immediately known, making it unclear for practitioners which particular efforts that are effective and not (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). The unknown outcome of changes makes it difficult to repeatedly make comparable change-related interventions and obtain feedback. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) argue that the immeasurable outcome of changes has contributed to the knowledge gap about employees’ reactions to change.
However, one can argue that task-oriented changes have relatively distinctive outcomes and should be able to provide feedback and still make an impact on employees’ day-to-day routine. Task-oriented changes are to be seen as changes of less magnitude than organizational changes since they are more distinctive task performance based. The meaning of task-oriented changes in this paper is when employees need to adapt by e.g.; ‘Start working in system A, instead of system B’ when both systems are in place or ‘Start using internal communication platform X, instead of communication platform Y’ if both platforms are available to use. Task-oriented changes, as mentioned, are something organizations need to be effective in constantly (Burnes, 2004; McKinsey, 2015; Moran & Brightman, 2001) in order to stay competitive (Burnes, 2004).

Researchers have argued from different point of view when explaining the underlying dynamics of a successful adaptation of changes in organizations. Individuals’ competence is highlighted as one factor determining an individual's ability to adapt to change (Beer et al., 1993). Competence is during change assumed to treat aspects such as knowledge of the business, analytical skills and interpersonal skills, which are necessary for a successful change.

Furthermore, communication and interaction between employees are also argued to contribute to individuals’ personal adoption of change (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). Ford et al. (2008) introduce the perspective where change actors are the main reason why change recipients do not adapt to change. Green (2004) contradictory argues that adaptation is driven by the merits of the characteristics of adopters, rather than the relationship between change agents and change recipients. Other studies found motivational states influence employees’ adaptation to change (Caldwell et al., 2004) and personality dimensions to be related to people’s strategies for coping with change (Judge et al., 1999).

Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) introduced different initiatives on why individuals are committed to change, based on different mindsets during a change. By analysing behaviour, they categorized different levels on a commitment to change, which stated that some individuals were more committed to change and therefore should perform better when a change occurs. Accordingly, Conner and Patterson (1982) highlight that individuals’ lack of commitment is driving force why changes fail.
Fedor et al. (2006) explored characteristics of changes, rather than the process used to implement it and found the magnitude of change to be a potentially important correlate of change commitment. The individual's' commitment to a change can, therefore, be assumed to be dependent on the degree to which the change impacts their day-to-day routines.

In order to stay competitive, it is argued that organizations need to manage changes faster since the speed, impact and the unpredictability of changes are greater than ever before (Burnes, 2004). This environment of fast changes is argued to impact employees’ psychological condition or well-being. For instance, organizational change can be a source of considerable stress to employees but also lead to high performance (Holbeche, 2006).

Research about individuals’ adaptiveness to change tend to examine the organizational change of greater magnitude than task-oriented change at the individual level. Yet, little is also known about the differential effects of various aspects of organizational change (Fedor et al., 2006). Since new business models can be impacting employees’ daily work-routines (McKinsey, 2018) it would be of interest for managers to know what underlying dynamics that are influencing their employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change at their workplace. Managers could thereby stimulate those dynamics and potentially become a more efficient organization.

In the literature of adaptivity to change, the level of analysis also tends to shift (Griffin et al., 2007) between organizational level to individual level. This shift makes the underlying dynamics of adaptivity to change at different analysis-levels difficult to compare. However, this study will be focused on the individual level of adaptiveness. As mentioned, many researchers have studied changes by isolating different dimensions of adaptation, such as commitment to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002), competence (Beer et al., 1993), psychological conditions (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005) and the change actor and recipient relationship (Ford et al., 2008) when studying employees’ expectations, reactions and ability to adapt to changes.

In addition, these studies have not fully explored how different dynamics of adaptivity are constructed and interrelated with each other when individuals are adapting to a task-oriented change. This paper will explore the phenomenon through a lens of dimensions from the literature of organizational change and individual adaptivity. However, since this study is of explorative nature, what is known from previous research on organizational change will only
work as a point of departure for this study with its focus of individuals’ perceived adaptivity in the context of a fast-changing environment.

What underlying dynamics influence employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment?

How are underlying dynamics influencing employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment?

The aim of this paper is to explore what underlying dynamics that influence employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change in the fast-changing environment. Also, how underlying dynamics and its constructs influences employees’ perceived adaptivity will also be explored. Our study is motivated by research suggesting that up to 70 per cent of all organizational change initiatives fail (Beer & Nohria, 2000). Executives believe only a third of change interventions succeed (Stouten et al., 2018) where people fail to adapt to changes can be seen as one reason for these failures (Dekker, 2003).

Organizational change is a well-researched phenomenon (e.g., Stouten et al, 2018). However, research of individuals’ reactions to change within organizations and what underlying dynamics that are influencing their reaction connected to their adaptivity to change, are relatively unexplored (e.g., Fedor et al. 2006). Research about changes often tends to be unfocused both in terms of what sort of change activity that is studied but also what level of analysis within the organization that is studied. Therefore, this study will explore task-oriented changes and adaptation at the individual level, in other words, employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change.

As change is context dependent (Langley, 1999) and contexts differ across organizations, an understanding of the specific context and individuals’ perception within that contexts is important to answer the thesis’ research questions. However, since change is context-dependent one cannot, and the aim of this study is not, to generalize the empirical findings. This study could, however, provide findings that practitioners and researchers can facilitate when managing or studying employee’s adaptivity to task-oriented change. The context of interest for this study is the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry.
To answer our research question, data will be collected from a multinational company within the Swedish FMCG-industry. The industry has a long history of generating reliable growth through mass brands. However, the model that fuelled industry success is now to be seen as outdated as the industry faces great pressure as consumer behaviours shift and the channel landscape changes. To succeed in the coming decades, FMCG-companies need to shift from their old business model and become more flexible in their way of working (McKinsey, 2018). Since investments in new technology and business models are more important than ever for companies to maintain competitiveness, due to its general profitability problems (Arnberg, 2017), a lot of changes are therefore occurring which make this industry a good environment to study. Today’s business environment does not only demand high phased qualitative changes, but it also puts pressure on individuals to fully adapt to changes. Since task-oriented changes are increasing in the FMCG-industry this paper examines a case study at one of the industry leading FMCG-companies by exploring the underlying dynamics of individuals task adaptivity. As the case company has requested to be anonymous for this study, it will simply be referred to as the case company.
2. Organizational change at the individual level

Organizational change is a broad concept that includes changes of various elements of an organization such as changed structure or changing workforce (e.g. Siggelkow, 2001; Weick & Quinn, 1999), of various magnitudes (Watzlawick et al., 1974) and various frequency (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Organizational change takes place at different levels in organizations even though it can be difficult to define level since different organizational units are not suggested to be wholly independent or interdependent to one another (Griffin et al., 2007), but by definition includes all organizations some degree of interdependence. This interdependence suggesting that behaviours directly contributed to effectiveness at a given level (e.g., the individual level) can indirectly contribute to effectiveness at higher levels through an additive process of composition (Chan, 1998). Even though change per definition can be affecting different organizational levels, such as organization-wide level, team-level and individual level at the same time, one can focus the perspective from one level at a time. To exemplify, the whole organization can be introduced to a new vision of doing business, while at the individual level this change can take form as a task-oriented micro change such as new procedures in core tasks (Griffin et al., 2007). However, organizational change is said to be seen as complex because it differs from other domains that are discrete and repeatable and often immediately known (Stouten et al., 2018). One can though argue if this is applicable for individual task-oriented changes since Griffin et al. (2007) describe these tasks similar to “job-specific” task performance.

The magnitude of a change can be described as either a change of first-order or second-order where the earlier is changes within an existing system where the individual is thinking within the box and has a starting point of the existing system (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Changes of the second-order consist of system changes, of big fundamental organizational changes. From an individual perspective are second-order changes affecting new behaviour patterns and new contexts. However, individual task adaptivity to factors such as the introduction of new technology, work redesign or new processes are all often requiring individuals to adjust their workplace behaviours (Griffin et al., 2007)
The frequency of changes can be described by how they are identified as episodic or continuous change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Episodic change tends to occur in distinct periods during which shifts are precipitated by external events such as technology change or internal events such as a change in key personnel. The continuous change is used to group together organizational changes that tend to be ongoing, evolving, and cumulative. To separate these to different changes is not always easy, and again, it is argued that organizational change not often either is immediately known by change practitioners (Stouten et al., 2018). In other words, it can be difficult to know if the change is episodic or continuous. Weick and Quinn (1999) also suggest that change never starts because it never stops, and that change is not an on-off phenomenon. However, the authors explain that the contrast between episodic and continuous change reflects differences in the perspective of the observer. From a distance (the macro level of analysis), when observers examine the flow of events, they see what looks like repetitive action, routine, and inertia dotted with occasional episodes of revolutionary change. But a view from closer in (the micro level of analysis) suggests ongoing adaptation and adjustment. In other words, it can be argued that from an individual level (a micro level of analysis) work behaviour can be perceived as ongoing changing adaptation and adjustment rather than distinct changes as a higher level can see the on change.

Burnes (2004) states that “change has always been a feature of organizational life, though many argue that the frequency and magnitude of change are greater now than ever before”. From an individual perspective, this ever before greatness can be seen as contradictable. One can argue that the frequency of organizational change at some point hinders changes to be of continuous increasing magnitude. Scientific evidence shows that change often takes a long time to materialize, sometimes even years before the output is known (Stouten et al., 2018). Individual adaptation to new work (e.g., through the introduction of new technology) can also take a long time before applied practice stabilizes (Dekker, 2003). However, research of organizational changes of less magnitude, (e.g., involving only some units of the organization or is more task-oriented) with still high frequency seems to be poor and lacks conceptualization.

Planned organizational change (Stouten et al., 2018), organizational transition (Ashford, 1988) and strategic change are concepts used in the organizational change literature when describing major organizational changes. Individual adaptation to these major organizational changes is found to be a significant state for making the change successful. Concepts for the contrary to organization transition or planned change seems to be hard to find in the scientific literature.
As an example, Kurt Lewin’s original definition of planned change was applying to small groups change but have during time extended to include organization-wide change initiative e.g., by Beer and Nohria (2000) and Mintzberg et al. (1998) (Burnes, 2004). This has led to some confusion between planned (participative) change and the more lately used definition planned (transformational) change (Burnes, 2004).

