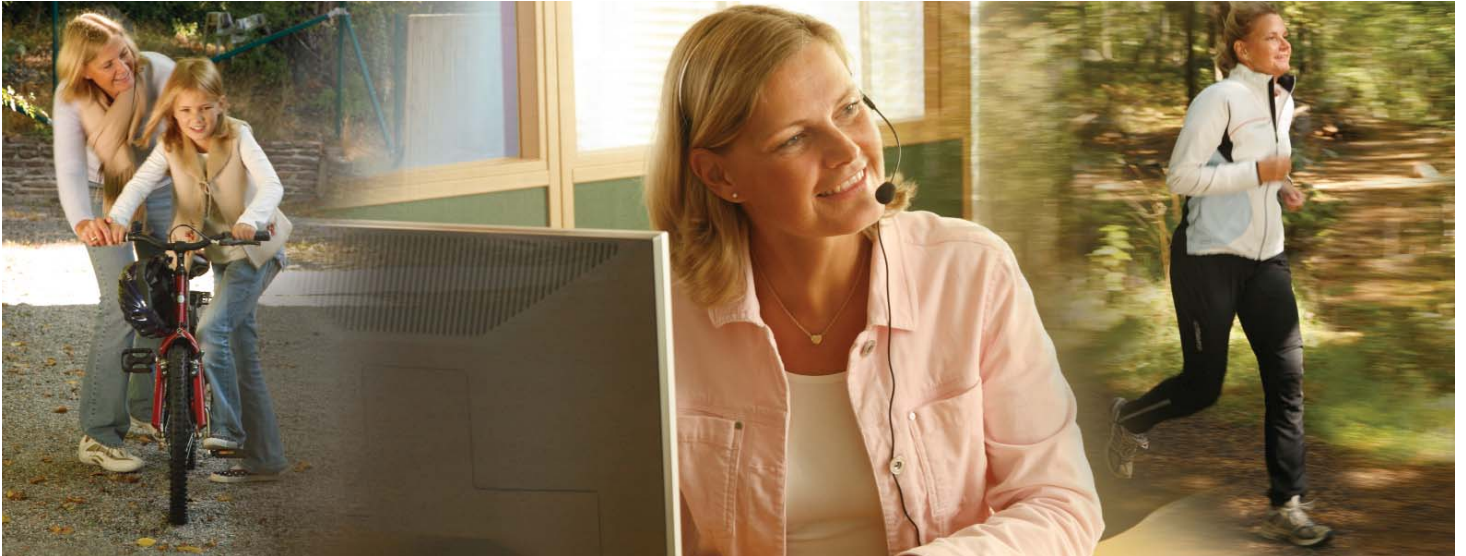


Lifestyle Scheduling

– Workforce Management with a Human Touch



Balancing work and leisure time

- 51% of your staff have promised themselves a better work-life balance*
- How do you fulfil this requirement?
- Hear Teleopti's views on how to reward and motivate your staff by improving work/life balance

**Source: Nielsen Healthier Life Balance, 28 Dec 2006.*

The global trend concerning 'health and wellbeing', which started many years ago, is now a general lifestyle approach for people in many parts of the world.

Increasingly, work is selected on the basis of mental and physical wellbeing. Balancing work and leisure time has become a prerequisite rather than an option. Work scheduling is increasingly a matter for negotiation and can be as important as remuneration to an employee.

