

The design path towards cabin crew engagement

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An exploration on the use of positive and strategic
design methods for improving employee engagement

Master thesis
Design for Interaction

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Executive summary

Over the years, FlyCo has set itself apart from competition with its customer intimacy, and wants to maintain this quality as a primary focus for the future.

Competing with growing competitors, however, have forced FlyCo to take the necessary measures in terms of financial savings and efficiency. These measures may have returned the desired operational results, negative side effects include a decline in the engagement of its cabin crew. Not oblivious to the importance of cabin crew in terms of customer intimacy, FlyCo is looking for ways to improve the engagement of cabin crew. The objective in this project was exploring the use of design methods to improve the engagement of the cabin crew.

Definitions on the concept of employee engagement in academic literature often take different approaches. Nonetheless, agreement can be found in stating that engaged employees are highly energised in, and strongly identified with their work roles. Work roles comprise both roles in the job itself and roles in being a member of an organization. This work-related state of high energy and strong identification cannot simply be implied to employees, but should be stimulated by providing the required preconditions.

Combining insights with academic literature, the following definition of employee engagement for use within the OBS division was

proposed:

Engaged OBS employees are flourishing ambassadors of FlyCo, highly energised in, and strongly identified with their work roles and collaboratively contributing to a flourishing airline.

Results in this project show that the cabin crew is intrinsically highly energised in, and strongly identified with their work roles, consciously choosing this work and the accompanying way of life. However, changes in their work context have negatively affected the personal feel within the division, resulting in a sense of anonymity among cabin crew and a sense of separation between cabin crew and OBS office employees. This has caused a decrease in their perceived sense of importance for the company, negatively influencing their work engagement.

The proposed design is the Employee application, which aims to bring back the personal feel within the OBS division: A travel guide application by and for OBS employees. This design builds upon the OBS employee's shared love for seeing the world. In doing so, the design contributes to restoring the required organizational conditions for facilitating cabin crew engagement.

Validation of the design prototype showed its potential in connecting OBS employees based on mutual interests outside of the work context. Intrinsic motivation for use of both cabin crew and OBS office employees was sparked by building it around the topic of travelling.

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Chapter I

Introduction

This introductory chapter presents the context and scope of this design project. Starting with background information on FlyCo and its ambitions, this chapter works towards the formulation of research questions guiding the analysis of this project.

1.1 Introduction to FlyCo's ambition

Over the years, FlyCo has taken the necessary measures in order to remain future fit. Specific investments in relation to modernising the company were necessary, requiring savings to be made elsewhere in the company. It was a necessity to decrease expenditure in operations and increase efficiency, in order to withstand the increasingly strong competition of airliners worldwide and guarantee FlyCo's existence in the future. FlyCo's new ambition was subsequently formulated as follows:

An airline's cabin crew is often regarded the face of the company, due to the role they play in the customer's airline experience in general and flight experience specifically. Since FlyCo's cabin crew was already renowned for their onboard customer intimacy, FlyCo decided to build on this strength and make customer-centricity its unique selling point.

In order to build on this ambition, FlyCo requires all employees to be 'on board' in working as a team towards this common goal. Recent savings and efficiency measures, however, have affected employees throughout the company.

1.2 'on board' services

FlyCo's operation is subdivided into divisions, of which OnBoardServices (OBS) is the largest. As the division's name indicates, its responsibilities cover the provided customer service onboard and requirements making this service possible.

It is essential to have the cabin crew's support and endorsement of this ambition. Nonetheless, recent need for company-wide savings and efficiency measures have also affected cabin crew. Examples are the densification of airplanes (having to serve more passengers on board), shorter rests between work days and reducing the intercontinental flight crews by one cabin attendant, all of which impact the cabin crew's workload. Consequently, Ipsos' 2017 employee monitor among cabin crew shows an overall drop in cabin crew engagement compared to earlier measurements.

1.3 Project scope

The personal approach of FlyCo's cabin crew is considered an important motivator for customers for choosing to fly with the company. This, together with potential operational benefits, formed the incentive to explore new possibilities and approaches towards cabin crew engagement. This present project about exploring and evaluating the use of design methods in order to structurally improve cabin crew engagement.

Even though Employee engagement is a company-wide topic, this study focuses specifically at the engagement of cabin crew at the On-Board-Services division. This project looks beyond the immediate challenges, to find opportunities for improving the cabin crew engagement on a structural basis, providing a more sustainable solution.

1.4 Project goal and build-up

FlyCo has so far used potential operational results such as higher customer metrics and profitability as motivators to focus on engagement. The aim of this present project was to provide On-Board-Services management with refreshing and usable insights supporting the improvement of the cabin crew's engagement. The overall project goal was formulated as follows:

Using design to structurally improve the engagement of FlyCo's cabin crew.

Specific emphasis was put on using elements from positive and strategic design, both taking a human-centred and holistic view on the design context. The application of these design methods is evaluated in the reflection in chapter 5.

In order to gather the necessary insights to design for the engagement of cabin crew, the analysis phase of this project was guided by the following two research questions:

1. What does employee engagement for FlyCo comprise?

In this first research question, the scope was limited to the HR and OBS divisions of FlyCo. HR had been working on new tools to measure company-wide employee engagement and team-specific engagement, and would therefore form a good foundation to gauge the company's views on employee engagement. The analysis at OBS office departments was done to specifically analyse current views on cabin crew engagement and means for improving the cabin crew's engagement within the OBS division. The result of the first research question is a workable definition of employee engagement at OBS. This facilitates streamlining

further goals and ambitions regarding employee engagement.

2. Where lies the opportunity to positively influence the engagement of cabin crew using design methods?

The second research question targeted the cabin crew specifically. This focus was chosen to get a holistic view of the context in which this project is placed. The results of this second research question provide an 'entry point' for using design methods to structurally improve cabin crew engagement, by defining a design goal.

This analysis of employee engagement served as the basis for the design created and validated in this project.

1.5 Report structure

The structure of this report is divided into 4 phases. The current introductory chapter provides the background information on FlyCo's motives for their focus on employee engagement and the scope and leading research questions for this design project.

Chapters 2 and 3 form the analysis phase of the report, both analysing the concept of employee engagement in literature and current views and understanding of this concept at FlyCo and OBS specifically. Chapter 2 is concluded with a comparison between the different approaches and views which finalizes in a definition proposal for employee engagement at OBS, serving as a guide for alignment of future efforts. Chapter

3 utilizes the proposed definition to analyse factors in the work context of cabin crew which influence their engagement to their work. This chapter is concluded with the design goal for the conceptualization and design phase in this project.

Chapter 4 presents the translation from analysis to the design of the Employee application and the validation of this design. This chapter concludes with the final design of the Employee application created in this project.

Chapter 5 forms the conclusion of this present research, discussing its findings, reflecting on the use of design methods to design for employee engagement and recommending future endeavours on this topic.

Chapter 2

Employee engagement

The term employee engagement has already been mentioned in the first chapter of this report, but what does it actually refer to? Before working towards a definition for employee engagement at OBS, the academic theory behind this concept is presented in this chapter, as well as an internal analysis of current views of employee engagement within FlyCo and OBS specifically.

2.1 Origin of employee engagement

Even though the origin of the term employee engagement in academic research is somewhat ambiguous, the relation of engagement to the context of work can be traced back to the “psychologization” of the workplace” (Schaufeli, 2013, p3). This refers to the increasing need for employees to have psychological capabilities to make themselves thrive, and contribute to an organization’s survival (Schaufeli, 2013).

In academic literature, there are three main approaches to employee engagement. These approaches are respectively focused on personal engagement, work engagement and employee engagement. To provide a background for this present study, this chapter starts with an overview of these three approaches to employee engagement, which will be discussed in order to find similarities in the essence of each approach. These similarities were used in this project to guide the analysis of employee engagement at FlyCo, presented in this chapter as well.

2.2 Personal engagement

The founding definition relating to employee engagement is the definition of personal engagement (Kahn 1990). This type of engagement is defined as the simultaneous self-employment (driving personal energy into labour physically, cognitively and emotionally) and self-expression (displaying one’s real identity in thoughts and feelings) of one’s preferred self in task behaviour, promoting connections to work and others personal presence and active, full-role performance (kahn, 1990).

Important in this definition is the synergy between one’s self and the role(s) which one performs: “People who are personally engaged keep their selves within a role, without sacrificing one for the other” (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). It indicates a possible merging of two entities, a person’s preferred self and the role which he/she has to perform. The more these two entities align, the more engaged a person will be.

