



Managing the global service transition: Employees' reactions and management responses

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Abstract

Despite the importance of global engineering services (GES) to many manufacturing companies, this area of research has not been studied extensively. This paper explores the role of employees in a manufacturer's transition to a global engineering services provider. Based on the literature, a conceptual framework is defined, which specifies the dynamic interaction between employee reactions and management responses to determine the transition outcome. Evidence is presented from a single case study based on 21 interviews and observations as well as documents and media information. The findings empirically demonstrate how employee resistance, support and rejection of the globalisation strategy develop, resulting in the need for continuous management responses to ensure global integration. Exemplar employee reactions are prioritisation of local over global customers in service delivery due to lack of ownership, which were responded to by designing new organisational procedures to ensure local prioritisation of global customers with service contracts. This study contributes to the emerging field of global operations management by studying the operational contributions of employees and the respective management responses. This research focuses specifically on global services as a novel focal area within this emerging field.

Keywords Organisational transition, global manufacturing, global engineering services, servitization

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Despite the central importance of large and often globally operating manufacturers (Blomqvist and Turkulainen 2019; Cheng et al. 2019) and the increased financial revenue from global engineering services (GES; Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016), the literature focuses predominantly on localised service setups (Kreye, Newnes, and Goh 2014). This may be due to the importance of local operations for services in general (Sampson and Froehle 2006) and engineering services in particular (Kreye, Roehrich, and Lewis 2015). To provide engineering services globally, companies face additional challenges connected to network integration (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016) and the diversity of customer needs (Hakanen, Helander, and Valkokari 2017). Becoming a GES provider requires dispersed resources and collaboration among stakeholders from the global network, while also considering the specific needs of individual local customers (Cheng, Farooq, and Johansen 2015; Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016).

Employees play a crucial role as the embodiment of service capabilities and knowledge (Sampson and Froehle 2006; Baines et al. 2013). Employees are the core customer contact points (Kreye, Roehrich, and Lewis 2015), and they determine the service performance (Santa, Hyland, and Ferrer 2014). Employee skills and expertise affect the company's ability to deliver services (Baines et al. 2013). Similarly, employee support is one of the key factors in overcoming organisational resistance related to resources, structures, processes and a cultural orientation towards services as the main commercial offerings (Gebauer and Fleisch 2007). However, relatively little is known about employee contributions and their management, specifically when becoming a GES provider (henceforth referred to as a global service transition). This research

thus investigates the following research question (RQ): *How do employees affect the process and outcome of the organisational transition to a global service provider (global service transition)?*

Based on a single, in-depth case study within the maritime industry, we provide insights from a 10-year global service transition. We explore employee reactions and management responses which dynamically determined the transition outcome. Our findings show a varied picture of employee reactions spanning from support to rejection of the global service strategy and identify specific management responses to these employee reactions. This research contributes to the emerging field of global operations management (Feldmann and Olhager 2019; Cheng et al. 2019), as well as engineering services (Kreye, Newnes, and Goh 2014; Baines et al. 2013), by studying the operational contributions of employees and the respective management responses. Our research focuses specifically on global services as a novel focal area within this emerging field (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016).

2. Theoretical background

Global engineering services are offerings which employ engineering capabilities and digital resources adapted to customer needs and are delivered globally through a service network (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016). Here, services are typically provided by a headquarters operating through local subsidiaries (Parida and Jovanovic 2021) which creates complex service networks that require alignment and coordination in deploying resources (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016). Exemplar companies are Alfa Laval, Grundfos and Vestas. Providing GES through a complex service network offers the possibility of acquiring competitive advantage through local market knowledge and improving efficiency based on standardised value and dispersed resources (Hakanen, Helander, and Valkokari 2017; Wang and Zhang 2019).

2.1 Globalising service operations

In services, transitioning from local to global operations means that decision-making processes move from a local setup to a centralised setup with the need for frequent information sharing (Reim, Sjödin, and Parida 2019). The centralised setup is comprised of local subsidiaries which share information and resources globally through a headquarters and establish local customer connections and services provision (Peillon, Pellegrin, and Burlat 2015). This implies a hierarchical relationship between the headquarters and the local subsidiaries, where the latter act as the customer-facing extension of the headquarters, creating a globally dispersed and yet integrated network of resources (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016). Local subsidiaries are positioned in close proximity to local customers (Cheng, Farooq, and Johansen 2015), creating direct contact points for service delivery (Kreye, Roehrich, and Lewis 2015). These subsidiaries are connected through infrastructural links, including communication and logistics links between local subsidiaries, to ensure availability of resources for service delivery (Hakanen, Helander, and Valkokari 2017).