2.1 Adaptiveness to organizational change at the individual level
Several researchers argue that the individual’s psychological capabilities, in other words, his or her behaviour, is in direct relation to the successful executions of organizational changes (Griffin et al., 2007; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Müller & Kunisch, 2018; Stouten et al., 2018)

Adaptivity has concerned a great variety of theoretical schools. Adaptivity, as a performance domain, is described by Griffin et al. (2007) as the extent to which an individual adapts to changes in a working system or work roles. This behaviour or performance domain can also be described as individual task adaptivity since it regards how the individual adapts to tasks as an adjustment to new equipment, processes, or procedures in core tasks. Furthermore, the factor uncertainty has found to be a core element in studies of the link between individual performance and effective outcomes for organizations (Griffin et al., 2007). How individuals behave during uncertainty can, therefore, be of interest when trying drawing parallels to how they behave in change.

Research within the field of change presents different and similar factors that are required for successful change implementation and adaptivity (Stouten et al., 2018). Outcomes in the empirical literature of change largely focus on employee commitment to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Oreg et al., 2011). Other frequently used concepts in traditionally change management-models focus on relationship-related factors (Ford et al., 2008; Battilana & Casciaro, 2012), stress-factors (Griffin et al., 2007; Ashford, 1988) and factors regarding competence (Beer et al., 1993.) These four concepts will be discussed below as factors that possibly could affect the ability of individuals adapting to change.

2.1.1 Commitment to change
Commitment to change is assumed by Meyer and Herscovitch (2002), as a force or mindset that binds an individual to a course of action, considered essential a successful implementation and adaptation to change. The authors are making this assumption of these mindsets as a result
of their extended research findings on how to identify different mindsets by a different commitment to an individual’s organization.

Commitment has received a great deal research attention; where commitment has been connected to important outcomes such as turnover and job performance (Becker et al., 1996; Maertz et al., 2002, Mowday et al., 1979). Although commitment was initially intellectualized as an employee’s attachment to the values of the organization, researchers have also recognized commitment during specific activities. Commitment to a change has been found to be conceptually and empirically distinct from organizational commitment (Fedor et al., 2006; Ford et al., 2003; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Meyer and Allen (1991) conceptualized organizational commitment as a psychological state that increases the likelihood that an employee will maintain membership in an organization, by categorizing commitment in three different labels: Affective mindset (desire to remain), normative mindset (perceived obligation to remain), and continuance mindset (perceived cost of leaving). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) argued that the three-component model should be applicable to the study of other forms of workplace commitment. Meyer and Herscovitch (2002) converted the three labels of organizational commitment, into labels of commitment to change, where they portray a commitment to change, as a force that binds an individual to a course of action considered essential a successful implementation when a change occurs. The force that binds an individual to this course of action can reflect (1) a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits (affective mindset to change), (2) a sense of obligation to provide support for the change (normative mindset to change), and (3) a recognition that there are costs associated with failure to provide support for the change (continuance mindset to change).

Research has shown that employees' normative and affective mindset to change positively affect their behaviours supporting change; however, organizations are regularly unsuccessful in motivating appropriate levels of employee commitment to change (Hill et al., 2011). According to Neves (2008) perceived supervisor support show a positive relationship between competence, affective and normative mindset to change. The same study showed that supervisor competence was negatively related to continuance mindset to change.
In the examination of individual reactions to organizational change initiatives, change commitment reflects the individual's alignment with the change, intentions to support it, and a willingness to work on behalf of its successful implementation. This notion proactive behavioural intent toward the change makes commitment different from other attitudinal constructs that capture either the absence of negative attitudes, such as resistance to the change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Piderit, 2000), or positive dispositions toward a change, such as readiness for change (Armenakis et al., 1993) or openness to change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

Most of the change literature has fixated on the role of change implementation processes (Brockner et al., 1994; Caldwell et al., 2004) as shaping employees’ behaviours and attitudes toward change. Thus, the impact of any one change on the target person, in terms of increased workload or adaptation demands, is often ignored in studies of change (e.g., Judge et al., 1999; Lau & Woodman, 1995). Since a direct and personal consequence of the change for affected individuals is important (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996; Caldwell et al., 2004). Fedor et al. (2006) explored aspects of the change itself, rather than the process used to implement it. The study suggested that the magnitude of change at both the job and the work-unit levels to be a potentially important correlate of change commitment. The individuals’ commitment to a change is therefore dependent on the degree to which the change impacts their day-to-day routines.

As well as the potential outcome of a change could affect the commitment, individual commitment and personalities could affect the outcome of the change. Researchers found motivational states to influence employees’ adaptation to change (Caldwell et al., 2004) and personality dimensions to be related to people’s strategies for coping with change (Judge et al., 1999). Align with the previous argumentation Beer et al. (1993) states that changes in attitudes lead to changes in individual behaviour where changes in multiple individual behaviours will result in an organizational change. By a joint diagnosis of the business problem the unit making the change are able to mobilize commitment. By, including all affected stakeholders involved in the change process at an early stage, commitment to change is more likely to be created. According to this, change is almost like a conversion experience where people ‘get religion’ and changes in their behaviour will follow.
2.1.2 Individual competencies during change

As high level of commitment is seen to be essential for efforts, initiatives and cooperation when organizations make changes due to cost, quality and product development, competence factors such as knowledge of the business, analytical skills and interpersonal skills as necessary when making a change (Beer et al., 1990). Kotter (2012, p.133) argue that even employees who are motivated to change can lack sufficient knowledge or ability to do so. Learning is enabled by receiving sufficient support (Beer et al., 1990) and resources (Hiatt, 2006) to be able to implement change.

Research on major organizational changes have found that when an organizational change is introduced, adjustment is required, and employees must adapt by developing new skills. The more disruption a change causes, the more adjustment it requires (Ashford, 1988). In other words, one can argue that developing new skills at the individual level are enhancing the adaptivity to the major organizational changes. However, it is not clear if individuals in the context of organizational changes of less magnitude also must adapt by developing new skills. Weick and Quinn (1999) define micro-changes as a part of continuous changes, where learning is fundamental though.

A number of researchers argue though that effective change is about learning new skills and knowledge (Ashford, 1988; Beer et al., 1990; Stouten et al., 2018) or strengthening existing skills (Weick & Quinn, 1999). As an example, it is argued that it is rare that top-management knows in advance the fine-grained details of organizational change that many units in large organizations demands. Top management is suggested to learn from innovative approaches coming from younger unit managers closer to the action (Beer et al., 1990). However, it is not clear if this is also suggesting that learning is of importance for those employees at lower levels in organizations, or for other organizational changes that not is demanded by many units, for instance, a task-oriented organization change involving a couple of individuals at the company.

Beer et al. (1990) further suggest that new competencies such as knowledge of the business as a whole are necessary, which can be seen as contradictable to the example above about top-management reaching out to lower-level managers. From a hierarchical perspective can top-management be considered to possess a higher degree of knowledge of the business as a whole than lower-level managers working in a specific unit. If this character of knowledge is needed on an individual level regarding task-oriented changes is unknown.
Hiatt (2006), Judson (1991) and Kotter (2012) all address the need for creating awareness about the need for change to everyone the change will affect. That argumentation includes that the change initiator should also address the reason for the change, and the risk that comes with the implementation phase. Judson (1991) argues that a change actor should use a “balance sheet” of positive and negative predicted outcomes in order to predict implications for employees and possible resistance during the change. Lau & Woodman (1995) stresses that if employees understand the reason for the change and believe that the reasons of the change is beneficial, the employees tend to have a more favourable attitude to the change.

Developing knowledge and ability related to the change emphases the learning aspects of organizational change and can be related to both understanding the vision and how to practice new behaviours the change motivates (Stouten et al., 2018). When trying to distinguish different types of knowledge, some authors use the concept of soft skill for interpersonal qualities and hard skill for technical skills (Robles, 2012). Bloodgood and Salisbury (2001) defines explicit knowledge as knowledge that is easily expressed which can be transmitted to others in a relatively straightforward manner. On the other hand, tacit knowledge is that which is difficult to articulate and express to others. How important this knowledge is for developing the ability to adapt to change is not clear and the scientific literature lacks consensus.

2.1.3 Psychological condition during change
Change is typically activated by environmental shift which, once are recognized by the organization, leads to an intentionally generated response (Porras & Silvers, 1991). Emotions and responses to organizational change can be so intensive that has been compared with individual responses to traumatic changes such as death and grief (Henderson-Loney, 1996). Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) state that a person can experience emotional fluctuations during change processes such as anger, denial, chaos, depression, resignation, openness, readiness and re-emergence. This response is affecting the members of the organization and their work-related behaviours.

According to Elizur and Guttman (1976), attitudes toward change in general consist of a person’s cognitions about change. Piderit (2000) have recognized employees’ responses to an organizational change ranging from strong negative attitudes (i.e. “this change could possibly ruin the company”) to strong positive attitudes (i.e. “this change could be essential for the
organization in order to succeed”). The change could therefore consequently be received with happiness and excitement or fear and anger while employees’ reaction to it may vary from positive intentions to support the change to negative intentions to dispute the change (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005).

Individuals are being forced to rethink during changes. This process can trigger emotional turbulence like stress and internal competitiveness since it is difficult to handle tensions between old loyalties and new imperatives of the change initiative (Senge et al., 1999). Since uncertainty is the most frequent psychological state resulting from changes, stress reaction evokes (Ashford, 1988). Stress is a fundamental concept that exists at most of the workplaces around the world. The British Industrial Society Survey (2001) suggested that 91 per cent of the personnel professionals stated that stress was a problem in their organization.

Since stress are related to several outcomes, such as low motivation and morale, high turnover and sick-leave, low quality products and services, low job satisfaction, poor internal communication, and low performance (Schabracq and Cooper, 2000; Murphy, 1995) one could argue that a high stress-level should be negatively correlated with the level of adaptability. Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) confirmed a relationship between stress and individual attitudes towards organizational change but did however not isolated how stress affects the individual adaptivity to change. On the other hand, stress may not just inhibit performance. Stress can also facilitate performance, depending on the situation, since stress could be related to attributes such as “pressure to perform”.

With this said, changing ways of thinking is demanding because it stretches individuals away from their “comfort zone” (Senge, 2006). When leaving your comfort zone, and when changes occur, individuals often sense a loss of control (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008) As a change could contribute to a temporary uncertainty in a work-process, especially in a fast-paced environment, employees in fast-changing organizations will have lower control. According to this phenomenon, Ashford (1988) argues that tolerance for uncertainty is a predisposition towards change and working in a fast-changing environment.