Furthermore, the self-employment aspect of personal engagement is connected to flow (Kahn, 1990), where the investment of personal energy finds the right balance between challenge and skill,

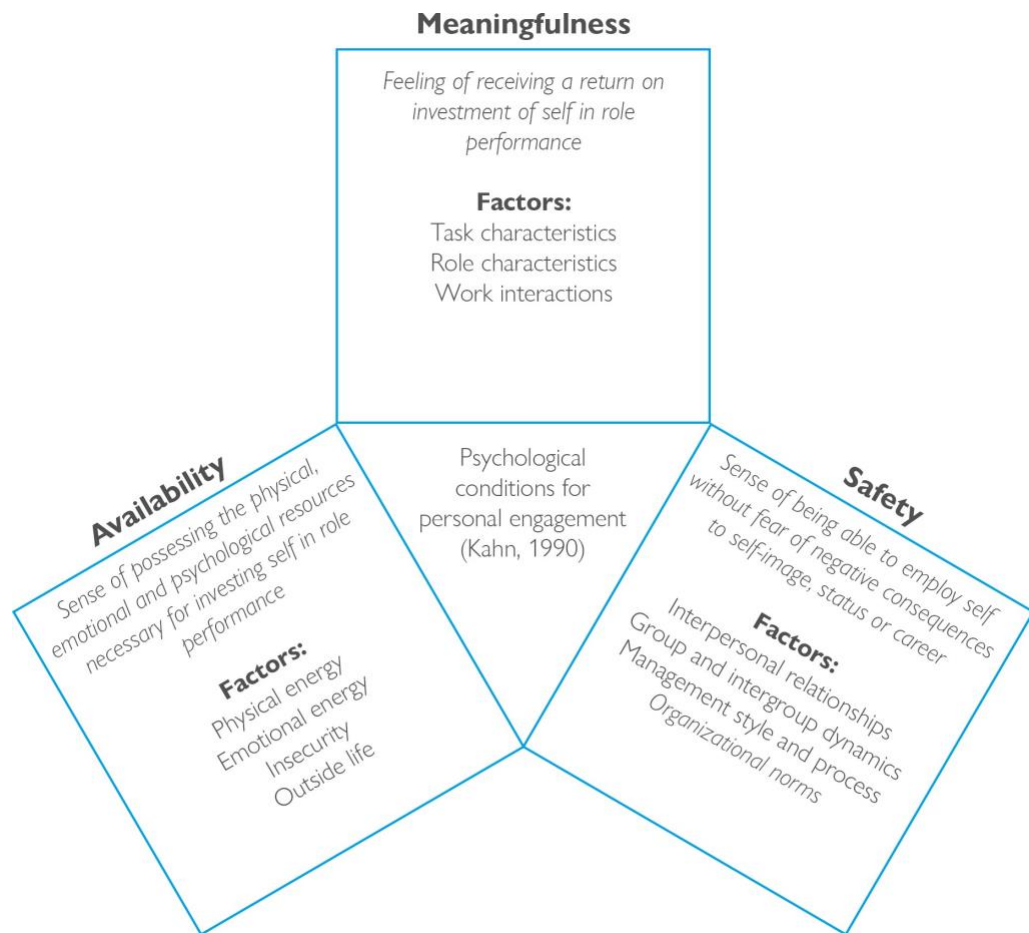


Figure 2.1. Three psychological conditions for personal engagement and factors influencing each (Kahn, 1990).

leading to a state of absorption at work.

The approach of personal engagement also defines meaningfulness, safety and availability as three psychological conditions required for people to be personally engaged (Kahn, 1990). Furthermore, each of these psychological conditions are potentially influenced by factors in the organization (figure 2.1).

2.3 Work engagement

The second approach in academic literature is the work engagement approach (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002). The work engagement approach specifically defines engagement in the work context. According to this approach, work engagement is “A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74).

This approach regards engagement as a distinct concept negatively related to burnout, where burnout is a state of energy deprivation (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Contrary to burned-out employees, engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Furthermore, these employees are more creative, more productive and more willing to go that extra mile (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Similar to personal engagement, the work engagement also connects to flow, specifically in the absorption aspect (Schaufeli et al., 2002). When engaged, an employee experiences being in a flow-like state of absorption in which “time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p.

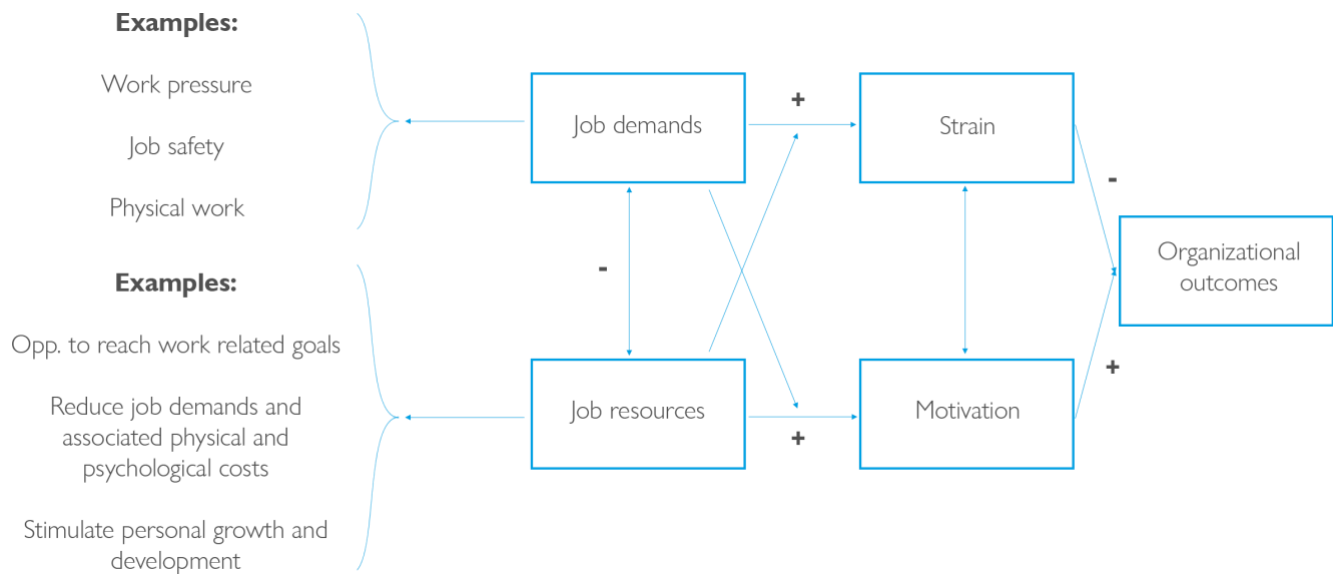


Figure 2.2. The JD-R model including examples of job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

210). However, where flow concerns short-term experiences, engagement is viewed as a more long-term experience (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

The Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) builds on the aforementioned burnout and well-being approach to employee engagement by linking work circumstances to straining and motivational processes. In the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R), energised employees find the right balance between job demands and job resources (figure 2.2). A job with only high demands and no resources to counterbalance these demands can result in an employee experiencing a large amount of psychological, physical and emotional strain, which may in turn result in burnout and absenteeism consequently. A proper balance between job demands and job resources is necessary in order to stimulate employee engagement, beneficial for organizational outcomes. Examples of job demands are work pressure, job safety and physically challenging work, while job resources offer opportunities to reach work-related goals, reduce job demands and associated psychological and physiological costs and/or stimulate personal growth and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

2.4 Employee engagement

The third academic approach to employee engagement explains why employees become engaged through a reciprocal interdependence in their job or organization (Saks, 2006). In this approach, employee engagement is defined as “A distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance” (Saks, 2006, p. 602).

Even though the psychological conditions as described in the personal engagement approach (Kahn, 1990) describe preconditions necessary for people to personally engage in role performance, they do not offer a full explanation on why employees become engaged (Saks, 2006). The social exchange theory (SET) offers a thorough explanation on why individuals will become engaged employees, explaining the relationship and obligations occurring in a situation where multiple parties are in a state of reciprocal interdependence (Saks, 2006). “One way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement. That is, employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organization”

Engagement driver	Type of engagement	Organizational outcomes
Leadership style	Job engagement	Job satisfaction
Job characteristics		Job performance
Value congruence		
Perceived organizational support	Job & organizational engagement	Intention to quit
Workplace relationships		
Procedural justice	Organizational engagement	Organizational citizenship behaviours
Shared vision		
Shared mood		

Figure 2.3. Drivers of job and organizational engagement (Edwards, 2018).

(Saks, 2006, p. 603). These resources influencing the employee's level of engagement are of economic and socioemotional nature (Saks, 2006).

Important in this employee engagement approach is the distinction between job and organizational engagement (Saks, 2006). An employee's engagement in this approach is role-specific with respect to the employee's job and organization. The engaged employee can be fully consumed by the job roles which s/he has to fulfil. On the organizational side, the engaged employee can be energised by getting involved with organizational developments. Being two distinct types of engagement, these do not necessarily have to occur simultaneously. An engaged employee can be engaged with the job role(s), but disengaged with organizational activities and vice versa. Figure 2.3 (Edwards, 2018) shows the distinction between job and organizational engagement based on examples of unique and overlapping drivers affecting both types of engagement.

2.5 Preliminary discussion

The three discussed approaches to employee engagement found in literature each emphasize a unique aspect of employee engagement. Kahn (1990) discusses employee engagement from an overview perspective, hence naming it personal engagement. Personal engagement does not necessarily link to work, and can be applied to many situations in which an individual takes on, or has to take on, a certain role. In relation to work, personal engagement might occur in job-specific roles, but could also occur in organizational roles, such as being an ambassador for the organization the employee works for. In relation to the cabin crew, this is a valuable approach since they have multiple roles. Not only do they have the job roles of amongst others taking care of passengers and maintaining the flight's safety, they also act as the 'face' of the airliner, stressing their importance of being ambassadors of the airline.

The work engagement approach of Schaufeli et al. (2002) is the engagement of an employee with the job-specific role. This approach, together with

the JD-R model, shows conditions influencing the level of energy an employee has in the job role. Highly energised employees found the right balance between the job's demands and resources, contributing to their work engagement. In light of recent measures affecting the cabin crew's job, this approach possibly provides handles for evaluating the effect of these measures on the cabin crew's energy and therefore engagement in their job.

The distinction between job and organizational engagement as made by Saks (2006) is an important addition to the previous two approaches. Both job and organizational engagement of cabin crew are important to focus on for FlyCo, since they affect both the employee and the company. If job demands get too high, cabin attendants may perceive more strain than motivation in their jobs. This could eventually result in burnout, negative for employee well-being, and absenteeism consequently, negative for the organization's operation. If organizational engagement drops, the cabin crew might no longer be the desired, energetic ambassadors of the company, affecting for instance customer evaluations.