2.2 Employees' roles in local service operations

The role of individual employees is critical in the global service transition for two reasons. First, engineering services depend on individual employees for their embodiment of relevant engineering and technical knowledge (Baines et al. 2013), problem-solving skills and customer contact (Kreye, Roehrich, and Lewis 2015) and, ultimately, service performance (Santa, Hyland, and Ferrer 2014). In fact, various authors argue that it is the individual employee who connects provider to customer and hence defines the inter-organisational relationship in the service dyad (Kreye, Roehrich, and Lewis 2015). Second, the employees' support is required to manage organisational changes (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002). Specifically, employees are expected to

adapt their behaviour and working roles to align with the service transition requirements (Baines et al. 2013). Their reaction to the organisational transition, visible through their support or resistance, is critical for the outcome of the transition (Ulaga and Loveland 2014). Employee reactions are thus an important starting point for management approaches during the transition.

2.3 Managers' roles in global service operations

The complexity of offering GES through dispersed local subsidiaries increases the managers' responsibility as the node between the localised subsidiary and the global network. On the one hand, local managers need to enable their employees to create local service value (Hakanen, Helander, and Valkokari 2017) through operational flexibility in responding to customer needs (Baines et al. 2013) and sufficient decision-making abilities (Kreye, Roehrich, and Lewis 2015). On the other hand, local managers need to develop and enable the global network that ensures this value (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016) through global patterns of service delivery, knowledge sharing within the network and integration of global innovations in the local market (Hakanen, Helander, and Valkokari 2017). As a result, the global transition may infringe on or diminish these decision-making powers. The need to integrate resources and capabilities globally and, in turn, the increased dependence on the global network in terms of information and material flow (Hakanen, Helander, and Valkokari 2017) may increase internal resistance. This, ultimately, undermines the individual employee's ability for flexibility and adaptability required by engineering services. Managers are the focal point of responsibility for motivating and training individual employees in local service-related jobs (Ulaga and Loveland 2014). Furthermore, they must acknowledge and mitigate factors that hinder the successful outcome of transitions, such as employees' resistance to change (Pană and Kreye 2021). This extends the role and responsibilities of managers, who become directly responsible for observing, evaluating

and handling the reactions and concerns of employees in the context of supporting the organisational transition.

2.4 Conceptual framework

To guide our empirical study, we define a conceptual framework which consists of three fundamental building blocks: (1) employee reactions and (2) management response, which, taken together, determine the transition outcome of (3) becoming a GES provider (see Figure 1). First, employee reactions are defined as the visible actions of employees when faced with changes that affect their core role and working approach (Bareil and Gagnon 2005). These reactions need to be considered because employees are expected to adapt their behaviour and working roles to align with the global transition and hence affect the transition outcome (Ulaga and Loveland 2014). We study these employee reactions as causes for relevant management responses. Here, the management's understanding of employee reactions in terms of observed behaviours and underlying reasons and motivation determine their responses (Bareil and Gagnon 2005), which in turn may shape how employee reactions develop over time (Baines et al. 2013). Finally, the dynamic interaction between employee reactions and management responses are expected to determine the transition outcome (Erwin and Garman 2010). Fundamentally, this triangular connection between employee reaction, management response and transition outcome can be inferred from prior organisational behaviour studies (Erwin and Garman 2010; Bareil and Gagnon 2005) and servitization research (Baines et al. 2013; Kreye 2016). We take this dynamic interaction as an initial conceptual framework to guide our empirical study.