2.1.4 Relationships during change
Changes are not physical objects that move and tend to slow down by contact with recipients, they should rather be seen as discussions, conversations and texts (Boje, 1995; Ford, 1999). A
successful change, where the change recipient adapts to the new outcome, is therefore according to Ford et al. (2008) dependent on the quality of the agent recipient relationship.

In the literature of change, change agents are often described as undeserving sufferers of the dysfunctional and illogical reactions of change recipients (Ford et al., 2002). Adoption of change is arguably driven by the merits of the characteristics of adopters, rather than the discursive exercises of change agents (Green, 2004). Ford et al. (2008) introduce the perspective where change actors are the main reason why recipients do not adapt. Change agents tend to contribute to the occurrence of change resistance when failing to legitimize a change through a communication or misrepresenting the potential positive outcomes.

Hiatt (2006) highlights that communicating the vision of a change requires adapting different approaches depending on the audience. Not only what kind of information and what kind of tone when communicating but also, adjust when the information about the change is communicated and what communication channels are being used. According to Griffin (2004) employees appear to be more responsive to changes introduced by leaders of their own group than they are to change activities initiated by leaders of other groups. A reason for that may be that a leader within a group may know when information should be shared and how to communicate to the change recipients as Hiatt (2006) argued.

When it comes down to how much information about the change that should be communicated is, on the other hand, argued with differentiated meanings. Hiatt (2006) is stating that full transparency is suggested when making a change. Judson (1991) and Kanter et al. (2012) do not believe the complete openness may be necessary all the time. Further, when it comes to how the change actor should stress the need for change, the disputes continue. Kotter (2012) suggests that a change actor should create a feeling of urgency by setting excessive goals with the change. Hiatt (2006) do on the other hand see a danger in overselling a change by stress the urgency of the change since it can reduce the credibility of the change. According to Hiatt (2006), Kanter et al. (1992) disagree that urgency is necessary since the message of urgency might appear to “cry wolf” and therefore fail to induce the need for change.

Battilana and Casciaro (2012) show that the connections employees have with other organization members contribute to their personal adoption of change. Results demonstrate that employees who have a strong connection to peers are well equipped to help endorse the change,
particularly when the change does not diverge from current systems and structures. If the change does require a substantial deviation from the status quo, employees with a few quality connections with peers but lacking others are more likely to adopt change when they can go beyond their own network in seeking relevant information.

Communication, both peers to peer and recipient to agent, in these networks are essential. Tversky and Kahneman (1973) suggest that organizational changes fail because of the abundance of available information. A person's attention is a limited cognitive resource, and people only have a limited number of hours a day where they continually are making decisions of what information to direct their attention to. In order to communicate a change or a new way of working, the leaders need their follower’s attention.

2.2 Synthesising dynamics of task-oriented changes in a fast-changing environment

In order to be an effective organization, organizations need to manage interdependence and uncertainty. As the tasks in an uncertain environment become more unpredictable for employees (Griffin et al., 2007) and changes more frequently, there is expected that adaptivity, as behaviour or work performance, will make a large contribution to effectiveness. By using the lens of the literature of organizational change and the literature of the dimensions: commitment to change, competence, relationship and psychological conditions, this paper will combine with an empirical case study investigates how these dimensions are built up by substituted constructs. The underlying dynamics of the individual adaptivity to task-oriented changes in a fast-changing environment should, therefore, be seen as: “everything that influences employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment”.

The literature of commitment to change (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2002) focus on how different mindsets affect the level of organizational change support, where a correlation of affective mindset and high level of support is confirmed. However, individuals with high levels of support to change are not the same as individual adaptivity to change. As affective mindset is explained as a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits, this indicates that the change recipient needs understanding the change. Beer et al. (1990) is highlighting the importance of individual competence for a successful process and implementation where the recipient contains a deeper knowledge of the business and the change itself. Based on this previous research as indicators for the subtheme of task-oriented
change, one could imagine that competence as an underlying dynamic of individual adaptivity to some extent will influence affective mindset.

However, within the context of task-oriented change at the individual level in a fast-changing environment, knowledge about the business and the change itself may not be perceived as important. This reasoning is argued since Beer et al. (1990) is highlighting the importance of knowledge of the business and the change itself as drivers for successful implementations of bigger organizational changes. The indicated the lower necessity of competence as an influence for individual adaptivity to task-oriented change is motivated by arguments of Stouten et al. (2018). They argue that organizational change is said to be complex because it differs from other domains that are discrete and repeatable and often immediately known, which may not be applicable on task-oriented changes because of their interpreted more discrete nature.

Ford et al. (2008) highlight the importance of a good relationship between change actors and change recipients and when making a change. Battilana and Casciaro (2012) argue that employees with good connections their peers contribute to their personal adoption of change. However, what is the driving factors of these relationships? As both argumentations are stating that good connections and a good relationship are of importance, this study will explore concepts that are important for these relationships when adapting to change. In additional to relationships, when adapting to change where the change recipients need learning a new skill or a new task one could imagine these the relationship with peers and change actor could be important.

Finally, changes are connected with many different emotional reactions, which will affect the individual actions (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). What we do not know is, what kind of emotions that are triggered when changes in a fast-changing environment occur and how they are turned into action. Since the study is within the context of a fast-changing environment within a high performing company, the workload of the change recipients is most likely to be high. Therefore, could a change in the workload impact their adaptability, which according to Judge et al. (1999) often are ignored in studies according to changes

By using a theoretical lens of the dimensions: commitment, competence, relationship and psychological condition this paper will explore what constructs that are substantiated these dimensions and how the underlying constructs are influencing the perceived adaptability to
adapt to task-oriented changes. In addition, the study will explore how these constructs interrelate with each other. To the best of our knowledge, underlying dynamics of individuals’ perceived adaptivity to change is earlier studied by few with the focus on task-oriented changes in a fast-changing environment. As illustrated in Figure 1, this study will explore the perceptions of employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change and how their adaptivity is influenced by the underlying dynamics’ constructs.

Figure 1. Summary of theoretical dimensions as suggested influencing underlying dynamics of employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change in fast-changing environments. This paper will explore the phenomenon through a lens of dimensions from the literature of organizational change and individual adaptivity. However, since this study is of explorative nature, what is known from previous research on organizational change will only work as a point of departure for this study with its focus of individuals’ perceived adaptivity in the context of a fast-changing environment.
3. Method

3.1 Research context and method
Our research question of what the underlying dynamics of employees’ adaptiveness to task-oriented change are and how employees perceive these dynamics to influence their adaptiveness to task-oriented change was initially developed after an empirically interesting phenomenon was identified. This phenomenon, at the individual level, was also theoretically unexplored in the context of an industry in a fast-changing environment. Connections to organizational change theories and adaptivity as a performance domain theory were thereafter drawn. It is emphasized that undertaking a review of the literature is an important part of any research project since it assesses relevant intellectual territory in order to specify the research question(s) which will develop knowledge of the topic (Tranfield et al., 2003). By using an inductive approach, the theory is intertwined with empirical case evidence, which has been deployed in prior inductive studies aimed at theory-building (Aguilera & Jackson, 2003; Graebner and Eisenhardt, 2004).

Our research questions have an explorative approach with the aim of examining the underlying dynamics of employees’ adaptiveness to task-oriented change. In order to understand what these dynamics are and how they influence employees’ adaptiveness, the context is important (Pettigrew, 1997). As change is context dependent (Langley, 1999), it is important to identify themes, capture mechanism and the dynamics within a single setting. Therefore, we use a case-study research strategy (Eisenhardt, 1989) to understand the empirical case and its context. By emphasising the importance of the context of the single setting (Eisenhardt, 1989) we followed Miles and Huberman’s (1994) design approach to select (1) the setting, (2) the actors, and (3) the events and processes.

3.2 Setting
In order to stay competitive, it is argued that organizations need to manage change faster than ever before since the speed, the impact and the unpredictability of change are greater than ever before (Burnes, 2004). Therefore, in order to examine the empirical phenomena of employees’ adaptiveness to task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment, companies competing at a high-competitive market with the assumption that these companies want to ensure competitiveness was of interest when choosing context and case company.
The Swedish FMCG industry is a setting with high competition among Swedish local producers and global multinational producers such as food, home- and personal care products (Konkurrensverket, 2018). The industry on a global level is driven by major actors such as Nestlé, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Johnson & Johnson, Coca Cola and other. The global FMCG companies with net revenues of more than $8 billion, grew only 1.5 per cent (55 % of GDP) between 2012 to 2015 (McKinsey, 2018). This global market development can be seen as a stagnating market growth where the global competition among FMCG-producers increases as a consequence.

The global companies among the other major actors are acting within the Swedish local market competing with local actors such as Orkla and Lantmännen. To win in the coming decades, companies within FMCG need to change from their old business model and become more flexible in their way of working (McKinsey, 2018). One can argue that task-oriented changes are increasing in the FMCG-industry. Therefore, this paper examines a case study at one of the branches leading producers within the FMCG-company by exploring the underlying dynamics of employees’ perceived adaptability to task-oriented change.

3.3 Actor

The actor which is the chosen case company for our study is one of the world’s biggest MNC within the FMCG-industry. The firm is almost 100 years old and has a potentially administrative heritage of different procedures and processes for how to deal with different aspects of change. The company owns 15 out of the 50 worlds’ top FMCG brands based on market penetration and consumer interactions. This is significantly more than any other FMCG company, which makes the company of interest in the highly competitive Swedish FMCG-market. The case company has an office in Stockholm where about 150 people work in the organization. As the case company has requested to be anonymous for this study, it will simply be referred to as The Case Company.

As The Case Company states that change is common, we believe The Case Company is a suitable actor for exploring the phenomena of employees’ adaptivity to change. However, The Case Company are actively searching for employees who are comfortable by working in a fast-paced environment and who are adaptable to changes. Therefore, we believe that investigating
the phenomenon of employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change in fast-changing environments is well motivated to do at the chosen Case Company.

3.4 Events and processes
Events and processes of interest pertained primarily to adaptivity to changes and underlying dynamics of adaptiveness, which provide the data for our study. Consistent with themes derived from the literature, interview topics included founding perceptions of change as a phenomenon, perceptions of adaptiveness in relation to task-oriented changes and suggested underlying dynamics from the change literature.