2.6 Employee engagement: A psychological concept

Generally speaking, engaged employees feel highly energised in, and strongly identified with, their work roles (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, Taris, 2008). These work roles can be the employee's job, or to the employee's organizational roles. The energising aspect of employee engagement can be found in self-employment as discussed by Kahn (1990) and vigor as discussed by Schaufeli et al. (2002), while the identification aspect relates to Kahn's (1990) self-expression and Schaufeli and colleagues' dedication. Employee engagement is strongly connected to employee well-being, and through employee well-being employee engagement could yield beneficial outcomes for the employee's organization as shown in the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Employee engagement cannot be implied upon an employee, but preconditions facilitating and supporting employee engagement can be provided by the organization. The discussed approaches to

employee engagement agree on the psychological nature of this concept, and the physical, cognitive and emotional expressions accompanying this psychological state. As proposed by Kahn (1990), in order to facilitate employees to be(come) engaged, the required psychological conditions have to be present. However, as Saks (2006) argues, apart from the right conditions, the reciprocal relationship (as described through SET) between the organization and the employee provides further incentive for employees to be(come) engaged. The company's internal environment and/or culture play an important role in creating the right circumstances for employees to reach the desired psychological mindset.

This academic background stresses the importance of investing time and effort to discover the conditions necessary for FlyCo's cabin crew to be engaged employees. In order to specify engagement as a concept, the research focuses on cabin crew's energisers in their work roles and their motivational identification for choosing this line of work.

2.7.7 Employee engagement at FlyCo

In FlyCo's new ambition customer centricity was defined as FlyCo's unique selling point.

In regards to customer-centricity, cabin crew play a key role in creating the desired memorable experiences for FlyCo's customers.

The desire to become future-fit and being a generally good employer are FlyCo's reasons for investment in employee engagement. This reasoning

is partly driven by research of consultancy firms such as the Gallup Organization, showing that employee engagement yields amongst others the following operational results: lower absenteeism, higher customer metrics and higher profitability (Van Allen, 2012).

The service-profit chain illustrates the connection between engaged employees, customer satisfaction and profitability and revenue growth (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser & Schlesinger, 1994). Targeting employee engagement would therefore not only aid FlyCo in reaching its ambition, it also contributes to the financial fitness of the company. In summary, FlyCo human resources (HR) distils the model proposed by Heskett (1994) down to the following essentials, making employee engagement the starting point of this chain:

Employee engagement > Customer experience > Profit

2.8 employee engagement

Operationalizing the service-profit chain at FlyCo was done by implementing an organisational protocol aimed at increasing engagement and alignment with FlyCo's ambitions of all employees throughout the company. This was defined through reverse thinking, starting from the desired customer experience and working towards the required leadership. The protocol offers guidance for all employees in reaching the common goal.

2.9 Measuring and monitoring employee engagement at FlyCo

To evaluate employee engagement, the Employee Promotor Score (EPS) (Legerstee, 2013) is used. Information on the EPS is obtained in two ways: through one FlyCo-wide EPS question and on a team level by using the WhatsUp dashboard.

The FlyCo-wide EPS question is sent out to a random group of xx employees every week and is formulated as follows: 'How likely is it that you would recommend FlyCo as an employer to friends and acquaintances?'. This question aims to measure the level of company ambassadorship and company advocacy among employees. The results are a balance of employees recommending FlyCo as an employer (promoters) and employees who discommend (detractors).

Where the company-wide EPS generates a global score, the team-tool WhatsUp generates more in-depth knowledge on how engaged each team member is. By using this tool, teams can monitor how employees within that team evaluate its performance. The main question in this tool is similar to the one-question EPS: 'How likely is it that you would recommend colleagues to work in this team?' and yields a similar result.

A downside to this tool in the OBS context, is that it is not applicable to cabin crew due to the ever-changing teams they work in.

2.10 FlyCo and OBS views on engagement

Questions of why FlyCo focuses on employee engagement and how the company strategizes its approach are easily answered. The question what employee engagement is to FlyCo reveals much less of an aligned answer.

Current views on employee engagement within OBS and FlyCo in general are divergent, and there is a strong need to align engagement efforts along a central definition of this concept. The following section presents an analysis of the different views on employee engagement within OBS and FlyCo HR, which were compared to literature definitions in order to arrive at a central definition of employee

engagement for the OBS division. This capitalizes the importance of defining employee engagement in order to streamline engagement strategies (Edwards, 2018).

An inventory was made of available documentation concerning employee engagement at OBS. Additionally, relevant documentation from FlyCo HR concerning the background on the EPS and WhatsUp tool and background documentation on the protocol were collected and analysed.

	<i>Business Development (BD)</i>	<i>Cabin Crew Management (CCM)</i>
<i>Definition</i>	Engaged OBS employees work according to the protocol and strive to collaboratively ‘make’ the company.	Employee engagement is having a meaningful relation on the smallest (personal) level, which is based greatly on reciprocity. Engaged employees contribute to a higher goal, in this case FlyCo’s purpose and ambition.
<i>Ambition</i>	Less absenteeism and stronger support for necessary changes which FlyCo and OBS have to make.	Satisfied employees who work with a great sense of reciprocity.

Table 2.2. Definitions and ambitions of OBS Business Development and Cabin Crew Management MT members.

2.11 Individual MT member views on employee engagement within OBS

Next to the analysis of available documentation concerning employee engagement, insights were gathered through conversations with OBS MT members individually on what engagement means in their perspective and what they want to achieve with it. These insights are gathered in table 2.2. The MT members were representatives of the Business Development and Cabin Crew Management departments, two departments most closely involved with cabin crew engagement.

2.12 Comparing views on engagement

When analysing the views on employee engagement at FlyCo, a connection to two approaches discussed in the literature background can be found. The first connection is found between the definition of OBS’s MT and the definition of personal engagement as presented by Kahn (1990), even though the OBS definition seems to be a stripped-down version. Self-employment and self-expression as discussed by Kahn (1990) are integrated in the physical, cognitive and emotional expressions resulting from engagement.

The way the definition is formulated entails both job and organisational engagement. In their ambition regarding engagement there is a strong distinction between job and organisational engagement

The strategy envisioned aims to create the required preconditions by letting employees experience the optimal working climate. This can be viewed as a psychological approach towards employee

engagement, connecting to the academic views on employee engagement.

The second connection to literature is found between the definition as described by the member of the CCM department and the reciprocal interdependence of the SET as described by Saks (2006). In both approaches, engagement is a consequence of reciprocity within the organization, both on job and organizational levels. This can also be linked to psychological meaningfulness as described by Kahn (1990), being a personal evaluation of return on investment.

In both MT member perspectives (table 2.2), engaged employees have an impact on the organization at large. Both definitions show a 'sense of relationship' which employees should feel at FlyCo. A potential benefit in formulating the definition as is done by BD is that a collaborative contribution to the greater good does not make the distinction between two interdependent parties, whereas the reciprocal interdependence does. This latter relationship could result in a feeling of 'us' and 'them', instead of giving a team feeling in collaboratively working towards a common goal. This feeling of unity is deemed important specifically in the context of OBS, where the office and cabin crew are already physically separated.

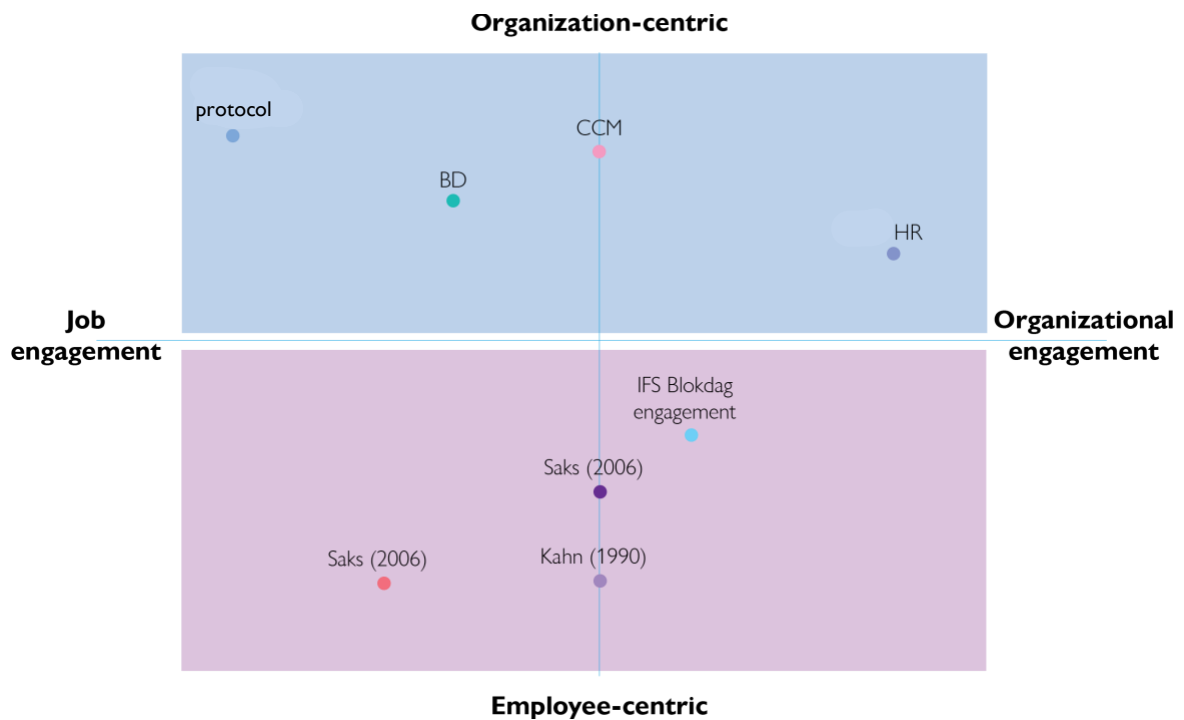


Figure 2.6. A plot of FlyCo and academic definitions of employee engagement on a job engagement to organizational engagement scale and an organization-centric and employee-centric scale.