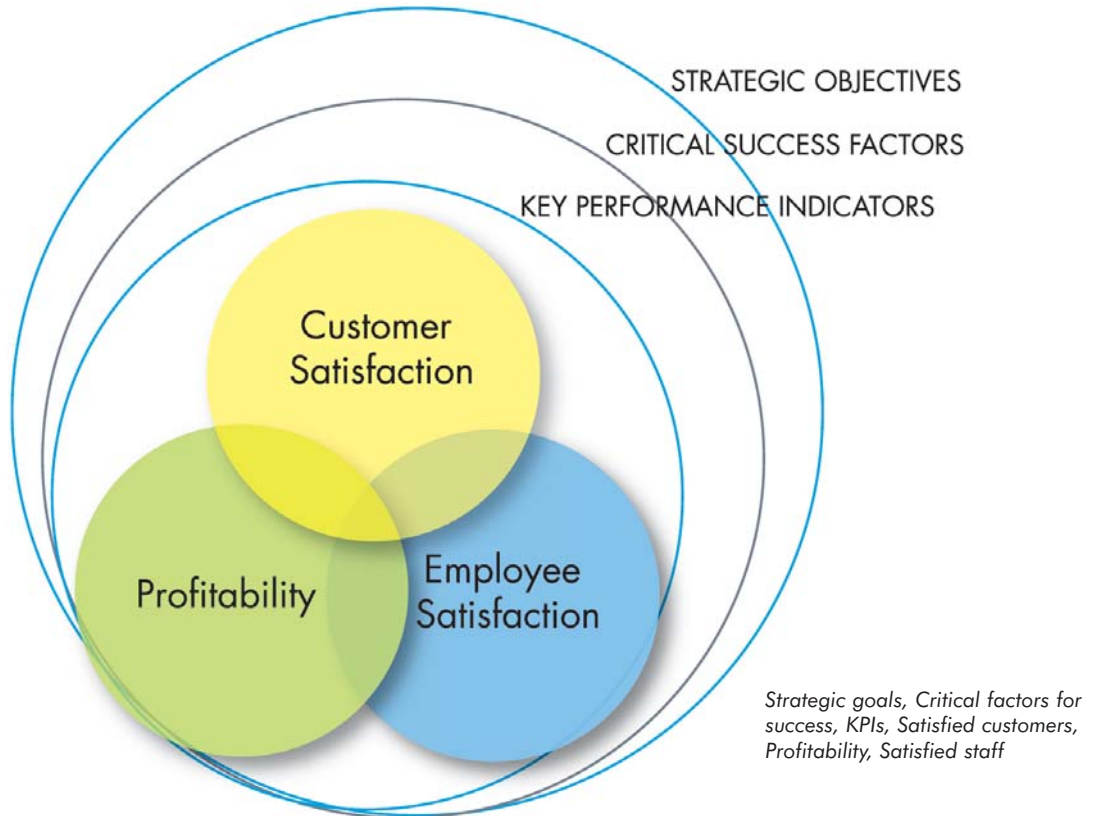
How can the customer services sector meet this new trend? Is there a way to offer your employees a work-life balance in a healthy environment?

We believe that there is and will gladly share our thoughts with you.

At Teleopti, we have developed a new generation of workforce management tools that unite:

- Management's demands for efficiency and profitability
- Customers' demands for service and quality
- Employees' demands for recognition, participation and work-life balance

An appealing workplace can be characterised by a positive interaction between satisfied customers, profitability and satisfied staff. Factors which contribute to a successful interaction are people (recruitment, training and development, motivation and coaching) and processes (strategy, management, internal communication, corporate culture, policy, workplace environment, the entire place as a whole).



Raising customer service attendance

Staff-related costs make up 60-80% of total customer service costs, which often means corporate management sees it solely as a 'cost centre'.

Precision staffing is a term meaning the employer strives to pay for the exact, correct amount of labour at every given moment. The employer wants to achieve cost-effective production through staffing that is as precise as possible. Therefore the focus is on work hours and staffing issues.

This type of customer service streamlining is sometimes interpreted, by unions and employees, as an attempt by management to implement cutbacks and/or make employees work harder. Tools for precision staffing have been described by unions as 'machines that turn people into robots' (Swedish Insurance and Finance Union Magazine, no. 3, 2005).

A report from the former National Institute for Working Life in Sweden (report 2000:15) states that many people feel they are under surveillance and have little opportunity to influence their work. Call counting is often perceived as stressful because it can drive the quality of response down. It is certainly true that shorter calls give a larger call count, but response quality cannot be measured in terms of time. Negative perceptions also arise from the monotony of the work and having little control over your

own work. One in five people working in this type of environment say that their workload is too great.