In our study, the point of departure is from the concepts commitment to change, competence, psychological condition and relationship from the synthesized literature of change and the literature of adaptiveness. A priori specification of concepts can help to shape the initial design of theory-building research, as it permits researchers to measure constructs more accurately. According to Eisenhardt (1989) concepts that are proven important as the study progresses, researchers have a firmer empirical grounding for the emergent theory. For example, in a study of strategic decision making in top management teams, Bourgeois and Eisenhardt (1988) identified several potentially important concepts (e.g., conflict power) from the literature on decision making, which during their study explicitly was measured in the interview protocol.

When exploring a phenomenon with a broad research question, such as this thesis provides, we are permitted to specify the kind of organization to be approached, and, once there, the kind of data to be gathered (Eisenhardt, 1989). At the case company, change is a common phenomenon since the employees are aware they are working in a fast-changing environment. There exists a lot of research about change but not in regard to how employees adapt to change in a working system or role, as Griffin et al., (2007) and we define task-oriented adaptivity. We use Griffin et al.’s (2007) definition of individual task-adaptivity ‘the extent to an individual adapts to change in a working system or role. Interviews are used in the study since they may uncover narratives of events and the meaning that actors have attributed to them (Czarniawska, 2004).

Selection of respondents
A total of 15 semi-structured interviews was conducted during three field visits at the case company’s headquarter in Stockholm in April 2019. Nielsen and Landauer (1993) created a
mathematical model based on the results of six different projects and demonstrated that six participants can uncover 80 per cent of the major usability problems within a system. Further, they argue that when more than twelve participants are interviewed the diagnostic number tends to level off at around 90 per cent. In addition, the number of 15 respondents also allowed the study to find patterns by cross-compare the results of the interviews, see table 2. This paper explored the phenomena of individual task-oriented adaptivity by using the lens of four different dimensions, but with an openness to explore other driving underlying dynamics. Since the interviews were semi-structured, the open-ended questions made it possible for the interview to not treat the dimensions from our theoretical lens with a given focus. With 15 interviews one can draw patterns how the respondents chose to talk and discuss the questions. In order to achieve triangulation (Eisenhardt, 1989), interviews were conducted with employees at different hierarchical levels (executives, managers and subordinates), see table 1. The respondents are also working in different departments and teams, which was preferable for us in order to cover the whole context of the company. Within this study, the respondents are working in departments of Marketing, Sales, Finance, Human Resources, Supply Chain, R&D, Business Transformation, and People Data Centre. The variation of respondents from different departments and teams also reduces the risk of the respondents highlighting the same experiences which could give the study a misleading result. However, all of the respondents are to some extent facing task-oriented changes in their professional work-life. All of the respondents are working a lot with digital platforms and systems and should, therefore, have easier relating to this kind of changes.

Also, we aimed to reach respondents with a wide variation in employment time at the company, since workplace experience could theoretically affect the adaptivity. By choosing a heterogeneous group of individuals, the study would at least not be limited in finding such data. Before the interviews we sent out an invitation, see Appendix 1, we also informed what type of changes the respondents to have in mind when discussing adaptability. Since change is such a broad term, the context-setting invitation made the interviewees talking about task-oriented changes. Before the interviews, we asked if we were allowed to record the conversation and all of the respondents confirmed. The interviewees were also promised anonymity, which can make respondents more willing to answer questions honestly. Each interview lasted approximately for thirty minutes and yielded in a total of 93 single-spaced transcribed sheets.
For the interviews, a guide was used to consistently capture certain broad themes, see Appendix 2.

Before we held the interviews, the interview questions were controlled by a third party. After the control, we made the questions more open-ended to mitigate leading questions. We also made two extra questions to each question, to be ready to have another formulation of the initial question, if the interviewee did not understand the question. This made it easier for us to rephrase it during the interview. The fourth question (“What do you believe is important for you to be able to adapt to change?”) turned out to be a key question, where many respondents had interesting discussions. We tried to ask that question in an earlier stage in interview 3 but found out that the respondent was not yet in “the zone of change” which made the answer not as thorough as in the previous interviews. After interview 3 we then had the intention to ask question four later in the interview, so they were able to talk a bit about change before answering this question.

Table 1. Interviews and respondents background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Date for interview</th>
<th>Function at the company</th>
<th>Time within the company</th>
<th>Gender of resp.</th>
<th>Place of birth of resp.</th>
<th>Length of the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>19-04-04</td>
<td>Supply Chain Manager</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>19-04-04</td>
<td>Marketing Analyst Subordinate</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>19-04-04</td>
<td>Marketing &amp; Sales Trainee</td>
<td>7 Months</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>19-04-04</td>
<td>Brand Manager</td>
<td>13 Years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>19-04-05</td>
<td>HR Trainee</td>
<td>9 Months</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>19-04-05</td>
<td>Marketing Executive Manager</td>
<td>18 Years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>19-04-05</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>25 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>19-04-05</td>
<td>Key Account Manager</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>35 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>19-04-05</td>
<td>Sales Category Manager</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>40 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>19-04-09</td>
<td>Finance Manager</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>19-04-09</td>
<td>Business Transformation Manager</td>
<td>9 Years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>19-04-09</td>
<td>HR subordinate</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>35 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>19-04-09</td>
<td>Supply Chain Manager</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>40 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>19-04-09</td>
<td>Data Analyst Subordinate</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>19-04-09</td>
<td>R&amp;D Subordinate</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>35 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Data analysis and coding process

Our research question has an explorative nature with the purpose of understanding an empirical phenomenon. Therefore, we used Miles and Huberman’s (1994) three elements for the process of analysing qualitative data (data reduction, data display and conclusion-drawing of data). This is followed by other researchers that also designed case studies similar to our study since they have in common to have inductive approaches (e.g., Prashantham & Dhanaraj, 2010; Eisenhardt, 1989). Data were reduced and structured by a content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), see Appendix 3, followed by a coding scheme, see figure 2, do display aggregated dimensions to be analysed line with Gioia et al. (2013). The distribution of quotes (first-order concepts) was also analysed and displayed in order to get a sense of which subtheme that was most often mentioned or identified, see table 2.

Our data consists of transcriptions of 15 interviews and in total a number of 93 pages of single-spaced font size 12 Times New Roman. In this state, it is common that the data feel unstructured. The first step was, therefore, to get familiar with our data and begin a within-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). There is no standard format for such analysis, but the overall idea is to generate insight into the data by reducing it and structure it in a meaningful way (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Eisenhardt, 1989). In multiple case studies, it is common to start analysing each case by within-case analysis before making a cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). Since we define our study as a single-case study (Yin, 2009), the within-case analysis will cover the whole data analysis. However, we wanted to mitigate the risk of interpreting all quotes together as one mass taken from their context. Therefore, we structured the data by making a content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) separately for every interview to some extent keep the context. This does not infer that we intended to compare different respondent by each other, we have analysed our data as one mass.

First, we made one copy of the interview transcripts in order for us to do the content analysis individually. This enabled us to analyse the transcripts inductively without being influenced by the other author's personal interpretation of the transcript. By doing this, we also made it possible to later measure the inter-reliability (Cohen et al., 1972; Tyllström, 2013) of our interpretation of the material, see table 2.
Individual content analysis:
interpretation of first-order concept and theoretical dimensions
Since the individually content analysis was the foundation for the categorization in first- and second-order coding scheme followed by Gioia et al. (2013) methodology, we decided to follow some rules when working separately to ensure we followed a similar process, a one by Graneheim and Lundman (2004). This was to inductively condense interview quotes that were connected to our research question as a data reduction tool (Mile & Huberman, 1994). This means that we read the transcript line-by-line with our research question top of mind. For every answer or phrase connected to our research question, we made a condensed quote (first-order concept) that contained fewer words with the same meaning as the quote. The quote was then also categorized inductively but the choice of theme was decided together beforehand to fit one of the keywords from our literature review if possible. One could say we used our organizational change- and individual adaptivity lens to look for theory-based themes. Whenever a first-order concept was identified and interpreted to not fit one of the already known dimensions made by our theoretical lens, it was given an additional dimension labelled other. The data reduction analysis consequently reduced the data by a cyclical approach moving back and forth between theory and the empirical data to finally start to theorize the empirical concepts aggregated dimensions, see Appendix 3. Our cyclical approach moving between empirical key concepts and key concepts from the theoretical literature review might be viewed as transitioning from inductive to a form of abductive research (Gioia et al., 2013; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007).

Second-order coding: agreement of first-order concepts and its theoretical dimensions
When we both finished our individual 15 content analysis, we started to compare each other's analysis to see if we had found similar or different interpretations of the transcripts. Author 1 read the content analysis made of interview no. 1-7 and Author 2 read the content analysis for an interview no. 8-15. To exemplify, the green colour was used to mark the same condensed quotes (first-order concepts) where both had identified the same aggregated theoretical dimension. The red colour was used to mark first-order concepts that we both had identified as relevant to our research question but where we had identified the first-order concepts to be a construct of different themes. The yellow colour was used whenever a unique first-order concept was found by one author that had not been highlighted by the other author.
After comparisons in the two-content analysis were colour coded, we reduced all the double first-order concepts that we both had analysed as a construct of the same theoretical theme (green concepts) to ensure that the data set was not falsely doubled in the number of quotes. All first-order concepts were thereby also sorted by its aggregated dimension. The quotes we interpreted differently (red concepts) we discussed until we reached an agreement of which theoretical dimension it belonged to. However, a few first-order concepts did we not find an agreement for. These first-order concepts were collected twice to the reduced data set. This can be seen as facilitating bias since the same quote is interpreted as two quotes but since the amount of these quotes was such a small percentage of the total quotes (2.3%) we argue that they will not impact the volume of quotes or misrepresent our findings hence they will nuance the data set by the fact that one first-order concept can be interpreted as a construct of more than one theoretical dimension. The unique first-order concepts (yellow) that were identified by only one of the authors was read through by the other author and only first-order codes that was interpreted by the other author as relevant to our research question was collected to the final reduced data set. By doing these content analyses individually (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), followed by a merged and reduced first- and second-order coding (Gioia et al., 2013) together, we mitigated the risk to miss relevant quotes (first-order concepts) since both analysed the material.

When the data set was reduced, and first-order concepts were sorted by its analysed aggregated dimension, we started the second-order coding process following the methodology by Gioia et al. (2013). The constructs of every aggregated dimension were analysed and identified to explain how these aggregated dimensions were constructed by the phenomenon in the context of the case company.