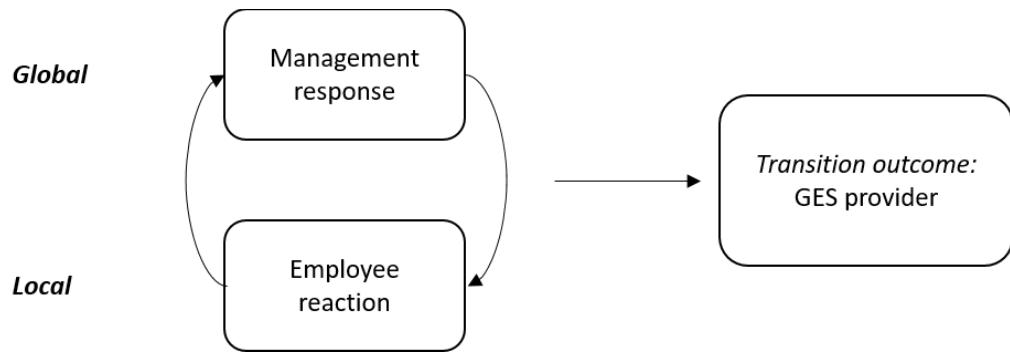


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

3. Research method

An exploratory single case study approach was considered the most appropriate research method for the following reasons. First, the investigated topic, the employees' role in global service transitions, has not been explained by prior theories. Single case studies overcome this limit by enabling the collection and analysis of in-depth data (Voss, Tsikriktsis, and Frohlich 2002) in the context of exploratory research (Yin 2018). Consequently, we conducted a single case study to respond to our research question by analysing extensive data without developed hypotheses (McCutcheon and Meredith 1993). Second, the implementation of engineering services is context dependent (Pereira, Kreye, and Carvalho 2019), meaning that engineering services depend on different business approaches. A single case study enabled us to explicitly create the premises for exploring and presenting the context of our findings (Flyvbjerg 2006). This supports external validity by allowing further comparison between the presented case and similar cases with consideration of the context dependencies (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008).

3.1 Case selection

The case company was selected based on theoretical selection criteria. We selected an outstanding case that served as an example of a completed global service transition at the time of

data collection (Flyvbjerg 2006). The case company was one of the first ones in the industry to have undergone a transition towards globalising their services, based on our experience working in the field. This transition spanned over a period of 10 years, enabling us to study a complete transition. Because the case company's transition was close to completion, data could be collected retrospectively, illuminating the whole transition process to identify the dynamics between employee reactions and management responses. This enabled us to develop a timeline of events and determine the connections between our investigated concepts (Langley 1999). Furthermore, the case company was selected based on the practical criteria of stakeholder availability during the global service transition, allowing access to data from employees and managers involved in the transition alongside data from employees hired during and after the process. This enabled our understanding of the organisational actions implemented during the transition and enriched the collected insights (Meyer 2001). The selected case company operates in the maritime industry with headquarters in northern Europe and local subsidiaries around the world. The operating practices of the company include provision of performance-based services for their products in term of annual safety inspections and refurbishment.

3.2 Data collection

Data were collected from multiple sources (Childe, 2011; see Table 1). The primary data source were 21 semi-structured interviews, which were conducted both at headquarters during a one-week stay and online with interviewees from local subsidiaries. Interviewees were identified in early meetings with company management and through referrals during interviews (i.e., the snowballing method). Notably, the global service transition was actively implemented by four employees who visited local subsidiaries and trained employees with support from top management. These four employees were included in the data collection and are marked in Table

1 for clarity. To understand the subsidiaries' perspectives, we interviewed service managers from three subsidiaries with a predominant global orientation and high service maturity to focus on the global transition aspect.

Table 1. Data collection.

Sources	Source
Interviews	Senior Vice-President Global Services Senior Vice-President Global Sales Corporate Sales Manager* Service Centre Manager Corporate Development Executive Global Customer Logistics Manager Global Service Network Manager Brand Communication Manager IT Director* Director of Owners Agreements* Business Development Executive Global Service Manager* Team leader Customer Logistics Global Service Coordinator Corporate Sales Coordinator Business Process Specialist Region Director Sales Director Service Manager 1 Service Manager 2 Service Manager 3
Observations	Five working days at the company's headquarters During the meeting related to the service business
Additional documents	Service planning flow presentation Service contract document Meeting minutes Roles and responsibilities of the units supporting the services presentation 40-minute video presentation of the business service PowerPoint presentation of the business service Company website

*Stakeholders who were part of the project group involved in managing the transition of employees from the local subsidiaries