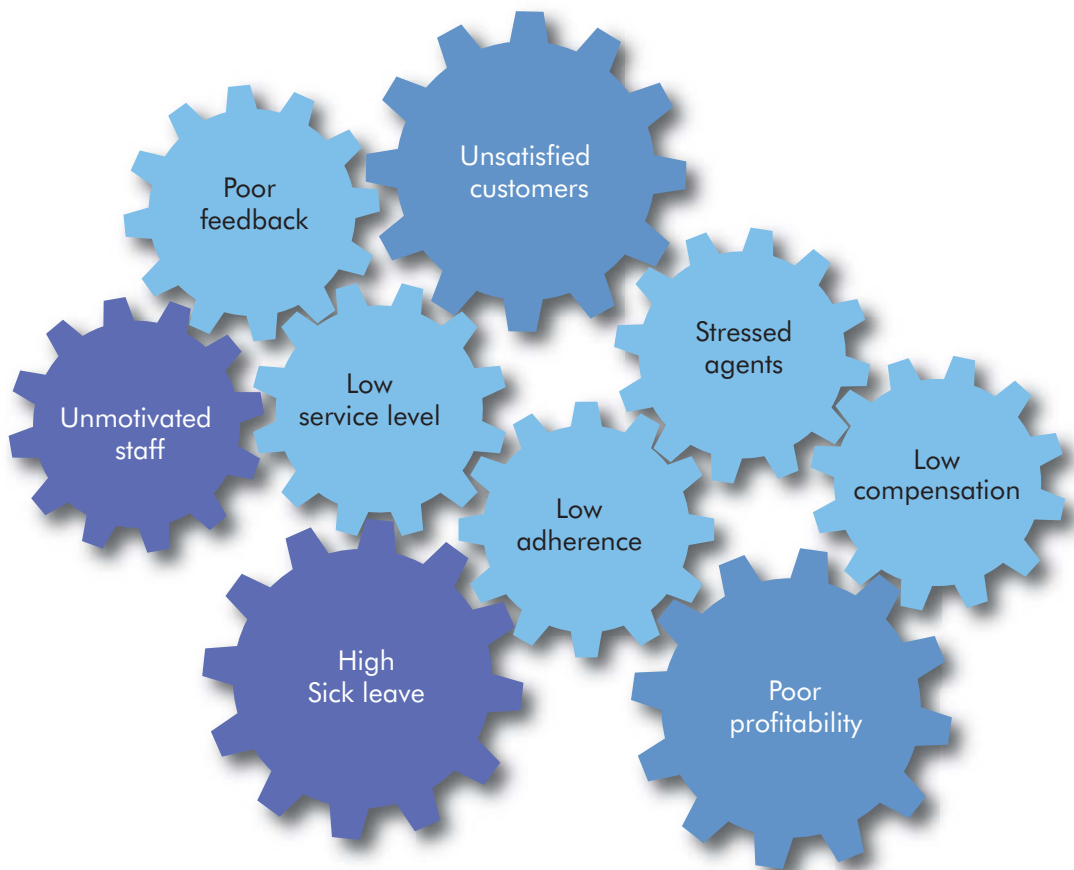
It is interesting to note that more than half of respondents in the survey think their workload is just right or too small. At the same time, it is apparent that people are most satisfied with a variation of tasks, the possibility of flexible working hours, and contact with the customers and their fellow employees. This can explain why we are seeing more customer service departments where staff are developing and feeling no stress despite/ due to the staffing system, and we are determined to share our knowledge about how these environments can be created. And finding examples of best practice is frequently more instructive than focusing on poor examples.

In 'Keeping Good People' (by Roger E. Herman, Oakhill Press, 1999) you can read about the Herman Group's survey regarding the real causes of staff turnover:

- **IT DOESN'T FEEL GOOD HERE.** Often it is a matter of corporate culture. Employees may also be troubled by the company's reputation, the actual workplace environment, security and a sense of clarity in their tasks.
- **THEY WOULDN'T MISS ME IF I LEFT.** Even if managers really do appreciate employees, they might not say it out loud too often. If people do not feel important, then there is no motivation to stay. No one wants to feel like part of the furniture, easily replaced by anyone walking down the street. If they are regarded as expendable, then they leave their position for another where they do feel appreciated.
- **I DON'T GET THE SUPPORT I NEED TO DO MY JOB.** Contrary to claims made all too often by management, people really do want to do a good job. When they are frustrated by too many rules, restrictions or incompetent managers and employees, then they look around for new opportunities.
- **THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCEMENT.** No, we are not talking about promotion, even though many qualified professionals would like to move up the corporate ladder. The issue here is about learning. People enjoy learning in order to be better prepared and the sense of discovering something new. They wish to improve their ability to conduct a broad spectrum of varied tasks. Call it 'career insurance'. There is a desire to train and develop. If the employee cannot see development potential in a company then they seek other positions where they can develop.
- **REMUNERATION IS THE FINAL REASON MOST PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LEAVE.** It's a materialistic statement, but it is also true. Employees want fair remuneration but the above four factors have to be met first. If not, and the salary is high, they will still say: "You cannot pay me enough to make me want to stay." Even if this assessment applies, there are many employees who think they can improve themselves by chasing a higher salary.

