Copenhagen Business School
Masters Thesis, Cand. Merc. Fil.

At tæmme en sælger

- en fortælling om forandring og forankring -

af
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English Abstract

The modern workplace is in a state of rapid change as the introduction of information technologies promises to deliver a world of effectiveness, coordination and precision in almost any kind of organization imaginable. This is at least the slogans with which programs of IT-implementation and organizational change are introduced. The main objective of this thesis is *to show how the introduction of IT does not necessarily in itself entail the desired changes in how work is done.* The thesis is based on a case study of the introduction of an IT-based CRM- and knowledge management system in the Danish subsidiary of a multinational IT-corporation – designated here as "CorpX". It is based on 26 interviews conducted with sales representatives and their managers combined with a large amount of work-process descriptions on the CorpX intranet.

Traditionally CorpX has sold IT-products individually but, as the market for IT-technologies is changing towards integrated IT-based solutions, CorpX has to change too. As a response to this challenge the concept "Team CorpX" was launched and had as it primary goal to break down the divisions between the different departments within CorpX and thus enable a unified and coordinated sales effort – in short: a single point of entry into the customers. The knowledge management system has a pivotal role in this change as it is intended to be the central source of information and coordination in the sales process. To enable this remodelling of the sales approach the role of the sales representatives must also be redefined, as the realization of "Team CorpX" demands a disciplined sharing of knowledge in the sales approach. As such, the introduction of "Team CorpX" also means the tightening of the disciplinary techniques with which the sales effort hitherto has been managed. The emergence of a disciplinary *dispositif,* as envisioned by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (Foucault, 2002), serves as the inspiration for an analysis of how the introduction of "Team CorpX" transforms the concept of selling and thus shifts the role of the sales representative – a change from a goal-oriented to a method-oriented subject position for the sales representative. These plans, however, have not consistently brought a change in the actual behaviour of the sales representatives towards a systematic sharing of knowledge – and this is because CorpX has partly failed to facilitate a naturalization (Star & Bowker, 1999) of the CRM-system. Instead there is some resistance on part of the sales representatives as some cannot and will not work as the new procedures prescribe. The lack of ability and motivation is due to three central problems in

the process of sharing knowledge: First, how the perception of the relevance of the knowledge shared affects what is registered; second, motivating the sharing of knowledge where the value of this knowledge cannot be readily assessed; and finally the importance of creating a structured yet meaningful common language of reference.

These problems cause the resistance seen in that there are two different ways of using the CRM-system: One where the sales representative acts disciplined and documents his method proactively in the CRM-system, which can thus be dubbed (with inspiration from Latour (1987)) "CRM ready-made" - The other a contrasting use of the system where the sales representative uses the system reactively and only to the point of appeasing his or her manager. In the last case there is a gap between what is required and what is actually done in the CRM-system – a gap showing how the use of the system is not settled yet, and is a part of a power struggle to define the future meaningful usage of the system. This phenomenon has been named "CRM in-the-making". The existence of this gap is due to the fact that there has never been a general clearance (Star & Bowker, 1999) of the routines of documenting customer-related work. The lack of clearance combined with a massive incentive for egoistic behaviour among the sales representatives – an incentive created by large bonuses for individual revenue attainment – entails a situation where sales representatives considers the CRM-system exterior to their ways of working and thus undermine the concept of "Team CorpX". The general conclusion is that the restructuring of work-routines is not done just by laying out a new system – organizational change of this size demands a massive and thorough clearing-effort throughout the organization.