The second step following Mile and Huberman’s (1984) three elements for the process of analysing qualitative data (data reduction, data display and conclusion-drawing of data) was to put this the coding scheme made in accordance with Gioia et al. (2013) on display before starting to draw patterns and conclusions, see figure 2. We also chose to display how the emerging second-order subthemes were distributed among the dataset to enrich the analysis, see table 2. The last step when analysing our data following Miles and Huberman (1984) was conclusion-drawing of the data and emerged dimensions, its constructs and how these aggregated dimensions were interpreted to impact each other. In figure 2, one can also see that the three sub-themes do not belong to an aggregated dimension. These themes were not found
to have enough interconnectedness between either themselves as sub-themes or as a substantiated construct to any of the existed dimensions. However, these three emerging was found to be influencing the individual adaptivity to task-oriented changes and therefore are presented in the empirical section with the following analysis.

Figure 2. Data structure: of coded first-order concepts and emerging second-order subthemes and aggregated dimensions.
4. Empirical findings

In this chapter, empirical findings from interviews will be presented according to the dimensions that emerged during the content analysis and coding process. The dimensions are Commitment to change, Competence, Relationships and Psychological conditions together with the additional emerging constructs: Reflection, Time & Workload and Change characteristics, see figure 2. The aggregated dimensions describe the phenomenon of employees’ perceived adaptability in a fast-changing environment. The underlying dynamics of perceived adaptability and its constructs were differently distributed to be perceived as an influence by the respondents, see table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Distribution of Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First order code</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subthemes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Normative Mind-set</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuance Mind-set</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand effects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand reason</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills &amp; Capability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job atmosphere</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stress</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workload &amp; Time</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “A” means that second-order subtheme occurred more than 3 times in the interviews "a" means that second-order themes occurred less than 3 times, and "0" means that the second-order subtheme was not present in the interview. The number of first-order codes does not answer if the respondent were talking positive or negative about the subtheme.

The results in table 2 do not reflect if respondents were talking about the different sub-themes in a positive or negative way. However, the frequency of the subthemes is telling us what the respondent discussed during their interview. The interview guide was conducted with open-ended questions, so the interviewees could, therefore, steer the conversation to topics they self-found interesting and important. In terms of frequency mentioned dimensions, competence was discussed most followed by relationship and commitment. The dimension psychological condition was discussed least, where the construct stress was brought up only by four interviewees in total. The characteristics of the change were discussed most frequent of the additional emerging constructs. A notable result was that respondent number two was the only
respondent who discussed all of the topics to some extent. As we can see in table 1, interview 2 was in average length, which is telling us that longer interviews do not pursue make them broader in its content. Following in the empirical section, the paper will dig deeper into the dimensions and the constructs.

4.1 Commitment to change
The dimension of commitment to change was perceived by all respondents to influence their adaptability to task-oriented change. Its three subthemes; effective mindset, normative mindset and continuance mindset was identified to constitute commitment and influence individual perceived adaptability in different frequency across the respondents, see table 2. The subthemes and its constructs are presented below.

**Affective mindset**
An affective mindset was discussed by all respondents, except one, either as a choice of mindset to make it easier to adapt to task-oriented change or as a trait of positive or motivating attitude that was identified by the employees when they discussed task-oriented change in general or when explaining why they adapt to them.

The importance of having a positive mindset was according to the employees’ a postulate to make it easier to adapt to task-oriented change suggested by the quotes below.

“Having the ability to adapt to change depends on the skills you have and the mindset.” (14)

“It is easier to adapt to a change if I have a positive mindset and being optimistic.” (2)

"If I also have an open mindset, the change will go smoother.” (1)

An affective mindset was not only an explicit desirable way of thinking among the employees. The majority was also identified to possess a positive attitude when discussing a task-oriented change. An affection to task-oriented changes was identified, e.g., when employees explaining that change is; inspiring, needed for the firm to be competitive, personal developing and something fun. Following quotes will exemplify.

“I think it is my view of change that makes it easy to adapt. [...] I love to try new things and it is a really bad match to love trying new things and not be able to adapt to change.”(3)

“I think change is good, it is something you can't avoid, especially if you work in the FMCG industry. [...] Everything will change. People will change their mind and their opinion. The business needs will always change [...]” (5)
“I encourage change, it is good for your brain to change your patterns but also good to develop personally.” (9)

Normative mindset
A normative mindset was identified among every respondent to some extent constitute their reasons or thoughts of why they commit to task-oriented change. A majority of the respondents showed a normative mindset more than three times times in their interview. The constructs of the normative mindset were either rooted in respondents’ obligated reasons for why they adapted to change or as a feeling of indifference to change. The normative mindset construct as an obligation within individuals’ roles sees suggested quotes below.

“One even though the change is not making my work more efficient, I still have to adapt.” (2)
“When new regulations come from externally then we needed to adapt to those.” (4)
“Some changes are made for other markets and are not perfectly adaptable here in the Nordics. Even though the new platform is not the most accurate you still need to adapt.” (9)
“[…] and change is constant, so you may as well get used to it.” (7)

The normative mindset rooted in individuals’ indifference towards change sees suggested quotes below.

“When adapting to change, my mindset is that it may be different now but become fine in the end, it is not going to matter in a couple of years.” (7)
“Most of the changes you cannot really do anything about so are they worth fighting for?” (7)
“If I don’t agree with a change, I will just do the change but not with 100 per cent effort.” (10)
“I think I am good at adapt because I don't worry. I don't care so much and think change is easy.” (6)

Continuance mindset
Among a majority of the respondents was a continuance mindset identified, however, the mindset was only identified more than three times by two respondents. Nearly half did not show or explicit mention that their adaptability was impacted by a continuance mindset. What constituted the continuance mindset among the respondents was firstly the mindset of committing to change as a reason driven by the alternative costs for the business or of their individual situation, suggested as quotes below.

“The company demands us to adapt to change, in order to survive.”
“I adapt to change because I am supporting the business. If I do not meet my managers need, I am not relevant.” (5)
“At this company you need to like change, otherwise, you will not stay for long. (5)
“I agree 75 per cent of times, 25 per cent is just something I can’t do anything about. Then I am without any power, the only power is to leave the company.” (10)
“One reason I haven’t put any time and effort working with the new system is that I don’t have to”. (6)
“I have my routines and if I don’t have to change, then I want to stay at my routines.” (6)

Continuance mindset was identified as mindset with stronger tendencies of resistance so to change as reasons and thoughts by employees of why they do not adapt to task-oriented changes. See suggested quotes below.

“I have examples when I have not been adapting when I have been like; “no, don’t you dare change this working thing.” (4)

“When I don’t see the benefits and believe the change just is initiated because of internal nonsense I am annoying and disregard the change and hope it blows over. I believe I have a sense of what is important and not.” (4)

“I am not very fond of changes, to be honest. If I find a way how to do things, I like to stick to that. If someone says we have to change something, I am usually very sceptical to that.” (15)

4.2 Competence

Competence was the dimension which was most often discussed by the respondents in the case study. The dimension of competence was found to emerge from four different underlying categories: information, understanding the effects, understanding the reason, and skills and capabilities. See table 2, in different frequency across the respondents.

**Information**

The subtheme *Information* was based on the respondents’ perception of information about task-oriented changes. Information about change was discussed in both positive and negative contexts. Some respondents explained the lack of information as a problem when adapting to change, while others explained that information about a change often helped when adapting to change.

“Clear instructions is important for me to be able to adapt to change.” (2)

“No one has really explained what systems we work in, I just get different invites to different portals to co-work in. I don’t really know, what’s official to work in.” (3)

“When the changed system, for instance, is not known by teams I work with and also are affected by the new ways of working, conflicts can starts because they don’t know about the change we have.” (10)

“When I am in lack of information or need to understand the change better, my colleagues help me.” (12)

Within the subtheme *information*, also codes in what the information preferably should contain are preferable was also discussed. The respondents highlighted different aspects of what information they were needed during a change. Some respondents wanted a lot of information, but the majority wanted only relevant context-based information in a pragmatic way. However,
when the respondents received information in their most preferable way, their ability to adapt to task-oriented changes was perceived by employees to become better.

“Information about a change should contain an explanation of what responsibility there is for each step of the change process.” (1)

“Information of change should contain a short and clear explanation of why and how we are dealing with the new system and where to find out more because people demand the different amount of info.” (3)

“The information about change just need to contain some context, some background, knowing where change is coming from and why the initiative is made, then I am fine.” (7)

**Understand reason**

The subtheme *Understand reason*, was emerged when the respondents’ emphasised that they wanted to know why the change was happening. The majority of the respondents addressed that when understanding the reason why a change was occurring they could easier adapt to the change.

“I think change triggers a lot of emotions and you have to ensure that people understand both by heart and mind why we are doing something because then it this will make it much easier for you.” (5)

“No that is the biggest problem of all. That we are really we work in a fast-phased company in a fast-phased industry where we really have to act fast that we usually leave out the most important question of all, why and really explain why we are doing things.” (9)

In contrast, when the respondents perceived they did not understand why the change initiative was taken, the adaptation to the change was identified to be poor. A common discussion from the respondents was also when they did not understand the reason for a change, they often tend to seek for that kind of information before acting on the change, which often leads to a longer adaptation phase.

“I would be more questioning and ask why we are doing something, but then if I understand the reason why then I would be as adaptable as if already knew the answer before. I just want to know the reason why we are doing a change, I don’t want to do a change just to do a change.” (8)

“I am also one that would demand to understand why. If why is not explained from the one that drives the initiative, I will probably make sure that my questions are answered of why we are doing it. I think that that is my prerequisite to follow the change. I make sure to understand why.” (11)

**Understand Effects**

The subtheme *Understand effects*, is driven by respondents who are adapting to task-oriented changes when perceived that the outcome of the change would be beneficial for either themselves or the company as a whole. When the respondents perceived that they could
evaluate the outcome of the change, the overall ability to adapt became better. When the effects of the change were discussed, the mindset of the respondents was also highlighted. A change with the positive effect of the respondents owns workstream often made the respondent more positive towards the change.

“I adapt to change because it makes my work more efficient.” (2)
“I always calculate in my mind when I see something new, I visualize what it is going to illuminate at the same time, which is good.” (9)
“If I see the winning for me, then change is motivating for me. Even though I know the change is good for the organization, I am not positive unless it is good for me.” (6)

Respondents were in some cases not able to see the benefits of the change which made the adaptation harder. The effects of the change were either unseen by the respondents because the effects were not explained enough or that the effects were explained but the respondents did not see them as positive outcomes.