2.13 Plotting the definitions

For further comparison of the definitions for employee engagement at FlyCo and OBS, a plot of these definitions was made along two axes:

Employee-centric to organization-centric and job engagement to organizational engagement (figure 2.6). The distinction between employee-centric and organization-centric is about the desired outcome of employee engagement. Employee engagement aimed at organizational outcomes (e.g. operational results) are organization-centric, whereas employee engagement aimed at employee outcomes (e.g. well-being at work) are employee-centric.

2.14 Employee engagement as a goal or means

The central question when comparing the academic views on employee engagement with the corporate and marketing views (such as Gallup's and FlyCo's), is whether employee engagement is considered an organization's goal or a means to an end. Viewing employee engagement as a goal means that the organization aims to provide conditions required for employees to be(come) engaged, for the employee's well-being as a central reason. This would be in line with an organization's desire to be viewed as a good employer. On the other hand, viewing employee engagement as a means to an end entails utilizing employee engagement to, for example, improve operational results beneficial to the company.

In the first situation, where employee engagement is viewed as a goal, any beneficial outcome of employee engagement for the organization is a nice 'byproduct', but the main objective is the employee itself. The organization focuses on creating the required preconditions so its employees are facilitated in being highly energised and strongly identified with their work roles.

The second situation, utilizing employee engagement for potential beneficial outcomes, actively steers towards the 'byproducts' of employee engagement. In this situation, it may not be about creating the required preconditions for employees to become engaged, but about obtaining the desired results of employee engagement. The danger of this second situation is that the organization might project a certain envisioned image on the employees.

This latter approach is strongly present when evaluating the protocol on its fit with employee engagement literature. As stated earlier in this chapter, the protocol is envisioned as company-wide, aimed at increasing employee engagement and alignment towards FlyCo's ambition. The rows optimal employee behaviour, optimal working climate and optimal leadership are the means towards obtaining the desired customer experience. The optimal working climate does aim at creating certain conditions to facilitate employee engagement, but the optimal employee behaviour implies a certain behaviour on the employees, which projects how FlyCo views the optimal behaviour of an engaged employee.

Having the desired behaviour in mind is a good thing to do when evaluating job applications to make sure to hire the most appropriate candidates. However, when these employees are hired, it is then up to the company to facilitate them in displaying this behaviour, and also up to the company to trust their employees in displaying this behaviour when they are facilitated with the required and desired conditions in their work environment. In creating these desired conditions for employees, companies benefit from taking an employee-centric approach towards employee engagement, showing the organization's care and appreciation towards its employees. Projecting this approach on the protocol would make the first row appropriate if 'customer' would be replaced by 'employee'. Focusing on the experience of employees

instead of operational outcomes does require a sense of trust from FlyCo in that the desired customer experience and profit will follow naturally from the engagement of employees.

These two distinctive approaches, seeing employee engagement as a goal or as a means to an end, are illustrative of the division in the plot in figure 2.6. Viewing employee engagement as a goal shifts the definition towards the employee-centric side of the spectrum, whereas viewing employee engagement as a means to an end shifts the definition towards the organization-centric side of the spectrum. As figure 2.6 indicates, this division illustrates the difference between employee engagement approaches in academic literature, and the approaches within FlyCo.

2.15 Proposed definition

The employee engagement definition takes into account both the views from academia and OBS' desires in terms of employee engagement. The decision was made to formulate one definition of employee engagement for the OBS division, instead of formulating a separate cabin crew definition. Creating alignment on the topic of employee engagement at the division is the key reasoning behind this decision.

For FlyCo, employee engagement will be a means to achieve a part of its ambition and to become future fit. However, organizational benefits such as increased customer metrics and profitability will be the return on investing in FlyCo's employees first. Through this proposed definition, the focus of employee engagement is shifted from organization centricity and operational results to the well-being of employees. This definition provides a guideline, aligning future efforts in regards to employee engagement.

An aerial photograph of an airport tarmac, showing various aircraft parked at gates and on the apron. Two large white airplane silhouettes are overlaid on the image, one above the other, facing right. The background shows the complex layout of the airport, including runways, taxiways, and terminal buildings.

Chapter 3

Cabin crew engagement

This chapter presents the results of various analysis methods used to uncover where the opportunity lies to positively influence the engagement of cabin crew using design methods. The key elements were discovering what makes them flourish in their work, by analysing the aspects which make them highly energised in and strongly identified with their work roles. This analysis also functioned as a research into the lives of cabin crew to obtain a complete as possible view on their working context. As a starting point, a brief introduction to the work life of cabin crew is presented, after which the chapter works towards the design goal for this project.

3.1 FlyCo's cabin crew work life

FlyCo's cabin crew is subdivided into several ranks, each having their own onboard tasks and responsibilities. Each rank is recognizable by the stripes on the sleeve of their uniform.

The executive staff is responsible for onboard management. This already starts at the airport, where they meet up and discuss the division of tasks and lead the pre-flight briefing with the flight's full cabin crew.

The composition of the cabin crew on board differs per destination and aircraft type. On intercontinental flights, overall onboard cabin crew management is led by the senior purser, and the purser manages the economy class specifically. European flights have no senior purser on board, so the purser is responsible for all onboard management.

As was mentioned in chapter I, the cabin crew is part of the OBS division. All office departments within OBS influence the cabin crew's work in one way or another. Even though the cabin crew is by far the largest group of employees within OBS, they rarely ever visit the OBS office. The cabin crew's work revolves around flying and providing service to the onboard customers, spending only relatively short time at the airport. The time they do spend at the airport, is mainly spent at the crew area, which offers the cabin crew all necessary amenities needed to make their work successful. In the flow of a cabin crew's 'work day', the crew area can be seen as the transformation moment, in which the cabin crew signs-in and signs-out of their service performance.

2 Methods of research

A variety of methods was used to gain insights into what motivates and engages cabin crew to be highly energised and strongly identified with their work roles. The methods are briefly explained:

Subject-specific interviews (n=24)

Subject-specific interviews were held in three sessions with cabin crew. All interviews took place at the waiting lounge of the airport, since the cabin crew was most easily accessible here and often had time to spare. The interviews were purposefully kept short (around 10 minute average per interview), so it would not disturb their preparations for their upcoming flight. The interviewed cabin crew was selected randomly, although attention was paid to having a balanced selection of ranks of at least one purser/senior purser.

The first interview session (n=10) researched the

use of the protocol in their work and their view on what engagement is.

The second interview session (n=6) researched their motivation for their work and their view on what engagement is.

The third interview session (n=8) focused specifically on the process of receiving the necessary flight and work information from the company.

Longer conversations with crewmembers (n=4)

On two occasions, longer and unguided conversations were arranged with cabin crew at the airport. Even though the initial focus was on engagement, the conversations took various directions and proved a valuable source for understanding the cabin crew's work context both now, and how it changed over time. Since the interviewees were not on schedule, the conversations took between 1 and 2 hours.

3 Results

The results are collectively presented in this section, centred around what motivates and engages crew to be highly energised and strongly identified with their work roles.

3.3.1 Highly energised in, and strongly identified with job roles

This section discusses research results connected to job engagement. Within this type of engagement, both job aspects inducing high energy and strong identification among cabin crew are discussed.

The cabin crew's motivation for choosing their work and the subsequent motivation for staying in their job can be summarized by:

I came to see the world and stuck around for the lifestyle

The dynamic work life, in combination with opportunities to see many parts of the world are key aspects in the cabin crew's way of life, energising them in their work and to which they strongly identify. For many, the freedom accompanying this line of work played an important role in choosing to become a cabin attendant. This freedom is mostly substantiated by two factors. The first factor is driven by the desire to find a "job out of the ordinary", by which most interviewed cabin attendants meant the contrast this work offers in comparison to a "nine to five office job". The second factor is the opportunity to see the world: "Seeing the world motivated me for this job, I

didn't want a boring office job". In the second set of interviews, all six interviewees were motivated to become a cabin attendant because it allowed them to see the world. For many cabin attendants, the uniform is the embodiment of this way of life, as it is symbolic for the cabin crew's identity.

Furthermore, results show the central role of personal interactions and a personal feel in the work context of cabin crew: "I want to get to know the story behind the passenger's faces. You always have to take into account the 'backpack' people may carry with them." This interest in the people they work for energises the crew to create memorable experiences for their passengers: "I'm interested in people, I want to make a difference for them".

Not only is this personal feel important for cabin crew in interacting with passengers, it also forms an essential aspect in having trusted and responsible relations and interactions with colleagues as a senior purser explains: "I feel trusted when colleagues compliment me about the good working atmosphere on board, where everyone takes care of one another".

Examples of a personal feel among cabin crew and in interactions with FlyCo's customers have a

resonating effect on many OBS employees, both cabin crew and office employees. In some instances, these personal interactions attract attention outside of the cabin. Examples are cabin crew colleagues packing and sending suitcases for colleagues who were stuck without luggage due to a cancelled flight, and a cabin attendant arranging a 'Sinterklaas' celebration for children on board a FlyCo flight on December 5th. These activities with a strong personal feel, are characteristic for FlyCo's cabin crew and are expressions of the cabin crew's energy in, and identification with their job.