Despite large amounts being spent on staff, management does not seem to measure the return on this investment. Let's understand that in a market where everyone is competing for first prize, it's the employees that are the only true means of competition. Try calculating investments in the recruitment strategy exactly like a technical investment. If you have a high staff turnover and/or high absenteeism don't make guesses! Find out why your staff are leaving or staying at home.

The diagram illustrates the interaction between various measurements. Suppose the problem is high absenteeism. Then there is a connection to the service level, agent accessibility and profitability which leads to the supposition that staff are not feeling motivated. In turn, unmotivated staff leads to a lack of commitment and poor health.



Make customer service a 'profit centre' – a strategic resource

Much of the success of customer services is judged from a cost perspective. Does this mean that value judgements and customer service quality come a poor second?

Customer service, in our opinion, has a much too low status in many companies. It is still the case that customer service takes care of others' mistakes. Incorrect invoices, ambiguous letters and unplanned market initiatives cause unnecessary and long calls to customer service, which can be hugely expensive for the business.

A 'profit centre' can be business critical by highlighting opportunities to increase profitability, alternative solutions and, not least, contributing to satisfying customers. As an employee, you have an important part to play in identifying failures in corporate procedures and therefore are fundamental in improving them.

It is in customer service where the company's strategies are put to the test. It is here that alternatives can be demonstrated in a changeable world where planning in advance and flexibility are necessities.

Diversity in recruitment

We would be so bold to say that the problem starts at the recruitment stage! Are sufficient time and resources being deployed to find out if the applicant is the right person for the company and the task is right for the employee?

Against the background of the employee's wish for the correct work-life balance, it is increasingly important to take a holistic view regarding the individual.

The job interview needs to be characterised by both the interviewer and interviewee having an understanding for the need for a work-life balance in order to feel motivated by the work and commitment to the job. It is crucial to offer flexibility regarding working hours, without diminishing the quality of service provided to customers. The diversity of the workforce (meaning different genders, ages, ethnic back-ground/culture, social class, functional disorders, sexuality, education, marital status, values, etc) means that the life-work balance varies among the staff and this therefore provides opportunities for flexibility concerning work time preferences. Religion, education, age and family affairs also strongly determine the employee's demands regarding working conditions.

Diversity also affects customer service traffic patterns. For example, religious holidays occur at different times. Diversity is part of our entire society and therefore customer service needs to raise its skill in meeting the diversity represented among customers. For the business that wants to succeed, managing diversity is a strategic necessity, even internally. Therefore a long-term diversity goal helps the business focus on competency.

For staffing systems currently used to plan customer service resources, it is therefore important to be able to group employees based on specific work-time rules, preferences, development ladders, etc. National origin and gender do not alter, however other characteristics such as age do change, so it is important, at least, to divide work-time rules into specific periods.

In other words, a staffing system should be able to manage everything from prayer times for some agents to shortened working hours for parents with small children.

Staff that most enjoy working in customer service are people with a pronounced feeling for service and who like to 'help out' – even in the most thankless situations. They do not have a typically competitive nature, but possess sound common sense and like a structured way of working and clear goals to match their own performance against. (Dr. John Crump)

Staff development – a prerequisite for productivity

"If you do not continually strive to increase each employee's sense of worth, then you have absolutely no chance to succeed. And what is the alternative? Talent that goes to waste, uncommitted people, a workforce that is angry or bored. It just won't work."

The above quote comes from Jack Welch, CEO, General Electric, in his memoir 'Lessons for Success'. It indicates the obvious, yet difficult, fact that a motivated workforce is a prerequisite for every organisation's success. A leader's task is to create the conditions for people to feel motivation and commitment. The concept of replacing

human leadership with self-instruction technology is devastating for motivation and the opportunity for personal development.