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide (see appendix). Here, the conceptual framework (Figure 1) provided overall guidance with regard to the topics to be discussed. Specifically, the conceptual framework provided the general areas of interest for the

interview questions that started with identifying changes, categories of employees involved in these changes, difficulties and reactions to changes, as well as practices which leaders adopted to monitor changes and implement the transition. The interview questionnaire differed depending on whether the interviewee was hired before or after the transition. For employees hired prior to the transition, questions covered the changes in organisational and individual roles. For employees hired after the transition, questions concerned their view of the service business, as well as organisational and individual changes that occurred during their employment. This enabled a balanced view of the organisational setup and management responses during the transition. All interviewees were asked about the current changes and further expected changes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. In addition, observations of the working environment and discussions during a meeting of all service-related units enabled contact with the company culture and complemented data collection. This further increased reliability of the research results, as it enabled triangulation between multiple primary data sources (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008). Furthermore, secondary data completed the dataset in the form of documents provided by the case company (e.g., meeting minutes), online company presentations and the company website.

Validity was ensured through data triangulation between multiple data sources (i.e., interviews, observations and archives), as well as through triangulation of insights from different interviewees (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008). In addition, details about the data collection procedure were recorded in a case study protocol to ensure reliability (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008).

3.3 Data analysis

Data were analysed following an iterative process (Childe 2011). We combined different data analysis strategies with the specific purpose of understanding both the event path and the context details (Langley 1999). Initially, inductive coding through analysing each aspect of the transition resulted in primary descriptive codes (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). This information was then mapped onto a timeline of pre-transition and transition events to gain a visual overview of events and their interconnections (Langley 1999). During this inductive coding process, the logistics unit emerged as an additional functional unit relevant for the global service transition, in addition to the service sales and service delivery units that had been identified in the literature (Oliva and Kallenberg 2003). We thus added logistics as a third functional unit to our analysis. The second step included an abductive approach utilising the conceptual framework to group existing first-order codes into second-order codes related to employee reactions and management responses within each functional unit. Here, we utilised the definitions and existing conceptualisations from the literature and iteratively applied them to the data to achieve increasing levels of abstraction and analytical depth (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). For example, in organisational transformation, resistance consists of ‘negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours towards organisational change initiatives’ (Erwin and Garman 2010, p.51). Starting from the above definition, we coded as resistance negative behaviours that opposed the transition, such as ‘seeing obstacles’ and ‘avoiding selling the service contracts’. This procedure allowed us to ensure internal validity by building upon a theoretically developed research framework and using empirical definitions to code our findings (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008). Through this process, the initially derived descriptive codes were linked to derive causal relationships between employee reactions and management responses.

Preliminary findings were discussed with managers of the case company first via a video conference and subsequently through a presentation at the case company. Here, we aimed to improve our construct validity by confirming our findings and collecting further feedback (Gibbert, Ruigrok, and Wicki 2008). This data analysis process resulted in a coding structure (excluding the connections between descriptive codes for visual clarity; see Figure 2).

