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Part of Dacke Group Nordic

NORDISKA FINANSANSTÄLLDAS UNION

Management Summary

Managers with personnel responsibility

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Decide if managers are a prioritized target group

Develop a sub-brand (union) for managers (possibly Nordic)

Highlight managers' work situation (and improve the level of knowledge)

Motivate employees for the future and their personal development

Continue to supply managers with courses and networks

Initiate discussions with managers

## DECIDE IF MANAGERS ARE A PRIORITIZED GROUP

“Managers with personnel responsibility” is a group with potential. They are very committed to almost all of the issues pursued by the union. This is shown in the very high response rate and the very ambitious answers to the open ended question. The managers are also in need of support in a lot of different areas, for example in salary negotiations, in specific personnel tasks, in creating a general understanding for managers’ work situation etc. Last but not least, they do believe that their union is able to support them. We believe that managers are an interesting group for you, but the question requires a lot of thought. Is this group important enough that you are willing to make some changes? Because, and this is the crucial point, if you want to be there for managers, changes are needed.

## DEVELOP A SUB-BRAND FOR MANAGERS

As mentioned above, if managers are a prioritized group you need to develop your organization, services, knowledge and attitudes. Many managers feel that there is a conflict of interest when the same union represents two sides. Most of them also believe that managers are always the ones ignored in these situations. According to comments in the open ended question, they do not even know that the union is meant for them, they are members by routine. This is probably the reason why less than 15% feel that their union supports them. Problems that are highlighted in the open ended question, are that managers sometimes have lower salaries than their employees sometimes as a result of collective agreements, managers have to negotiate their salary with co-workers lower in the hierarchy (Shop Steward) and managers also have to negotiate both employees’ and their own salary with the same union representative.

But, as mentioned above, they do believe in the union and they do need support. The best thing to do would be to create a “sub-union” only for managers, and why not make the “sub-union” Nordic? There are no major differences in attitudes, needs and the work situation between the Nordic countries and, as mentioned by some respondents, the business environment is becoming more and more Nordic and the co-operation is already established. The second best thing to do would be to arrange two Shop Stewards at every work place, one for the employees and one for the managers.

## HIGHLIGHT MANAGERS’ WORK SITUATION

First of all, to support managers with personnel responsibility you need to improve your level of knowledge of the managers’ work situation. Many of the managers feel counteracted by the union and also feel that the union does not seem to understand that – “we are all working towards the same goal”. They sometimes feel that the union has not understood today’s situation. The managers are not opponents, they are co-workers that want the best for the company and their employees. Managers are not bad people – an attitude they feel the union has towards them sometimes. If you want to support the managers you need to change this attitude.

To support managers you need to highlight their situation and show other members (who are not managers) what it means to be a manager. For instance, being a manager does not automatically mean you have to work overtime. More than 50% of the managers work more hours than contracted (especially in Denmark and Norway) and few managers (about 20%) feel that they have enough time to manage their tasks and pursue their personal development. If they were able to choose they would spend more time on their own personal development and less time on that of others. It is important to note that they do not feel stressed. Less than 20% feel very stressed and when asked what the optimal distribution of time would be, very few changes from the present situation were noted. This tells us that working overtime and lack of time for personal development is not causing stress in the short term.

The main reason for stress is lack of control. As a manager you have control. Managers know what's expected and they have the authority to prioritize and delegate tasks. Stress is also caused by doing things you do not like. According to the survey the managers are comfortable in their roll as managers and satisfied with their work situation. On top of that managers also have the ability to choose what tasks to delegate; they can hand over the task they find the least attractive. However, if the control is taken away from the managers they will probably feel stressed the very same day.

Even though the managers are not stressed and they do very small changes from the present situation when asked what the optimal distribution of time would be, they do want more time to spend on their own personal development. This is a desire and not a requirement. The lack of time for personal development is not causing stress. First of all, they don't feel that it is a prioritized issue; they believe they have the competence needed for today. Secondly, they still feel in control over the situation. However, this may change in the future, when other competences are needed.

The managers are not stressed, but they are working a lot and the managers' work hours are an important area to draw attention to. The statistic analysis (what factors have a correlation with the overall satisfaction) tells us that as well. To have enough time to pursue the personal development is one of four very important factors for the overall satisfaction at work. But it is the fourth. The most important factor for the overall satisfaction is to have the appropriate salary and benefits for the task. The second most important factor is to have influence over the work situation. To have influence over the work situation is more important than to have enough time to pursue the personal development, which supports the discussion above. The third most important factor is to have a positive attitude to the future regarding the work situation.

If anyone of these four mentioned factors will improve it will influence the overall satisfaction and the managers will be more satisfied at work. To help the managers get more satisfied, the union should draw attention to these issues and discuss them in different forum (in both manager and not manager focused forum). In doing so the understanding for the managers' situation will probably rise and it will be easier for the managers to improve the four most important areas for their overall satisfaction.

Another issue to address is that middle managers often have to implement decisions and changes that top managers have decided, but it is the middle managers that get blamed for the consequences. Top managers also tend to delegate all

issues to middle managers, resulting in an even greater lack of time for middle managers. This is an example of tasks the managers would like to have highlighted. – That it is discussed in different forum, members magazines for example. But, most of all, they want you to focus on your other members, their employees.

## MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES FOR THE FUTURE AND THEIR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The most positive sides of being a manager are development and influence. By development of course they mean their own personal development through stimulating and developing tasks and interesting courses (several comments on, and demands for, more and better management courses/forums in the open ended question), but also to support and experience their employees' personal development. In third place regarding what the most positive sides of being a manager are, we find relations with co-workers lower in the hierarchy. The answers to the open ended question show that this to a large extent concerns supporting and following the employees' development.

Even though the relationships are motivating, they are also demanding. Managers need to motivate, recruit, terminate, solve conflicts etc. All these issues were top five when managers were asked how demanding different tasks are. But it is important to note that it is not the relationship as such that is demanding. When asked about the overall relation with different people, the managers give very high satisfaction indexes. The relationship-related issues are demanding - not the relationships as such.

Different aspects relating to co-workers (competence, career, leadership) are the most important tasks that have to be solved in order to be able to handle future challenges. When asked what the most important issues are with regard to solving tasks in the future, the top 3 were that my co-workers have the necessary competence (>70%), that my co-workers to a higher degree manage themselves (>50%) and to focus on leading my co-workers (>40 %). This indicates that co-workers are important for the future, but it also indicates dissatisfaction with the current situation when looking towards the future. Having a positive attitude towards the future is one of the most important factors that influence satisfaction at work. Many comments in the open ended questions are about the co-workers. The managers want the union to motivate their members to make them ready for the future, they need to develop themselves, they need to be ready for changes, they need to understand the business situation (goals, competition etc).

The co-workers competence, attitude and independence seem to be very important issues for the managers. However, this may tell us more about the managers themselves than about their co-workers. The managers believe their competence matches the demands of the future and they don't feel that their personal development is an important to solving task in the future. They do explicitly ask for support regarding the co-workers. Maybe they need more competence regarding how to motivate and manage co-workers. This is not confirmed in the study, it is a hypothesis to discuss in detail in future forums.

## CONTINUE TO SUPPLY MANAGERS WITH COURSES AND NETWORKS

As mentioned above, many managers feel counteracted by the union. The satisfaction index reflects this. The satisfaction index is very low compared with other industries. The reason for dissatisfaction is according to the open ended question mainly the unions lacking manager perspective and old fashion organisation.

But the managers believe in the union and hope for changes. Over 50% would recommend the union to a colleague or another manager. Some comments in the open ended question in the end of the survey indicate that the managers believe the unions are trying, and they are trying well. The managers consider the courses and different networks arranged for managers as high quality and they explicitly say that they want the union to continue offering these services. Managers with no experience and no knowledge of the union's courses and networks for managers ask for these services when asked what the union can do for them. This tells us that the managers want what the union is offering but that it is a lack of information that the unions need to work on.

Even though managers want courses and networks, they all believe that the main focus for the union should be general support (for example in negotiations and conflicts) to members (including managers). To show that the union is for the managers as much as for the co-workers you need to discuss the manager perspective on all important issues. A sub-brand is a prerequisite for this. If you do not establish a sub-brand for managers this may result in other members' dissatisfaction and changed attitude. They may start to think that the union is on the employers' side of the table.

## INITIATE DISCUSSIONS WITH MANAGERS

The purpose of the survey was to identify areas for the union to improve. When the area is identified we need to have more in-depth knowledge before we can take action. This is not possible to get from the survey. To get more in-depth knowledge of the different aspects discussed above we recommend all unions to invite some managers with personnel responsibility to an open discussion. At these events you can choose some of the findings from the survey and discuss them more in detail.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS

Overall there are very few major differences between the countries. Besides, the differences found can be explained by other parameters. The differences worth mentioning are mainly about the situation today. In Norway and Denmark the managers seem to work more overtime than in other countries. One explanation, especially in Norway, is that more top-level managers participated in the survey. Top-level managers work a lot more than middle managers according to the survey. Another difference found, that probably also is a result of more top-level managers participated in some countries, is that in Denmark and Norway, the influence on the work situation is to a higher extent the most positive

with being a manager. Top-level managers believe that the most positive with being a manager is the influence over the work situation, the high salary and stimulating/developing tasks.

Finland and Denmark have a lower index regarding the relation to co-workers. And in Finland managers consider relationship related issues (motivating personnel, creating team spirit, solving conflicts, terminations etc) to be more demanding than managers in other countries appear to think. In Finland managers also mentioned co-workers competence and focus on leading co-workers to be the most important factors for solving tasks in the future to a higher extent. This is also a question about level of management rather than differences between countries. In Finland there were a lot more group managers/team leaders and project leaders participating and these managers consider these issues more demanding and they have lower index regarding relation to co-workers. They are also less comfortable in their roll as managers and feel counter-acted and lonely to a larger degree.

Denmark gives the impression to have a more positive attitude in general, but especially when it comes to being comfortable in the roll as a manager and to have a positive attitude toward the future. Regarding the future the only difference is in optimal distribution of time. In Finland managers want more time for business planning than in other countries.

When studying differences in age groups we find that younger managers appear to work more, they are less comfortable in their roll as managers and don't feel that it is demanding to inform co-workers. And older managers have a more positive attitude towards the future and feel that budget planning is demanding.

## METHOD

The conclusions are based on a web-survey. The web-survey was conducted in October 2005 and included union members that are managers and have personnel responsibility. The countries included are Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. 1,910 managers with personnel responsibility have participated.