“Before I knew the benefits with the new communication platform I wasn’t actively diffusing the change but after benefits were explained it was easier to adapt.” (3)
“I delete my emails if I don’t see the benefits of the change it is informing about.” (4)

Skills and capabilities
The subtheme of skills and capabilities emerged when the respondents discussed how their experience and expertise affected their adaptability to adapt to task-oriented changes. The respondents often described their practical capability. When the respondents described that he/she did not possess the necessary practical skills due to the change, the adaptation often inquired training and a learning phase which makes the adaptation time longer.

“The change is easier to adapt to if you already possess a skill in what is going to change.” (1)
“When changing a system, I can be positive, but I am always worried about the time effort the change demands of me to learn it.” (3)
“Many times, I don’t have the practical skills in order to adapt to change because you are not giving the skills, you need to find out by yourself. But if you are involved you often get the practical skills easier.” (12)
“Definitely you need training. You cannot take the employees and put them in the sea and say; okay you have to swim now! It is going to work but you will lose a lot of money in the beginning.” (13)

The respondents did also highlight their experience from earlier changes as a strength when entering a new change. Their cognitive capability was often recognized as a strength by the respondents themselves, where their knowledge about change processes was positive for them when adapting to task-oriented changes.
“I was more worried about change before when big changes happened all the time. Then I was stressed but realized that I couldn’t be stressed all the time, so I chose to change my mindset and decide that change is good.” (3)
“In this company, you have to be pretty adaptable because things happen so quick if you not adaptable you are not even at the right place[...]. For those who are really adaptable and understand the winning and the benefit of all things is going to grow pretty fast but for other people, it is not going to go so fast and those are once coming back and asking other once how it works.” (9)
“My experience of going through different changes has helped me becoming better to adapt to change, better to handle my feelings.” (15)

4.3 Relationships
The dimension of the relationship was perceived by all respondents to influence their adaptability to task-oriented change. The aggregated theme is driven by four underlying dimensions; communication, job atmosphere and colleagues, support, and trust. See table 2, in different frequency across the respondents. The subthemes and its constructs are presented below.

**Communication**
The sub-theme communication was identified as the respondents resonated how communication from other departments, the change actor and colleagues played an important role for them in order to adapt to task-oriented changes. The respondents often mentioned how they prefer the change was communicated. When the change was communicated in a preferable way, the respondents found it easier to adapt to the change.

“When I feel that the communication about information about changes is inviting, then I adapt to them easier.” (2)
“If you not customize the communication about change, and go for just having a big forum, you will lose 20 per cent of the people just doing one way of communication.” (9)
“I prefer when my line-manager gathering the team or more people to inform about the change.” (8)
“I think you should give people an email about the change because then it is documented but I would always like to get the opportunity to talk about change and ask questions Sharing thoughts is essential and important.” (11)

Another aspect of the subtheme communication was found when the respondents emphasised the need for communication during the change. The respondents highlighted that communication should start early in a change process and not only when the implementation phase starts. Communication during the change was found important, both from the change recipients, from the change actor and between departments.
“I feel like sometimes, especially a big corporation as XX it is a lot of like, we implement a lot of changes and then we don’t really go back and do follow-ups or anything like that, and then the change it is kind of dilutes.” (8)

“The context of a change is important for me to adapt to change. If I am informed of a change from one day: “This is going to change” I am not going to adapt.” (11)

“Sometimes when change happens it is lack of communication around it, and it is important to communicate, to keep people informed because then I am more willing to follow through the change.” (12)

**Job atmosphere and colleagues**

The sub-theme atmosphere & colleagues were found when the respondents discussed how their surrounding environment was affecting their ability to adapt to changes. The most common cluster within these concepts was that the respondent's peers were influencing their own mindset towards a change. The peers could influence both the mindset positive and negative.

“When my team members were more fixed to an idea, I become influenced and not as adaptable to changes.” (2)

“If my colleagues are not willing to adapt to a change, then I might also not be willing.” (8)

“I think my colleagues can influence my ability to adapt for sure, in both ways. It helps when feeling a part of a community, you feel stronger.” (11)

“I definitely believe colleagues affecting my ability to adapt to changes, sometimes you need to talk a bit more and just know that you are not alone.” (15)

In addition, the respondents were mentioning the company environment and culture as something that is influencing their ability to adapt to task-oriented changes. An open environment and encouraging environment were highlighted as something that helped when adapting to change.

“It is extremely important to have a work environment that is open to change, enhance it and it positive about colleagues’ ideas no matter what the idea is about because it can and up in innovative conversations and we need to dare to try because you can bloom much faster than if you are negative.” (8)

“For me, a safe environment with driven people around me is important to be able to adapt to change.” (12)

“...[...]. For instance, you know I work in my team where we have a really create a span of personalities. I am analytical and also kind of fast phased but I work with people that are really conscious about you now about well-being but also they need to have the right atmosphere about colleagues and around them to find the great work environment that gives them energy.” (9)

**Support**
The sub-theme support was driven by the respondent's discussion about how to help from both peers and managers influence their ability to adapt to task-oriented changes. When the respondents perceived they get the support they needed the adaptation to changes was easier. Some respondents highlighted that the knowledge of that they were able to get support was just as important than the support itself.

“Having someone to guide you through the change make it easier.” (5)

“A reason why I feel fine with change is that I can ask other functions for help if I don’t understand why something is happening and also be guided through the practical things.” (7)

“If I don’t feel I have the practical skills needed I then get support by the let say finance team if it is a financial tool, so they can show me, then I have the support I need.” (8)

“I feel that I can always talk to my manager about the changes, so I never feel that I am alone in a change.” (15)

**Trust**

Trust was recognized as a sub-theme when the respondents were emphasising the importance of feeling trust in the case company as a company in whole or to the change initiator when adapting to a change. If the respondents in general trust the change initiator they often believe that the outcome of the change would be beneficial for them and therefore adapt to the change more accurate than if they would not trust the change initiator.

“I mean again if a take XXs team as an example. I really have trust in him and his knowledge, so that relationship with him as a co-worker makes me more open to listening to his requests and introductions to new things, while for example, I have really low believes on procurement, poor guys. So, anything they would tell me I would be like: ” No way, this is beneficial for me. Because it has never been from the past “. (4)

“I am more suspicious about initiatives coming from Europe since those are not always making it easier or better for us here in the different countries.” (6)

“My manager probably understanding more of the background to why we would need a change, which makes me trust her to change initiatives and then I easier agree to it.” (5)

“XX is a big organization so people have probably thought about the changes that are being made, and that is nice to think.” (3)

**4.4 Psychological Conditions**

Psychological conditions were the dimension of what influences employees’ perception of adaptability that was identified as the least mentioned by the respondents. Psychological conditions were emerged by three subthemes; **Stress, Feelings and Control** in different frequency across the respondents, see table 2. The subthemes and its constructs are presented below.
Stress
Stress was the subtheme that was at least mentioned by all subthemes. However, half of the employees that mentioned stress as a psychological condition influencing their adaptability to task-oriented change mentioned stress more than three times in their interviews, see table 2. Stress is identified to negatively affect adaptability since it causes less energy, difficulty changing mindsets, increased time-consumption and tensions within teams. See suggested quotes below.

“When I am stressed, a change implementation takes more energy and the change feels bigger, I don’t have the same energy when I am stressed to make the change.” (5)
“It is hard to change mindset when you are feeling not well or stressed.” (2)
“When I am stressed, then a change would be more time consuming or demanding which also influence my perception of the change.” (5)
“If I and my colleagues are under a lot of stress, it could create some tension in the team.” (5)

Feelings
Emerging feelings as a cause by change initiatives is the most frequently mentioned construct of the dimension of psychological conditions. It is distributed relative equal among the employees. However, a majority of the respondents mentioned emerging feeling caused by a change initiative less than three times under her/his interview. Feelings of excitement caused by change initiatives were identified to make employees’ adaptation process faster, suggested by quotes below.

“Change is fun and exciting because I have an administrative job that can be boring without change.” (2)
“When I am excited about a change, I am less worried or annoyed, which make me adapt faster.” (3)

Feelings of fear, worry, frustration, nervousness and uncertainty were also identified to be caused by change initiatives. However, these feelings were not per se identified to influence employees’ adaptation process to become slower but increased time consumption was mentioned in the same context together with the difficulty of changing. See suggested quotes below.

“Change is like a double-edged sword because I like change, but it can also be time consuming and scary.” (8)
“I think it is frustrating when changes are overlapping since they not get embedded before the next is announced.” (11)
“Uncertainty of change makes it difficult, not knowing new things.” (4)
“If I have been doing the same work in almost four years, then I know exactly how, that is a safety” (15)
4.5 Additional emerging themes

The respondents brought up topics due to their adaptability to task-oriented changes, that was not suitable in any of the above-stated dimensions. However, these additional themes were interesting as the respondents perceived they affected their ability to adapt. The themes are Reflection, Characteristics of the change, and Time and Workload. See table 2, in different frequency across the respondents. The themes and its constructs are presented below.

**Reflection**

The emerging theme reflection was driven by the discussions from the respondents when they emphasised that reflection of their own behaviour and the change affected their ability to adapt to task-oriented changes. When the opportunity of reflection was given, the respondents felt their ability to adapt improved.

“When I have time to reflect on the change and my ability to adapt, I am good at adapting to change.” (2)

“I think everyone should reflect, take 15 min to just think about the change because it makes it easier to adapt to it.” (10)

“So, when I was at a workshop, where they talked about adaptation to change. That’s when I started reflecting and understanding that sometimes when I feel really uncomfortable it is only because it takes some time to adapt. Then it is a lot easier for me to speed up that process and act like “okay, think rational, this is actually a good thing. Stop feeling resistance and just move because I can't stop it anyway, I don’t reason to stop. It is just uncomfortable that it is new.” (3)

Reflection of the change process in general also occurred in the interviews, where respondents showed insightfulness into the process of change. The respondents have thought of how changes are processed at the case company and how that affects their adaptability. Respondents who reflect on the change process could possibly have a deeper understanding of their own adaptability phase, which is positive.