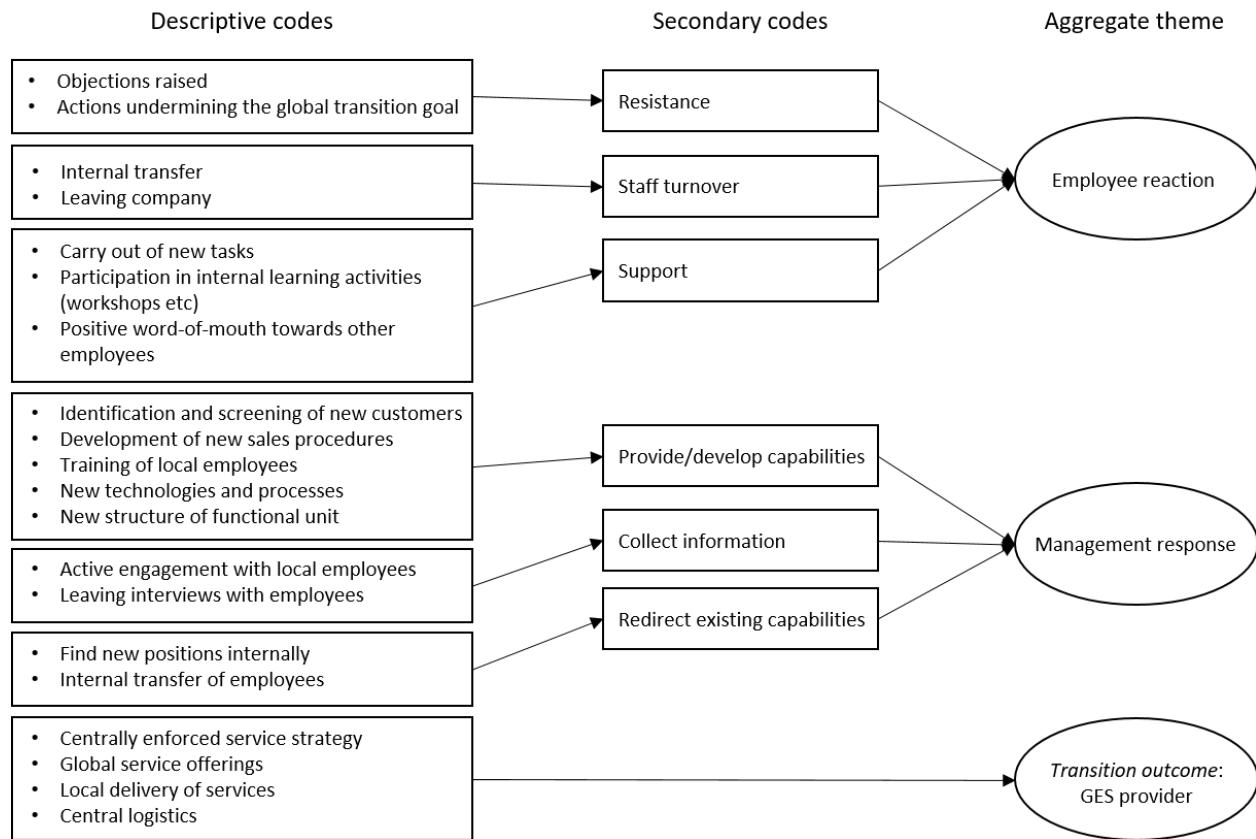


Figure 2. Coding tree.

4. Findings

4.1 Case context

The case transition was a response to external requirements in terms of market pressure from customers. The Brand Communication Officer summarised this as follows: “*More and more customers expect from companies [like us] and [our] closest competitors not only to provide*

product or services, (...) but what you pay a premium for is basically to have the [provider] to just take care of safety to a wider extent. “ This quote shows that pressure did not only come from customers, who wanted a more standardised service offering, but also from the Case company’s main competitor, who was already offering these services on the market. Specifically, customers requested predictable service safety around the world, irrespective of the local subsidiary which serviced their equipment. This involved, on the one hand, receiving the expected safety equipment services according to their global selling schedule and, on the other hand, having stable expenses for their serviced safety equipment. Hence, the central company focused on finding the appropriate pricing strategy while responding to customer needs. This resulted in fixed-price agreements, retention of products ownership and service offerings which consisted of an exchange of old equipment for a newly serviced equipment when the customer’s vessels arrived at the service station.

Internally, the transition intended to adjust working processes and procedures, which required local subsidiaries to engage in global operations and headquarters to coordinate the global service network for selling and delivering within the new global service business. More specifically, the headquarters and local subsidiaries had to shift from being individual enterprises which service different parts of the business (i.e., product sales and service provision) to collaboration in a global service business which responds to the changing needs of their global customers. This increased the interdependencies between the local subsidiaries, as they depended on each other’s abilities to sell and deliver service agreements to the same customer. The IT director explained this as follows:

With the upcoming of the service agreements, where the owners have global agreements at fixed prices, it became more and more important for the entities to work as a whole, as a global organisation. So, this has changed the way people are working together over

those years. (...) you can sell an agreement in Singapore to an owner in Singapore but the revenue will come into the U.S. or Europe so it becomes a much more entangled business.

This indicates that the operations between the local subsidiaries, on the one hand, and between the local subsidiaries and headquarters, on the other, became much more entangled and co-dependent due to the newly emerging global customers. Implementing the global transition created various managerial difficulties, as the global service manager explained:

In the beginning, it was very much a job to convince the organisation that this [transition] was going to change the business and that the company was going to make some changes, which they [local subsidiaries] should adapt to. This was the hardest work in the first three to four years, together with developing concepts. The main challenge in the last five years, where I was part of it was to secure the success. That we could deliver our promises to the customers because (...) we still have a limited number of servicing stations (...).