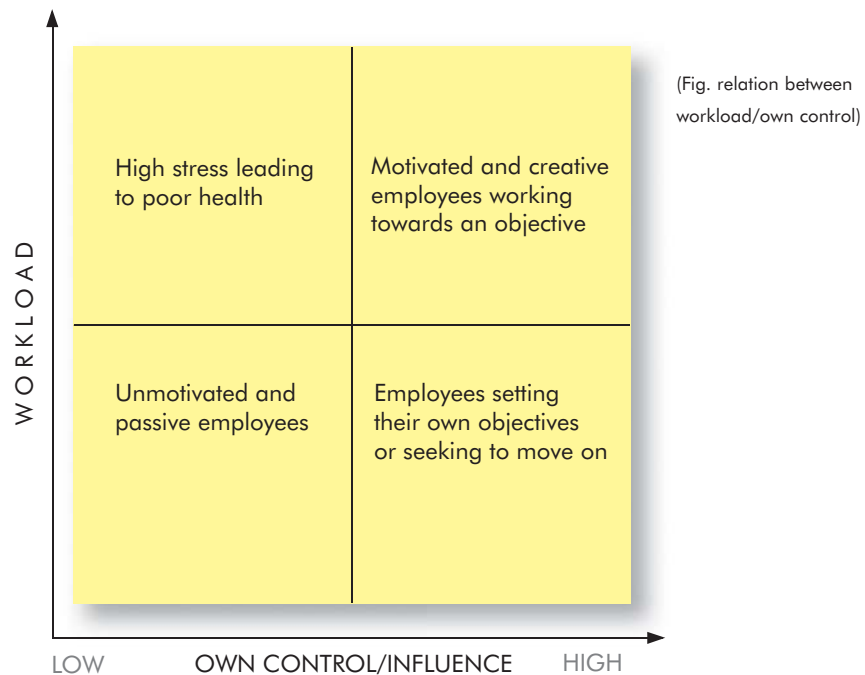
Research can give valuable insights to those of us working in this sector who want to maintain or increase motivation among employees. Attempts to raise productivity, without simultaneously providing support and opportunities to empower staff to influence their own situation, will quite simply fail.

There are several fundamental factors that create motivation:

- Satisfactory actual workplace environment
- To have the opportunity to influence your own situation at work
- To receive relevant feed-back on what you are doing
- To have been made aware and accept the goals for your work
- That work does not hinder meaningful leisure time

We should also keep in mind that a crucial factor in people's lives is 'room to manoeuvre'. Quite simply, we feel better at work if we know we can plan duties to suit other parts of our lives; this is confirmed by research. For some employees the actual task is the most important thing, while for others the social aspect is most important. A third point of view is purely existential. Most of us certainly work to be able to live – not live in order to work. Considering how much time we spend doing our jobs, it ought to be obvious to seek a supporting system that facilitates an employee's ability to properly combine work and leisure time.

This is supported by research about stress in many sectors (see Karasek/Theorell 1990, 'Healthy Work, Productivity and Reconstruction of Working Life', Basic Books, Inc, New York). Researchers have come to the conclusion that the consequences of stress and illness at work are not only determined by demands made by the work situation. Rather it is the workload in combination with the individual's room to manoeuvre, i.e. to what degree I can influence my situation and how I choose to conduct my tasks, that determines how we develop and feel at work.



Social support from a supervising manager is especially important for work with a high, quantitative workload. I would like to be recognised for what I do and to feel I have support if I should need it. This is an old fact; however it needs to be repeated. We must also remember that a combination of low demands and little opportunity to influence your situation can equally lead to a high degree of discomfort/illness and makes the employee passive. For customer service that gives staff little opportunity to influence how they conduct their tasks, the opportunity to influence their working hours increases motivation, once you make the connection between influence and motivation.

In order for demands to be clear and create commitment, they need employees to be involved and discussion to take place. Goals need to be realistic and regularly monitored together by employees and leaders. Quantitative goals ought to be complemented by qualitative goals and we should be looking for situations that increase employees' total room for manoeuvre.

The relationship between productivity and efficiency

Do you let your employees deliver the service customers are asking for, or are unrelated goals detracting staff from acting independently and using their own initiative?

There is often a conflict between providing good service to customers and keeping call times short in order to keep reasonable waiting times. Some companies seem to observe the 'hard' facts of productivity targets, while others see the quality aspects from the perspective of both customers and employees.