Also in services on the ground the personal connection between cabin crew colleagues is seen to be of importance in their job.

Reactions to this way of working have been very positive, where instances have been described of "colleagues tearing up, because they were so glad to find personal help for issues with digital tools they were dealing with on the job".

3.3.2 Highly energised in, and strongly identified with organizational roles

This section discusses research results connected to organizational engagement. Within this type of engagement, both organizational aspects inducing high energy and strong identification among cabin crew are discussed.

FlyCo's cabin attendants take great pride in working for FlyCo, being an important player in the airline business:
 "FlyCo is the best, the greatest. You could call it the premier league".

This research found two properties of FlyCo which together are important to organizational engagement of FlyCo employees.

Among employees, there is agreement on the sense of family and solidarity which is present within the company.

The overall long years of service of the FlyCo cabin crew indicate their strong commitment to the company. Wearing the blue uniform strengthens the connection between cabin crew and the renowned company, yielding a sense of pride and organizational engagement. Involvement also shows in times of negativity, as a cabin attendant, working at FlyCo for over 20 years, illustrates: "When FlyCo is negatively publicized in the media, I feel an urge to react, so my engagement is extra strong then".

As shown in the previous section, FlyCo's cabin crew is energised by working with people, and feel motivated to work at FlyCo due to its customer-centric and personal approach: "FlyCo has always had the customer first. That's why I joined FlyCo". Cabin attendants view themselves as an important connecting factor between the customers and the company: "I want to advertise FlyCo as being the best airliner. My goal is to have the passengers leave the aircraft happy, through personal contact and

service”.

The customer-centric approach which the company is renowned for is a characteristic example of showing intimacy towards the outside, but the intimacy is also a strength within the company itself. The intimacy in the form of a personal feel is not only important in terms of job engagement, as described earlier, but also play an essential role in cabin crew’s organizational engagement. Receiving recognition and appreciation from company is an important energizer for cabin crew, for example in case of 25 years of service: “The appreciation I received from my employer gives me a lot of new energy and inspiration. This shows that I’m being seen, especially my efforts, hard work and loyalty”. This expresses itself in gratitude for “working for a good employer who is also content with the employee’s work”.

4 Interim discussion of results

As the results show, an overarching aspect in the cabin crew’s job and organizational engagement is a personal feel in their work. A personal feel during work acts as an energiser, stimulating cabin crew to create memorable experiences for their passengers. As this personal approach has always been what makes FlyCo stand out, the cabin crew strongly identifies with the company’s values.

Personal interactions and the personal feel in the work of cabin crew contribute to creating the psychological conditions necessary for personal engagement as described by Kahn (1990). Work interactions contribute to the meaningfulness condition of work, interpersonal relationships contribute to the safety condition of work and emotional energy received from personal interactions contribute to the availability condition of work.

Factors influencing personal interaction and personal feel

The importance of a personal feel in the work of cabin crew is supported by insights on the causes of declines in both job and organizational engagement. As a result of company growth and efficiency measures, there has been a perceived decline in personal interactions between the cabin crew and the rest of the company.

3.5.1 Company growth

Company growth over the years has been accompanied by a growth in amount of employees at FlyCo. This has had effects on the perceived relation between the employee and the company. Automatization of processes and digitalization of communication means have been the logical step for FlyCo to make their operation more (cost) efficient, and have also shown to be convenient for cabin crew. However, as some cabin attendants explain: “Current improvements are not necessarily more human. [...] More humanity in digital communication is desired, also to make it more inclusive. Not everyone is used to working with smartphones or tablets, or is digital savvy”. Changes made affecting the cabin crew’s personal interactions and personal feel within the company.

The anonymity mentioned by the purser has, for many cabin attendants, resulted in feelings of not being seen or heard as another cabin attendant explains: “Personal attention is important I feel, being seen. Also for myself, I wish to be seen by FlyCo. I feel this lacks, we are not being seen.”

Feeling heard and seen is important for cabin crew in order to “maintain their feeling of importance”. As a consequence of not being seen or heard, cabin attendants express their worries about the visibility of their work outside of their job context: “nobody knows anymore which extra steps have been taken by cabin crew on board”. This perceived ‘separation’ makes that the “company sometimes feels distant”.

Two values which reoccurred in this research in the relation between the cabin crew and the rest of the company were *understanding* and *appreciation*. The decrease in personal feel have left the cabin crew feeling that understanding and appreciation for their work, from other OBS employees, OBS management and FlyCo as a company in general, is declining, and sometimes even missing. As a consequence, cabin attendants sense that they need to ‘turn to themselves’ in order to get the understanding

and appreciation which they desire in their work: “Sometimes we get messages from our MCC, but mostly you got to get the appreciation from your direct colleagues”. Illustrative of the lack of understanding from the company, as described by the cabin crew, is that while cabin crew work all days of the week, “There are no MCCs working in the weekend”.

As a consequence of the increased feeling of anonymity and the ‘turning inward’ of the cabin crew, a situation has arisen where cabin crew, and also office employees, sense a feeling of “us and them” within the OBS division.

3 Discussion

As the results in this research show, under the right conditions FlyCo's cabin crew are a highly engaged work force, intrinsically motivated and identified with their job and organization and energised by the contents of their work roles. This research shows that a personal feel significantly supports the necessary conditions for cabin crew to be engaged in their work roles

at FlyCo. A decline in personal feel reduces the meaningfulness, safety and availability conditions (Kahn, 1990) required for cabin crew to be engaged.

The decrease in personal feel, through perceived anonymization in the company and increased work pressure on board, restricts the cabin crew from being as highly energised and as strongly identified with their work roles as they can be. It increases the job demands (higher workload) without offering additional job resources to counterbalance these demands. Consequently, strain might take the overhand over motivational aspects on the job (JD-R model), as is endorsed by several interviewees. This influences both the employee's well-being and the organization's outcomes negatively.

Specifically for cabin crew, results indicate that the

key of being engaged in their work roles lies in the feeling of importance: The feeling that a personal contribution to the company is acknowledged and appreciated. Personal interactions and a personal feel within the division and the company at large support the sense of being seen and heard, and the notion that the work of each cabin attendant matters. In this sense, the personal interactions among not only cabin crew, but also between cabin crew and other OBS or FlyCo colleagues, contribute to feeling an important asset to the company.

Facilitating a culture of collaboration at OBS

The understanding of the context in this research have shown that all OBS employees essentially want the same thing: the best for FlyCo. There is a strong desire among both cabin crew and the OBS MT to collaborate and work as one team to reach this goal.

The current challenge at OBS is to give individual employees personally the feeling that they are a valuable asset to the company and to the company's endeavour in reaching its ambition, strengthening the employee's sense of meaningfulness in their work. As an example, more interaction moments with cabin crew would work two ways. These interaction moments provide other OBS employees insights in what is current on board (e.g. desires of cabin crew and customers, input from cabin crew) and the cabin crew feels heard and seen. On the other hand it provides the cabin crew with insights in current processes in other departments at OBS and at FlyCo in general, strengthening their involvement and commitment to the company.

These interaction moments do not necessarily have to be face to face, although this is the preferred personal interaction of cabin crew. Interaction through digital means is convenient, particularly for cabin crew, due to their dynamic way of life. In this digital interaction, it is then important to maintain a personal feel in order to retain the humanity in interactions.

8 Design goal

This chapter, and therewith the main analysis of this project was concluded with the formulation of the design goal:

Create a community feel among OBS employees

This design goal would be a strategical choice for OBS, as creating a community feel counters the perceived separation within OBS. The feeling of 'us and them' within the division seemed to have raised a threshold for interaction, affecting the personal feel at OBS. It is hypothesized that bringing back the personal feel within OBS makes the cabin crew feel more heard and seen, increasing their

perception of the importance of their work for the company. Stimulating this contributes to creating the required organizational environment and culture necessary for the cabin crew's engagement, and the accompanying benefits for FlyCo.

The formulation of this design goal answered the second research question for the analysis of this project. Creating a community feel among OBS employees is an entrance for design to contribute to creating the required preconditions for cabin crew to be(come) engaged in their work. The design goal was leading in the development of the concept and final design, as presented in the next chapters.

Chapter 4

Designing the solution

This chapter shows the translation from the analysis phase to the design of the Employee application, a collective travel guide service by and for OBS employees.

The chapter starts with a brief introduction into intergroup relationships, turning 'us and them' into a community. This knowledge is combined with insights of the analysis, showing the development, validation and final design of the Employee application.