“I have seen so many things when you implement a change and it is done halfway because it is either not explained or you don't have that transition. The output you get from the change is like, maybe as good but usually, it is not as good as before. Because you haven't taken the time to do it properly.” (10)

“It is really you know while you going to implement something or the process of starting the things you really have to adapt them to the individual personality otherwise they not going to do it or it is not going to stick that is something I really learn throughout the way.” (9)
**Characteristics of change**

The emerging theme characteristics of change is driven by the reflections of the respondents when describing the attributes of the changes. Respondents discussed the frequency, magnitude of change, from where the origin and how that influenced their ability to adapt.

“One thing I struggle with is that I often get change number two communicated before change number one is really embedded. It takes time for change to land, if you change too fast, then you can’t feel the effects of the first change”. (11)

“I change my daily work in probably in every single brief I work on in every single project I work on.” (14)

Change is often originated from high up in the hierarchy, at a European level. It feels external even though it is inside XX. (8)

“[...]. we implement changes but anyone last for like a year or so. And then we do something else, and then. So, there is like no clear meaning for us of why we should do it and no one really follows up and yeah, maybe the changes aren’t so good, so you don’t feel like this is actually not a good change you won't really put the effort in it.” (8)

**Time and workload**

The emerging theme of time and workload was identified by a majority of the respondents to either function as a dependent factor influencing their adaptivity to task-oriented change or as additional time and work as an effect by change initiatives. It was also identified that employees thought it was difficult to do the change on time when trying to adapt. See suggested quotes below.

“My response to change depends on how much time I have.” (2)

“If the change will require more of my time I will be more reluctant.” (10)

“Doing the change in time is difficult when adapting to a change.” (10)

Employees’ perception workload as an effect of change initiatives was identified both as something that could be unseen by change initiators and as an undesirable outcome of change. See suggested quotes below.

“I know from my experience of changes that it very often requires more work than I initially thought before the change.” (1)

“Change creates a lot of extra work for me and people deciding that we should do the change don’t really have any insights in that”. (15)

“A lot of time I feel that the change is just adding time to our work, instead of helping us.” (8)
4.6 Summary of empirical findings

In figure 3, an overview of the emerging underlying dynamics of employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change is presented. The sub-themes: Affective mindset, Understand reasons, Understand effects, Skills and Capabilities, Communication and Trust, were found to be of high influence for the respondents when adapting to task-oriented change. Figure 3 differs from table 2 since figure 3 is not focusing on how the subthemes are distributed among the respondents. Figure 3 is showing how the most influencing subthemes are constructing the aggregated dimensions and what importance the aggregated dimensions, in turn, have when influencing employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change. The Competence dimension was found to be most highlighted by the respondents, followed by Commitment to change and Relationship. Lastly, Psychological condition and the separate additional emerging themes: Time and workload, Characteristics of the change, and Reflection were all influencing the employees’ adaptivity but not to a higher extent.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3:** Overview of the underlying dynamics of task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment.

Note 1: The intensity of the lines between the dimensions and constructs to the perceived adaptivity box is a result of indication how much these dynamics are influencing.

Note 2: The bolded constructs are found to be in particular importance when adapting to change in a fast-changing environment.
5. Discussion

To find what underlying dynamics and how they influence employees’ perception of their adaptivity to task-oriented change results are analysed using the dimensions found in the empirics. Adaptivity refers to the extent to which an individual adapts to changes in a working system or work role. The section focuses on the interviews containing employees’ perceptions and thoughts and how we interpret these in terms of adaptivity-implications.

5.1 The varying combinations of commitment to change

Even though one mindset often was more prominent than the other two when identifying employees’ commitment to change mindsets, it was shown that individuals in the studied context had a dynamic commitment to change profiles. These varying combinations of mindsets in the context of organizational change can thereby support Meyer and Allen’s (1991; Allen & Meyer, 1990) findings in the context of organizational commitment, that employees can experience varying combinations of all three mindsets simultaneously.

The combination of affective mindset and normative mindset were together identified among all employees except one. The affective mindset was the only mindset which employees explicit mentioned they preferred because this mindset in terms of being positive, open-minded and embracing change, was perceived by employees to make it easier for them to adapt to task-oriented change. However, normative mindsets – the force of commitment to change rooted in an obligation to commit - was identified by everyone. In this context, a feeling of obligation to commit to change does not seem to be negative since these employees still perceived themselves as adapting to change. One can argue if these individuals maybe adapt faster to change since their normative mindset is partly constructed by feelings of indifferent towards change and that an affection to change per se is needed in order to adapt to it. However, it was also identified that employees with this normative prominent mindset “wouldn’t put in 100 per cent effort if not agreeing with the change initiative”, even if they adapted because they felt obligated (interview 10). Research has shown that employees’ normative and affective commitment to change positively affect their behaviours supporting change (Hill et al., 2011), which our empirical findings support.

The continuance mindset was identified by half of the respondents and the two ones that mentioned it over three times had one a managerial level and both two was the ones of the
respondents that had worked for the company the longest period of time. This negates Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) assumptions that organizations interested in getting employees “on board” quickly may resort to strategies designed to build continuance mindset in the hope that, with time and experience, the affective mindset will develop. The non-managerial employee of these was not willing to change unless she had to since it was more time-efficient to stick with her experienced learned way of doing her work. The manager felt resistance to change when not trusted the change initiator. Both respondents shared the most important factor in order to adapt was to understand their own benefits of change. These effects of change for the individual, on the other hand, is in line with Fedor et al. (2006) who suggests that individual’s commitment to change is dependent on the degree to which the change impacts their day-to-day routines.

Finally, commitment to change was interpreted to be the dimension that was influenced the most by the other dimensions and their constructs. The most outstood tendencies for connections was interpreted to be the dimension competence impact on the commitment to change. Employees are interpreted to evolve an affective mindset and consequently perceive their adaptation as an easier process when understanding reasons for change and their benefits. This suggested a positive impact by the dimension competence on the dimension commitment. This has not been highlighted enough in current research.

5.2 The importance of understanding reasons and effects of changes
One major empirical finding is that there is a strong need for understanding both the reason and effects of change in order for the change recipients to adapt. Even though Beer et al. (1990) emphasized that the change recipient’s ability to adapt is somehow dependent on the recipients’ general knowledge of the business, this paper’s findings regarding the understanding the reason and the intended effects of the change is not highlighted in theory. The empirics indicate that many respondents would not take any action on the change and start their adaptation phase until they have understood the reason behind the change. This paper emphasizes the importance of explaining the reason of the change initiatives.

In the context of a fast-moving environment, time was a central part of this study. The high change frequency of changes was emphasized by the respondents. One finding was that the high frequency of changes did not bother or affected the respondents negatively. However, the
high tempo could be a contributory aspect that the respondents felt they did not understand the reason for the changes since it is harder to grasp information in a high tempo environment (Burnes, 2004). With a smaller gap of information flow, a lot of pressure put on the change initiator to deliver information about the change in the right time and in the right context. Since Information was seen an important dimension of competence the change initiator must reach through the noise of other daily ongoing-events.

This study shows that understanding the reason behind a change is not as simple as one can think. However, understanding the effects of a change can be directly problematic, since the outcome of a change only can be hypothesized beforehand. Even if one explains the intended effects of a change there are still great work in materializing them (Stouten et al., 2018), even task-oriented changes. As the difficulty of predicting and materialize the outcome of changes is a reasonable argument when postulating the obvious that it is almost impossible to know the effects of a change beforehand. One can also understand and argue for the change recipients who are eager to calculate the outcome of the effects of the change, spending time before implementing it.

From another point of view, making the recipients understand the reason behind the change is crucial. The most outstood tendencies for connections between dimensions was as described in chapter 5.2, interpreted to be the competence impact on the commitment to change. Employees are interpreted to evolve an affective mindset and consequently perceive their adaptation as an easier process when understanding reasons for change and their benefits. Herscovitch and Meyer (2001) describes an affective mindset as a course of action that reflect a desire to provide support for the change based on a belief in the change’s inherent benefits. In order to have an affective mindset, which is found desirable when changing, you must believe in the benefit of the change. As the empirics show a lack of understanding, one can argue that change recipients would have a hard time believing in the benefits of the change when not even be aware of them. The paper's findings suggest a positive impact by the dimension competence on the dimension commitment to change, which has not been highlighted enough in current research.

5.3 Skills and capabilities gained from experience and support
Skills and capabilities were identified to influence employees’ perceived ability to adapt to task-oriented change since it was easier to adapt fast if they had the skills and capabilities needed, see chapter 4.2. The majority of the respondents mentioned that they often already
possessed the skills and capabilities in order for them to adapt to task-oriented changes. One common reason was that they had gained practical skills or cognitive capabilities from the previous change-, or lifetime-experiences. These experiences were perceived by employees to make it easier or faster to adapt to task-oriented changes in general which therefore are supporting previous research that define adaptivity as a performance domain (Griffin et al., 2007).

Suggesting that adaptivity to change can be seen as a cognitive performance domain or skill, one can then argue that it is possible to improve employees’ adaptivity-skill by training their cognitive capability. An additional emerging theme that was found when studying the phenomenon was employees’ desire for reflection over change and how it may impact themselves (see chapter 4.5). Employees that had set aside time for reflection, e.g., by participating in reflection-sessions over their learning curve with the aim of better understand their behaviour in change, said that they afterwards felt it was easier to adapt to task-oriented change. Also, working with cognitive frameworks gained from group training was identified to enhance their capability to visualize what the effects of a change could be like if adapting to change and thereby making it easier to adapt to task-oriented change. Time for reflection is, therefore, an important contribution to existing literature within the individual ability to adapt in change.

When employees did not perceive they possessed the skills and capabilities needed, they gained the competence via support from colleagues. Support is an important dimension when learning new skills which are highlighted by Beer et al. (1990). Support from colleagues or change agents is found to be of great importance for employees’ ability to adapt. This argument is in line with previous research suggesting that good connections with other organization members is enhancing employees’ individual adaptation to organizational change (e.g., Battilana & Casciaro, 2012). However, the positive effects of support on employees’ adaptivity is not really surprising. The contribution to highlight is that employees perceived their adaptivity to task-oriented change was improved when only knowing that support from their teams, other departments and managers was available and encouraged. This can be described as indirect support from colleagues and its positive influences on individual adaptivity to task-oriented change. A way of enhancing this indirect support is to have a supportive job atmosphere as a foundation to stand on when learning new skills when adapting to task-oriented changes.
5.4 Communication trigger Trust
Communication was a well-discussed topic, see table 2. Not only were the respondents mentioned communication about the change itself, but also lack of communication about other departments. The Case Company is a big company and therefore is communication between departments becomes even more important. Ford (1999) highlights that changes are not physical objects that move and tend to slow down by contact with recipients, they should rather be seen as discussions, conversations and texts.