Assuming the above 'staircase' to symbolise a company's progress over time (adapting to market conditions, changes in the way of working, etc.) it becomes apparent that the quantitative 'must' factors also need adjustment. By cementing and securing the quantitative parameters, a company can reach a certain level of progress. However it takes work with the qualitative parameters, if the company is to progress further and raise service quality for both customers and employees.

Key performance indicators that relate to productivity are 'must' factors that can change over time depending on the company's overall objectives. But quality enables motivation and development of both individuals and the company. Therefore we view this relationship as a development 'staircase' leading to the strategic goals. And because the world around us is constantly changing, these goals and ways of working need to be continually reviewed by those in charge.

Only a few studies have been conducted, however Houlihan is one researcher who has successfully studied bosses and managers in customer service environments in the UK. The conclusions and debates regarding the research show that the work of customer service managers is characterised by two principal tasks. The first is to monitor statistics and call graphs by using technology and computer systems within the organisation. The other is to check the number of hours worked by staff, monitor the number of calls and check these against forecasts and bonus-related wages. Furthermore, Houlihan (2001) states that managers are placed in a rigid, established system without particularly much left on which to use their own initiative. Managers are restricted by technical solutions and systems. The systems are in control, not the managers.

If there was better co-operation between resource planners and team leaders, then information from technical solutions would be an invaluable support in the pursuit of the perfect way of working.

Conclusion

All commercial endeavours are based on three fundamentals: **people, products and profitability**. There is no point discussing which is most important. Let us just summarise that without motivated employees there isn't a lot you can do to improve the other two fundamentals.

Teleopti has developed a staffing system that lives up to what we call workforce management with 'A Human Touch'. We have built-in the most important factors for employees, namely:

- The ability to plan work around your life – not your life around work.
- That values that actually matter are reflected in the behaviour that gets rewarded.
- To be seen and feel appreciated, as an individual but also as part of a group.

We see that customer service departments that succeed in creating an appropriate work-life balance for employees, and therefore retain their best staff, are those that combine Teleopti CCC with professional, value-based leadership and a commitment to a clear business strategy.

Referring back to Houlihan's research, we would like to point out that in companies where managers use Teleopti CCC strategically to raise the level of collaboration across different parts of the organisation, we clearly see that they can easier attain the objective of turning customer service into the one of the company's most important means of competition.

Within the sector there is a misconception that workforce tools with their precision and measurements are responsible for imbalance and stress. On the contrary, it is the lack of knowledge about what leads to increased efficiency from a human perspective that creates dissatisfaction in customer service.

About Teleopti

Teleopti provides world-leading solutions for strategic workforce management. With client-unique and advanced solutions for workforce planning, renowned for their user friendliness, Teleopti contributes to creating greater efficiency and productivity.

Hundreds of enterprises in Europe currently use Teleopti solutions to achieve the best efficiency and service levels. Solutions are available via Teleopti offices in Stockholm, Strängnäs, Malmö, Oslo, London, New Delhi and Dubai, as well as a comprehensive network of partners.

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About Maureen Lundgren Gomes

TITLE

Business consultant (BA in Business Economics, Sociology, Statistics and Human Relations)

ASSIGNMENTS

Works with Teleopti products and services for strategic workforce planning within the field of change management. The work covers change processes, organisational issues, leadership, customer service recruitment and much more.

EXPERIENCE

Project manager, sales manager and product manager at My Travel, Sweden. Together with My Travel's management team, she was responsible for the implementation of Teleopti CCC to balance My Travel's staffing costs against required service levels, customer demands and employee satisfaction. Since starting at Teleopti in 2001, her speciality is to create transparency in the client's organisation and thereby get management and employees to understand the need for change in order to reach strategic goals.

About Marita Bildt

TITLE

Organisational Consultant (BA in Pedagogy, Psychology and Sociology)

ASSIGNMENTS

Works with management issues at Teleopti.
Is an organisational and leadership consultant for Teleopti's clients. Conducts teambuilding activities and gives seminars about personal development, achieving goals and motivation.



EXPERIENCE

Worked as a teacher at the Pedagogy Institute at Uppsala University (1981-83).
Personnel and leadership development for the Defence Forces and Gällöfsta education centre (1984-86).
Leadership development and change processes at Digital Equipment (1986-91).
Founded Teleopti together with husband Nils in 1992.