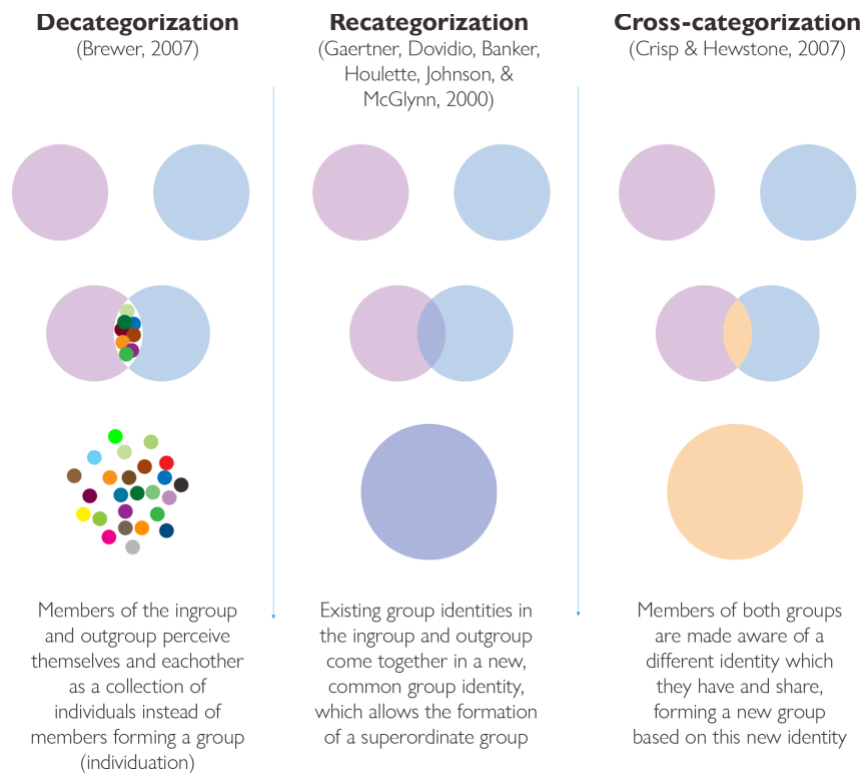


Figure 4.1. Visual representation of decategorization, recategorization and cross-categorization.

4.1 Intergroup relationships

When viewed objectively, the situation within the OBS division resembles what is known as an intergroup relationship. Literature on intergroup relationships shows that simply putting members of two groups together to build contact has little positive, and sometimes even negative effect on the intergroup relation (Forsyth, 2018). In this project, elements from two approaches to intergroup relationships, the social identity approach and the contact hypothesis approach, were used in development of a community feel through the design concept.

4.1.1 Social identity approach

The social identity approach to intergroup relationships aims to influence the social identification of an individual to the ingroup s/ he feels identified with. Characteristic in the social identification of an individual is the ingroup-outgroup bias, favouring the ingroup over the outgroup (Forsyth, 2018). Brewer and Brown (as cited in Forsyth, 2018) have found that the sense of 'us and them' which is also found within the OBS division and characteristic for ingroup-outgroup bias, fades when individuals cooperate with members of the outgroup. The impact of this cooperation is a change in saliency of one's perceived identity, where the saliency of one's identification with the ingroup can be impacted by decategorization, recategorization and cross-categorization, as illustrated in figure 4.1.

The decategorization approach focuses on individuating group members by decreasing their identification with a group, while both recategorization and cross-categorization aim to increase identification of members of both groups with another group identity.

4.1.2 Contact hypothesis

Even though the key to a unified community lies in contact, there are also important conditions to be taken into account for this contact to be successful and positive for the intergroup relation. A key element in building this intergroup relation is that groups should be unified in a situation of positive contact (Allport, 1954). According to Allport (1954) in his contact hypothesis, in order to achieve the positive contact, four necessary conditions should be met: Equal status, common goals, cooperation and support of authorities, law or custom:

Equal status

In the intergroup contact, there should be no unequal, hierarchical relationship.

Common goals

There should be common goals to be achieved, also called superordinate goals.

Cooperation

Groups need to collaborate in achieving the superordinate goals, in a non-competitive environment.

Support of authorities, law, or custom

Both groups respect and support the authority supporting the contact and interaction within the groups. The contact should not be implicitly or explicitly sanctioned, and should condemn ingroup-outgroup comparison.

In addition to these four conditions, researchers have also stressed the importance of promoting informal, personal interactions over superficial, role-based contacts (Forsyth, 2018). Cross-group friendships can, for example, have a spill-over effect to other members of the ingroup (Forsyth, 2018).

4.2.2 Determining the concept's foundation

In order to break through the current group 'bubbles' in place within OBS, cross-categorization was deemed the most appropriate way of influencing the saliency of current identification with groups (figure 4.1). This approach finds identification outside of the existing groups in the work context, contrary to recategorization. This prevents the possibility of falling back into the identification of the crew and office group, and the existing hierarchical structure. Furthermore, due to the importance of the cabin crew's identity in their job and organizational engagement, individuating the cabin crew from identifying to a group did not seem a fitting approach either. This eliminated decategorization as a suitable approach.

4.3 A division of world travellers

As the design will be used by both the cabin crew and the OBS office employees, it is important to find common ground for all OBS employees to counter any possible disbalance in interest or motivation. An important commonality found between both cabin crew and OBS office employees was their shared love for seeing the world. As illustrated in the results of chapter 3, seeing the world forms a key motivator in choosing to become cabin attendant and energises cabin crew in their work.

This formed the main motivation to cross-categorize all OBS employees into a shared identity of world traveller. Since this identity is already latently present among OBS employees, it was deemed motivational and appealing to both cabin crew and OBS office employees.

4.4 Concept of choice

After several ideation rounds, a collectively-run travel guide service by and for all OBS employees was the concept of choice. This concept was designed as a mobile application, suitable for use on a tablet or smartphone. As an initial working title, this platform was named the On-Board Travel Guide.

This concept revolved around exploring the in-app globe for activities or destinations recommended by colleagues, discovering recommendations by colleagues when already travelling and recommending activities and destinations to colleagues.

This concept took into account elements from both approaches for improving intergroup relationships. The collectively run travel guide by and for all OBS employees brings both groups together under the identity of world traveller/travel guide. This cross-categorization was combined with the conditions formulated in the contact hypothesis of Allport (1954) in the following ways:

Equal status

There is no hierarchy in this application, everyone

can contribute to their own liking and on the same level. The application itself makes no mention of the user's function at FlyCo.

Common goals

The users' common goals are finding and exploring places of interest and recommending places to colleagues, based on the mutual interest in travelling and seeing the world among OBS employees.

Cooperation

OBS employees collaboratively 'build' the application by sharing recommendations and keeping each recommendation up-to-date.

Support of authorities, law or custom

There is no external incentive implying the need for both groups to interact. Through mutual interests and motivation, the aim is to facilitate intergroup interactions in an organic manner.

Furthermore, through sharing and receiving recommendations, this service offers opportunities for informal interactions in a positive environment where colleagues can get to know each other's (shared) personal interests.

4.4.1 Fit with design goal

This concept promotes informal interactions between OBS colleagues by turning the ‘interaction with a group’ into an interaction with a person who shares the same group identity, and potentially shares the same interests. The goal of this design is to increase the community feel within OBS, in a way which appeals to many employees in this division. Connecting individual employees on their mutual interest, this concept aspires to improve the personal feel of interactions at OBS. Subsequently, as potentially more colleagues know and interact with each other, current feelings of anonymity will fade and each colleague will feel an important asset of FlyCo. Thereby, this design aims to contribute to

creating the required preconditions for cabin crew to be(come) engaged.

Among cabin crew, there is a broad understanding of the need for financial savings and efficiency measures, but often little understanding for the measures taken and the ways of implementation. The proposed design aimed to improve this by creating a sense of unity within the division, stimulating the personal feel and interdepartmental-interactions important for mutual understanding.

As discussed previously, engaged employees are beneficial to the company they work for. By facilitating and stimulating a ‘culture of engagement’, FlyCo as a whole will benefit.

4.5 Design development

Based on initial written scenarios, ideas for functionality and interaction were designed and presented through drawn scenarios. These drawn scenarios formed the basis for the design of the contents of the application.

The screens as represented in the flow diagram of the application were created in order to facilitate testing with a prototype of the application later in the process.

4.5.1 Main world screen

After login with a FlyCo account (in order to verify the user being an OBS employee), the user arrives at the Main world screen. This is the starting screen of the application, offering the user several possibilities. The most salient item on this screen is the globe, showing the amount of colleague recommendations per continent. The user can spin this globe on the screen and zoom in on a specific location, showing increasing amounts of recommendations as the user zooms in.

On top, the avatar icon opens the profile page of the user, showing a personal story about travel preferences and linking to recommendations made.

Instead of using the globe, the user can also search for a location by clicking on the magnifying icon and entering a destination.

Based on the user's current location, a recommendation can be made. This recommendation screen provides the user with opportunities to upload photos of the experience and write a personal addition to the (existing) recommendation.

By clicking the bookmark icon on the bottom-left of the screen, the user can open the travel diary, where locations or activities can be saved for future reference.

4.5.2 Activity recommendation screen

When the desired location is found, and an activity is selected by pressing the pin icon, the Activity recommendation screen opens. This screen presents the activity-specific recommendations by previous visiting colleagues.

By clicking the arrow next to a recommending person, the full recommendation shows. This full recommendation shows the photos and written contribution of that specific colleague. Clicking on the colleague's name opens the profile page, where subsequently the colleague's recommendation page can be visited.

Clicking the satellite map opens the navigation option, showing the travel time from your location to the activity's location. Using the in-app navigation augments a blue line on-screen, showing the directions to the activity.

The icon on the bottom-right opens the recommendation screen for this specific activity. A contribution can be made to the existing recommendations, building a complete overview of the activity.

The chat function allows the user to chat with recommending colleagues, in order to receive information not yet described in the recommendations. This will automatically open a group chat, which can be managed in the personal profile section.

When on an activity screen, the user can select the bookmark on the bottom-left, saving the activity to the travel diary. As shown previously, these bookmarked activities can be quickly accessed on the Main world screen.

4.6 Validation and evaluation

A prototype of the platform was created to test its idea, functionality and execution. Furthermore, these tests served as a validation and evaluation to gauge the effect of this design on the community feeling among OBS employees. In total, 11 OBS employees participated in the test, 7 cabin crew and 4 OBS office employees.