Communication seems to be important when building trust. Trust was found as a driving underlying dynamic of change recipients’ ability to adapt to task-oriented changes, see chapter 4.3. Many respondents highlighted that they did not have deeper insights in any other departments than their own, which lead to the perceptions of “How do they know what will be beneficial for us in our department?”. This reasoning leads to that some respondents did not take any action on the change when another department suggested a change. This finding is in line with Griffin et al. (2004) argumentation that employees tend to respond to changes introduced by leaders in their own group than leaders of other groups. However, this paper suggests that more transparent communication between departments and actors could possibly higher the level of trust, which possibly could higher the willingness to action changes from other departments.

5.5 No time for feelings
The dimension that got the least attention in the empirical findings was psychological conditions. People within this fast-moving environment did not tend to feel that much. When asked how the employees felt about changes, a common answer was:” it depends on the change and the effects of the change”. This argument is according to Elizur and Guttman (1976) that states that attitudes toward change in general consist of a person’s cognitions about change. The respondents were more driven by the reason and the expected effects of the change, rather than express a particular emotion. The effects of the change did almost determine the expressed feelings in the study.

That people within this study tend to wait for a reaction of a change announcement until they have calculated the outcome of the change. However, Judge et al. (1990) highlighted that increased the impact on the target person, such as increased workload, is often ignored in
studies. This study indicates that the impact of the target person will to some extent affect their ability to adapt to task-oriented changes.

Stress was not mentioned by many respondents in the study. One should not draw the conclusion that high workload is the same as stress. A reason for this finding could be that the people within this study has actively chosen to work in the context of a fast-moving environment. Nevertheless, the two respondents who brought up stress during the interviews, really emphasized that stress was negatively affecting their ability to adapt to changes which argument is supported by Vakola and Nikolaou (2005).
6. Conclusions

This thesis had the ambition to explore what underlying dynamics that influence employees’ perceived adaptivity to task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment. Also, how underlying dynamics and its constructs influence employees’ perceived adaptivity was explored.

The empirical findings show that the four dimensions; Commitment to change, Competence, Relationships and Psychological conditions, are influencing employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment. The dimensions were found to be substantiated by 13 different constructs which all are foundations of adaptivity to task-oriented change. Three additional emerging constructs were found in this study; Time and workload, Reflection and Change characteristics, but these were not substantiating any of the other dimensions. However, the four dimensions substantiated by its constructs and the additional emerging constructs create the underlying dynamics of task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment.

This paper suggests that the constructs of the aggregated dimensions not only influence employees’ adaptivity directly, but also interrelate with each other and indirectly affect individual adaptivity to task-oriented change. The constructs of the dimensions interrelate with both constructs within the same dimension and across dimensions. Within the dimension Relationship communication between departments in the organization was found to be important when building trust. Between the different dimensions relationship and competence; Support from colleagues found out to enhance individuals’ ability to learn new skills.

Competence was the most frequently mentioned dimension and was also identified to be of great importance for employees’ ability to adapt to task-oriented change. When employees understood reasons for change and effects of change, it was perceived as easier for the employee to adapt to task-oriented change. These two constructs were identified as the most important underlying dynamics since they are affecting the individual's ability to adapt directly but also indicated a great interrelation with constructs in the dimensions commitment to change and psychological conditions.
Finally, organizational change is said to be interpreted and experienced as complex because they differ from other domains that are discrete and repeatable and often immediately known (e.g., Stouten et al., 2018). One can argue that task-oriented changes which are impacting daily work-routines, e.g. changing communication platforms, would be easier to adapt to since they may be seen as more distinctive task performance (Griffin, et al., 2007) than organizational change of greater magnitude. However, in the context studied in this paper, task-oriented change can be difficult to understand and adapt to. We have not seen any evidence of that it being easier for employees to adapt to task-oriented change than organizational changes of greater magnitude.

6.1 Managerial implications
The most central finding in this study is understanding reason and the effects of change. However, since the change recipient must be able to receive and take in the information about the change, a lot of pressure is put on the change actor. This reasoning is in line with Ford et al. (2008) who states that change actors tend to fail in legitimizing a change through a communication or misrepresenting the potential positive outcomes. However, earlier changes are difficult to materialize (Stouten et al., 2018), which corresponds with Ford et al.’s (1999) reasoning that changes should not be seen as physical objects that move and tend to slow down by contact with recipients. They should rather be seen as discussions, conversations and texts. The change actor must, therefore, find the right balance making sure to communicate the essence of the change in a time where the recipients are in a state where they are available for information.

6.2 Limitations
Since the ambition was to draw a conclusion about employees’ adaptivity to task-oriented change in a fast-changing environment, one can argue the fact that the case company may not be representative for a fast-changing environment. The definition of fast-changing environment is not clear, rather a subjective interpretation by the authors in this study. However, a majority of the respondents perceived their workplace as a company within a fast-changing industry.

Secondly, when studying a relatively unknown theme - task-oriented change- it can be difficult to set the task-oriented change context, when discussing the phenomenon of employees’ adaptivity during interviews. Since we did not study employees’ adaptivity connected to a specific change, the result can be criticized not only regarding task-oriented change but change
on a more general level regardless of magnitude. This was intended to be mitigated by explaining the context to the respondents before the interview, both by a written document a couple of days before the interview as well as during the interview.

Lastly, any generalization of our results cannot be made. This research aimed to explore a phenomenon in a given context, rather than generating new theories. By doing so, one company in one context were studied and defined as a single case. A multiple case-study would have contributed with multiple sources of evidence and may have had stronger reliability. The reliability of data was instead achieved by structuring, reducing and analysing the data separately by the authors to mitigate impacts of other authors interpretations.

6.3 Further research
Because of the limitations stated above, there is value in conducting a similar study but with a specific task-oriented change where all of the respondents are going through the same change process. As we believe, task-oriented change is a process that would be preferred to be investigated as a longitudinal case study to gain a deeper knowledge of the topic. In this study, some additional emerging themes were found to be influencing employees’ adaptivity. These were not categorized into a known aggregated dimension found from literature within the field of adaptivity to change. These dimensions were: Reflection, Time and workload and the Characteristics of the change. A study of any of these concepts in how they correlate with the ability to adapt to change is therefore a suggestion for future research.
7. References


8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1

Interview invitation

Invitation to participation in
Master’s Thesis Project at The Case Company

Dear Participant,

We are two students from Uppsala University who are studying Business Management. This interview is part of an on-going study during the spring semester for our Master Thesis. Your participation in this study is of great value for the overall success of the project, and we greatly appreciate your help! We assure you confidentiality is guaranteed by not revealing your name in the study. The findings of the study will be presented to The Case Company.

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand employees’ thoughts and feelings about their perceived ability to adapt to task-oriented changes in a fast-changing environment. This interview is aimed to shed light on what influence your adaptivity to change.

When we discuss change as a phenomenon, we are thinking about changes on a micro-level which possibly could affect your daily work routine.

We want to exemplify what these changes could look like:
‘Use work-system A, instead of work-system B’
‘Change internal communication platform X, to communication platform Y’
‘Use the new excel sheet, instead of the old excel sheet’
Or, when changing other internal work tools or processes.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us or our supervisor at The Case Company:

Christofer Cunningham, christofer.cunningham@gmail.com
Master Student, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University.

Karin Lindén, karihildegard@gmail.com
Master Student, Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University.

Contact person at Case Company
Innovation & Portfolio Manager, The Case Company, Stockholm Head Office

Kind regards,
Christofer Cunningham & Karin Lindén
8.2 Appendix 2

Interview guide
The purpose of this thesis is to better understand employees’ thoughts and feelings about their perceived ability to adapt to task-oriented changes in a fast-changing environment. This interview is aimed to shed light on what influence your adaptivity to change, in other words, your ability to adapt to change.

When we discuss change as a phenomenon, we are thinking about changes on a micro-level which possibly could affect your daily work routine.

We want to exemplify what these changes could look like:
‘Use work-system A, instead of work-system B’
‘Change internal communication platform X, to communication platform Y’
‘Use the new excel sheet, instead of the old excel sheet’
Or, when changing other internal work tools or processes.

Introduction
1. Can you please describe your professional background at The Case Company?

Adaptiveness to organizational change at the individual level
2. Can you describe your general perception of change?
   How do you generally feel when changes occur?
   What is change for you?

3. How do you perceive your ability to adapt to change?
   How do you perceive your adaptability to change?
   How do you adapt to changes?

4. What do you believe is important for you to be able to adapt to change?
   What does often help you to adapt to changes?
   For you to adapt to new ways of working, what enhances your adaptation?

5a. What do you believe is difficult when change is taking place?
5b. What do you believe is easy when change is taking place?
   What is easy for you, when adapting to change?

6. Do you often agree with the change initiatives?
   When changes occur, do you often feel they are good?
   What affects your mindset towards a change initiative?
   What can motivate you to work towards change that affects your way of working?

7. How do you feel when you are asked to do your work in a different way?
   How do you feel when you have to change how you work?
   When you are told to change your way of working, how does that make you feel?

8. From where do you perceive change initiatives often originates?
   Who often ask you to change your work routines?

9. Last, is there anything else that you want to mention regarding the ability to adapt to change that we have not talked about?

Thank you so much for your time and participation in this interview.
8.3 Appendix 3
Example of content analysis from the transcription of interview 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning unit (Interview quotes)</th>
<th>Condensed meaning units (First-order codes)</th>
<th>Category (Sub-theme)</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When I am stressed, I don't have that much energy but if the workload is normal and I have time to reflect on it, I would say that I am pretty good at it.”</td>
<td>My ability to adapt to change is influenced when I am feeling stressed, I then feel that I don’t have much energy.</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Psychological condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“At the moment it feels like a fluffy cloud but I know that then they will sit down and we will have frames on exactly how we are going to do it and then there will be no problems because I know guidelines will be very clear.”</td>
<td>I trust on the decision-makers for the change, that they eventually will inform me with clear guideline information.</td>
<td>Trust in decision makers</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Often, change is making my work more efficient but not always perhaps but then I have to adopt it.”</td>
<td>Even though the change is not making my work more efficient - I still have to adapt.</td>
<td>Normative mindset</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Often, change is making my work more efficient”</td>
<td>I adapt to change because it makes my work more efficient.</td>
<td>Understanding the effects of change.</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>