All options as shown in the app flow in appendix B were functional in the application prototype, apart from rotating and zooming in on the globe in the main world screen. The procedure of the validation tests is described in.

4.7 Results

Results are discussed categorized in the design's effect on the perception of colleagues among OBS employees and its idea, design and execution and functionality.

4.7.1 Perception of colleagues

Results of the prototype tests showed a strong desire for this product, since all 11 participants voiced their explicit interest in having and using this application. Furthermore, they predicted an application like this to be highly appreciated among a wide group of employees within OBS.

Both cabin crew and OBS office employees expressed that the department where the recommending colleague works would not influence their perception of the recommendation, stressing that

it is essentially about another person's experience of an activity. Mainly cabin crew participants immediately saw possibilities in complementation and collaboration between cabin crew and OBS office employees. Cabin crew is abroad most often, but usually only has short time to visit, and therefore limited time to find interesting activities. However, when colleagues are on holiday (both cabin crew

and OBS office employees) they generally have more time to discover non-commercial activities. Finding and recommending these activities off the beaten track to their colleagues, and hearing about them ‘through the grapevine’ would be highly appreciated. A few participants voiced their concerns about cabin crew desires being different from the desires of OBS office employees and the possibility that OBS office employees might benefit more from cabin crew recommendations than the other way around.

Getting to know colleagues in a new way, outside of the work environment, was evaluated positively by mainly OBS office employees. According to them, this application offers possibilities to connect to colleagues with mutual interests, by finding a starting point for contact. Getting to know more about colleagues in a more personal way possibly opens up opportunities for friendship, as stated by a participant. On the other hand, one cabin attendant and one OBS office employee expected no added sense of connection through this app. They expressed that they would use this application more for the contents than reading about the person posting the recommendation.

4.7.2 Idea

The specificity and specific functionality of the application was desired over using existing social media platforms. It takes away the need to have a social media account and information can be arranged more clearly.

Most participants envisioned their use of this service primarily for inspiration (both with and without knowing the destination), but also expressed their tendency to share recommendations with colleagues when enthusiastic about an experience. Important in terms of sharing is that since it is a community with only OBS colleagues, willingness to share is higher because it provides a safe feeling. This was also expressed through trust in the recommendations, since they would know that a fellow FlyCo colleague wrote the recommendation.

4.7.3 Design and execution

The design of the application was received unanimously positive by the participants, presenting its functionality and information in a clear, accessible and user friendly way. Especially the use of visual elements was received positively, offering a large improvement over text-based recommendation sharing.

The service in the form of an application was received positively as well, making the service quick, handy and fitting in the current digital age. Furthermore, it sparked ideas among several participants, proposing the app and the navigation function to also be available offline. This would be a solution to using the application in an area of low or no network coverage.

4.7.4 Functionality

Several application-specific functionalities received positive feedback from the participants, such as the travel diary for saving activities, the chat function and the two ways of searching for destinations. An interesting addition to the functionality, as proposed by several participants, is the option to 'follow' colleagues with similar interests. This would keep one updated on recommendations by that specific colleague.

Various smaller modifications and additions were proposed in terms of functionality. Several practical adjustments were directly implemented in the revised design, such as the recommender's date of visit and being able to search for activities when exploring in the main world screen. Other proposed adjustments were not implemented, since they would reinstall the group separation. An example is the in-app display of the most recent cabin crew hotels. Two concerns for the functionality of this application, as voiced by two participants each, is the clustering of information to prevent double recommendations and to make sure the information is up-to-date.

4.8 Reflection on design goal

Create a community feel among OBS employees

The application was not tested in its real use situation and the number of participants was limited, therefore it is not possible to broadly generalize findings and insights for the real use context. However, The insights gathered put forward several positive aspects of this design in terms of its intent of creating a community feel.

The essence of a community lies in the sharing of interests and attitudes. The fact that all participants in the validation study expressed their desire to use this application shows their common interest for finding interesting locations and activities around the world. This desire also shows their interest in cooperatively creating this service as colleagues of an internationally oriented company.

Of particular interest in the results of the validation test were the mentions of complementarity and the possibility this design offers in terms of connecting to colleagues with similar interests. Participants saw opportunities in collaboration between colleagues visiting a location briefly and others who may have more time to spend at the location. This shows

the cooperation possibilities between colleagues at OBS, creating this service together and for each other. Finding connections to colleagues based on mutual interest outside of the direct work context offers the opportunity to get to know colleagues in a different way than usual. Strong interests may be shared between colleagues who have never met before, and who would unlikely have met without this service. As described by a participant, this could potentially open up possibilities for friendships.

The results of this validation test show a positive evaluation of this design and the idea behind it. A careful affirmation of the attainment of the design goal can be concluded from the results, tentatively validating this design's possibilities in contributing to an increase in personal feel and personal interactions within the OBS division.

4.9 Application walkthrough

The first-time login and consecutive login procedures are explained in. Additional functionality, using the surprise search and searching from the user's current location is presented in.

In a month time, Julia will travel to South-Africa. She opens the Employee application, which she always uses when travelling to new destinations. She presses explore and searches for Cape Town in the search bar.

After selecting Cape Town, the in-app map zooms in to the city, automatically opening the activity filter. As Julia likes being outdoors, she selects trips in the activity filter. Pins on the map show her recommendations from colleagues which suit her search term.

Julia heard great stories about the scenery around Cape Town, and is interested in the rafting recommendation. She presses the rafting pin and the activity page opens. This page shows her colleagues' recommendations specifically for this activity. She opens the first recommendation and is immediately enthusiastic about the activity.

She continues reading the recommenders profile page and looks at his further recommendations. Finding a lot of mutual interests, she decides to follow this colleague so she sees his recommendations highlighted whenever she looks up a place where he has been.

Back on the activity recommendation page, she adds this activity to her travel diary, so she can look it up quickly when she visits Cape Town in a month time.

A month later Julia has already spent two days roaming Cape Town. She looks forward to escaping the hassle and go rafting. She opens the Employee application, and selects the travel diary from the main screen. Rafting in Cape Town is in her saved activities and she presses the activity to visit the activity recommendation page. The orange circle surrounding the recommender shows Julia she follows him.

She decides to use the in-app chat function to ask the recommending colleagues how to get to the rafting activity easiest. She quickly receives a response from one of the colleagues giving her helpful directions to reach her destination.

After thanking her colleague for his help and quick reply, she opens the route from the activity recommendation page. After taking the taxi and bus, she walks the last part guided by the navigation function in the application.

Later that day, on a terrace in central Cape Town, she is still full of adrenaline from the rafting activity. She decides to write a supporting recommendation for this activity, since she enjoyed it very much. In her recommendation, she voices her wonderful experience and adds that it is wise to bring an extra pair of light shoes. After adding photos of her experience, she submits the recommendation.

From time to time, Julia checks back on her experience through the profile function in the Employee application. She has provided colleagues with helpful insights on this and other activities she recommended.

Later that year, Julia visits the north of Sweden. Together with a colleague, she went reindeer sledding near the town of Rensjön. During the experience, they got a real taste of traditional Sami culture. She would like more of her colleagues at OBS to learn about this culture, so she recommends the activity in the Employee application.

Based on her location, the app pre fills the location of the activity.

After submitting the recommendation, she is notified that she is the first of her colleagues to recommend this activity, making her the pioneer recommender. This also shows between Julia's recommendations in her in-app profile (figure 4.23).

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter presents the conclusions of this research. First a discussion of outcomes and methods used is provided. Secondly, a reflection is made on the use of design methods for improving employee engagement. The chapter ends with recommendations for future endeavours in terms of designing for employee engagement.

5.1 Discussion

In this present research, a collaborative travel guide in the form of the Employee application was designed to contribute to the engagement of cabin crew at FlyCo. This application was specifically designed to promote a community feel among all OBS employees.

This research shows that FlyCo's cabin crew desires to retain their feeling of importance, which has ultimately been affected negatively by the company's growth. The perceived decline in their feeling of importance has in turn negatively affected the energy in, and identification with their work roles, and their engagement consequently.

The cabin crew's perceived importance used to be strong due to the personal feel throughout the company. Increased automatization and digitalization of processes within the company have caused a growing sense of anonymity among cabin crew, who consequently sense a decline in feeling heard and seen. This results in a perceived separation between the cabin crew and the rest of the OBS division, negatively affecting the cabin crew's perceived importance for the company.

The community feel, aimed for through the design of the Employee application, is meant to reconnect employees within OBS on a personal level based on shared interests. By contributing to an increasing personal feel within the company, the goal is to facilitate the cabin crew in regaining their feeling of importance, increasing their engagement. Results of the validation test of the Employee application show opportunities for collaboration between different colleagues and the possibility for stronger personal connections between colleagues. These insights show the positive effect of this application on a community feel among OBS employees.

A limitation in this present research is the researched sample of the population. Drawing generalizable insights from this research should therefore be done with some care. However, insights gathered from different participants in this research were never far apart, showing trends which could potentially be valid for a much larger group of cabin attendants. Furthermore, participants in this research were selected to include different ranks in the results, in order to obtain a research balanced outcome. The

choice was made for a qualitative approach over a quantitative approach in this research due to the direct contact through personal conversations. This is believed to have aided in obtaining a better understanding of the cabin crew and their work context.

Limitations to the insights gathered through testing the design prototype are again the sample size of participants and the research context. Full validation of this design would likely need a larger amount of participants to evaluate whether results in terms of obtaining a community feeling are generalizable throughout the OBS division. In validating the design, participants were asked to imagine using this application. This gives initial insights into the user's evaluation of the design, but for full validation the design would have to be tested as a working application in the actual context of use. Creating this working application would also serve as a test for feasibility of this application, evaluating whether current company knowhow and resources are sufficient for building this service.

5.2 Recommendations

The Employee application aimed to contribute to creating the required preconditions for cabin crew engagement, increasing their sense of importance through a community feel within the division. Viewing this project's design as a metaphor for internal development within OBS could provide potentially interesting insights and inspiration:

- Finding connections on mutual interests/attitudes: Possibly of interest in communication to cabin crew by creating a sense of unity and collaboratively working towards the same goal.
- Acting on an equal level when cooperating: Collaboratively contributing to FlyCo while everyone feels equal, supporting expressions of thoughts and feeling heard and seen.
- Having the possibility for a personal point of contact: Increasing the cabin crew's sense of importance by making sure they feel personally cared for.

Translating elements from the app design to the direct work context could have a positive effect on the work conditions and work

environment of the cabin crew. The examples mentioned above could be a helpful guideline in designing services, where close collaboration within OBS is desired to create meaningful innovations supporting the cabin crew in their work.

FlyCo is a for-profit organization, and a focus on operational results is therefore necessary. The academic background in this present research shows that the concept of engagement is essentially a psychological concept, which potentially provides beneficial operational results. First and foremost however, due to its psychological nature, the right preconditions should be created within the organization supporting employees to be(come) engaged. Putting more emphasis on an employee centric-approach in the company's efforts could, in the long-run, provide FlyCo with the employee support necessary to stay future-fit.

Not having the direct focus on operational results could take time to get used to. Possibly, the transition of focus from operational results towards more employee centricity would be better substantiated through 'proofs of concept', where the connection between employee-centricity and organizational benefits is made salient to FlyCo. It would fit the company's values, being an intimate

airliner, to take on a more employee-centric approach.

Design methods, such as positive and strategic design, could play a role in aiding this shift by securing the employee-centric approach in new developments and innovations within the company. The design proposed in this present project is only a small example of a more employee-centric approach, and a larger culture and mindset change is likely necessary in order for such an approach to become more rooted in the organization. It is not only the cabin crew who will eventually benefit from an employee-centric approach, as it will be beneficial to employees throughout the organization.

Possible directions where design could support the organization:

- Create a generic 'employee engagement toolkit' to be used when new projects are started, to secure the employee's needs and desires. This present research offers insights and guidelines which may form (part of) the foundation of such a 'toolkit'.
- Actively make inter-departmental connections and collaborations so employees get to know colleagues from other departments more personally and have a better understanding of the work context of

colleagues from other departments.

- Find personalization in digital communications in order for cabin crew to feel seen and heard. Cabin crew should feel an important asset in the company to make them energised and identified with their work roles.

In order to achieve a structural use of design methods within FlyCo, it would be interesting to invest in the creation of a long-term and dedicated internal design team to support in the development of decisions and innovations. This could prove to be valuable in guaranteeing human-centredness and context specificity in future innovation. An internal design team, focusing on the application of various design methods, will potentially have more impact than relatively short projects by individual designers. These individual projects could still, however, play a role for inspiration and opening up new perspectives for the internal design team and FlyCo as a whole.

Personal interactions and feelings of importance and a sense of contribution can potentially occur in a wide variety of activities within an organization. A focus on a single project to improve engagement will likely not be successful, unless this project aims to impact structural processes within the company. An adjusted mindset, and an organizational culture in which this adjusted mindset can bloom, are important when a concept such as employee engagement is desired to be successful.

Specifically for FlyCo, an employee-centric approach in innovation, development and all-round intra- organizational interactions has a high chance of indirectly impacting the customer-centric ambition, since customer-centricity and intimacy is already intrinsically embedded in many of its employees. By providing the required environment and culture for these behaviour to flourish, both employee well- being and organizational outcomes can be positively influenced.

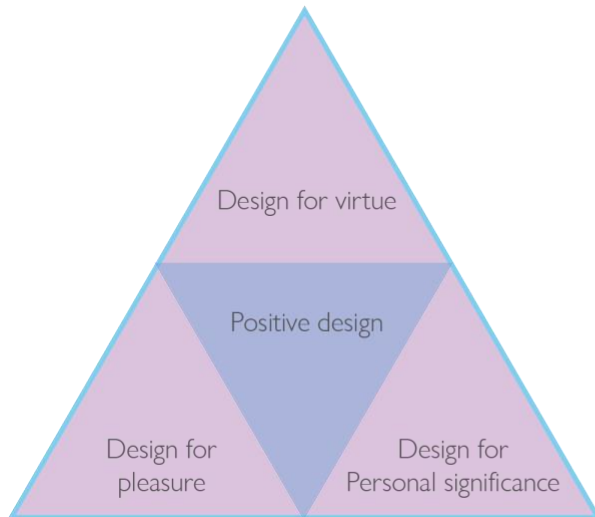
Positive design ingredients

Figure 5.1. The positive design framework (Desmet & Pohlmeier, 2013)

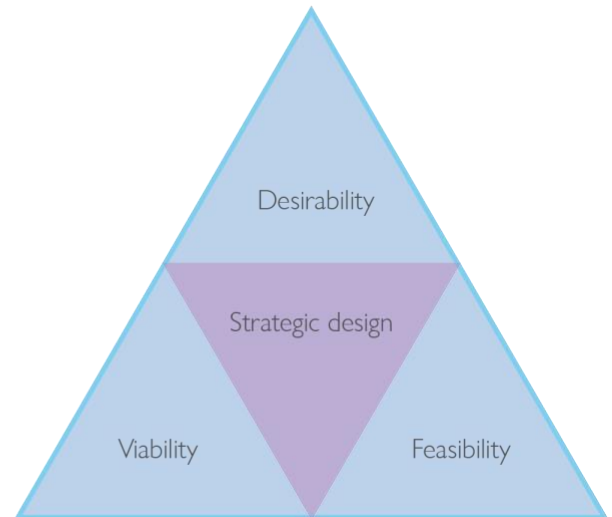
Strategic design

Figure 5.2. The domain of strategic design (Calabretta, Gemser & Karpen, 2016).

5.3 Reflection on the use of design methods for employee engagement

This reflection evaluates the use of design methods in designing for employee engagement, an important aspect in this explorative research. Within this project, the focus specifically laid on the application of positive design, by using positive design (Desmet & Pohlmeier, 2013) ingredients, and strategic design (Calabretta, Gemser & Karpen, 2016), by using strategic design practices. Both the positive design and strategic design frameworks work towards an optimum taking into account three key elements (figures 5.1 & 5.2).

To start generally, design takes up a human-centred approach and looks holistically at the whole context in which the future user acts. Being human centred is an important aspect when designing for employee engagement. As stated in the literature background in the analysis of this project, employee engagement revolves around creating the required preconditions for employees to flourish, by stimulating them to be(come) highly energised in, and strongly identified with their work roles.

In order for design to be successful in creating these conditions, support from the company is required in

order to be able to really make a change. Specifically for this project, it was therefore important to align efforts towards human centredness instead of organization centredness. This alignment was created through the proposed definition for employee engagement for the OBS division: Engaged OBS employees are flourishing ambassadors of FlyCo, highly energised in, and strongly identified with their work roles and collaboratively contributing to a flourishing airline. This provides the first step towards an employee-centric vision for engagement for OBS. However, simply installing a definition is not enough, and more support from higher management throughout the division is required to create a change in mindset. Important here is a proof of concept, showing that an employee-centric approach has the desired effects for both the employees as the organization. Envisioning the future of employee engagement at FlyCo formed an important strategic aspect of this present project. The formulated definition, in line with FlyCo's ambitions and values, pave the way for applying design methods in future efforts.

Dealing with the full context is vital for a design to be(come) successful, but is also proved to be a challenge in this project. Specifically designing for improved engagement when organizational measures and decision were taken in the past

influencing engagement of cabin crew negatively. A reversal of these measures is not immediately possible, therefore this project highlighted and used positive aspects and elements of cabin crew engagement to be further developed. Among cabin crew, there is a broad understanding of the need for financial savings and efficiency measures, but often little understanding for the measures taken and the ways of implementation. The proposed design aimed to improve this by creating a sense of unity within the division, stimulating the personal feel and interdepartmental-interactions important for mutual understanding. Instead of focusing on fixing a direct issue, a positive design approach was used as it is a possibility-driven design method.

Both positive design ingredients and strategic design practices were used in the development of the Employee application. A long-term impact for cabin crew was aimed for by focusing on impacting the organizational culture, making it more beneficial to the well-being of cabin crew. At the same time, the design aimed to play an inspirational role for FlyCo in evaluating future endeavours in terms of improving employee engagement. In serving as inspiration, mainly the desirability, adhering to future user's needs, and viability, making the design

fit into the ambitions set by FlyCo, of the design were taken into account. Evaluating the feasibility would be a recommendation for development of this project, although previous ideas have been developed at FlyCo which offer similar functionality.

The design itself implemented mainly the personal significance and pleasure aspects of positive design. The underlying personal significance of the design is not explicitly communicated to the user, being the creation of a community feel in order to stimulate their perceived sense of importance. Strategical inspiring techniques, in the form of role-playing and using prototypes, were both used in the analysis phase and in the development phase of the design. In the analysis phase, these means aided in retrieving more latent thoughts and desired from the cabin crew about their work context. In the development phase of the design, prototyping played an important role in inspiring the future users to voice their opinion and to stimulate them in imagining using the Employee application in the real context. These insights contributed greatly to the creation of the final design of the Employee application.

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