These explanations convey the extensive time frame of the transition with the strong internal challenges related to gaining employee support.

4.2 Service sales

Before the transition, the case company had a centralised product-sales department, which was complemented by local product-sales units. After the transition, the case company had a centralised service sales department with the commercial responsibility of managing the global service contracts. Local sales units complemented and were responsible for selling the service contracts to local customers, who would receive the services in any of the globally dispersed service stations according to their sailing schedule. The corporate sales manager described the value of this setup as follows:

They [service sales employees in local subsidiaries] speak the local language; they understand the local culture and the traditions. (...) We [central service sales] would not at all have had this success because that would never give the same customer knowledge.

This organisational setup enabled customer access in various local markets due to specific knowledge about the local values, language, culture and markets.

4.2.1 Employee reactions

In sales units, employees' reactions were divided between acceptance of the new global offerings, resistance to aspects of the global service transition and turnover behaviour. Generally, the observed reaction was acceptance, which was usually attributed to the personal preference for services and employees' enthusiasm to experience changes in their routines. However, acceptance was not the only reaction; resistance was also notable as a result of aspects that changed sales. Sales employees initially resisted selling global service contracts. The global service manager explained:

They [sales employees resisting the transition] saw all kinds of obstacles and tried to avoid selling this because they were uncomfortable with it. (...) They read the contract and tried to find any obstacle and every question the ship owners could have. They did not want to go out and present it until every small point was clear because they were nervous.

These descriptions show that sales employees resisted the global transition because they were doubtful and uncertain about presenting the new offerings to the customer. Secondly, resistance arose because sales employees needed to sell services to a different type of customer, namely ship owners instead of shipyards. The change of customers resulted in changes in the selling approach, as the corporate sales manager described:

(...) in the beginning, for a lot of the salespeople, one of the things that was a big change for them in their daily life was that they had to go out to meetings. [Before] they were used to sitting behind their desk and talking on the phone.

It can thus be summarised that the fundamental role of sales employees changed with the transition, requiring a more proactive approach to contacting (new types) of customers.

Ultimately, this led to a certain extent of turnover, as sales employees left the company due to the lack of identification with their new offerings and, implicitly, the company's new business.

4.2.2 Management responses

To reduce resistance and enable sales employees to engage in the transition, several management responses were combined. Initially, central sales took over responsibility for creating the new service-sales approaches. This involved having so-called 'sales experts' – sales managers, directors and employees who learnt about the global service contracts and were comfortable with selling them – involved in customer visits. The director of owners agreements explained this approach:

We used a lot of emphasis in actually travelling around to these places. We have two senior service guys who understood this [new service business] very well. They were used as advocates for this [transition], and we sent them around the world to take co-visits [with the local sales employees].

From this 'on-the-job training', sales employees learned about the service contracts and the new service-sales process before gradually taking over sales responsibilities. To prepare sales employees to take over this responsibility, headquarters provided development and training. The global service manager explained, '*We were a team from [headquarters] travelling around presenting, learning, educating them [local sales employees]*'. Through this constant and close interaction with the local subsidiaries, headquarters learned the concerns of the individual sales employees and were able to address them directly. Similarly, a centralised point of contact was available to help local sales employees with the required information. In sum, the central management responses consisted of preparing sales employees for their role in the global service business.

Finally, central sales responded by developing key performance indicators (KPIs) for local sales employees. This involved development of KPIs aligned with the new interest of headquarters in selling service contracts to ship owners. The IT director described this management response: '*We established KPIs on actual customer visits and, of course, closing of contracts*'. By aligning the performance measurements with their actual interest, the headquarters contributed to directing local sales employees' behaviour and reinforcing the importance of the new business approach. Local sales employees who resisted this transition were offered different roles within the organisation. For example, they moved from external sales (i.e., customer related) to internal sales (i.e., quotation and order placement related) or logistics. The corporate sales manager summarised the effect of this approach: '*I think the people we moved around were quite happy because they came into the position that they liked to be in*'. This suggests that managers did not receive any further negative employee responses once these moved into new positions.

4.3 Service delivery

Before the transition, local subsidiaries provided services as seemingly independent businesses, servicing local customers, handling their local prices and buying spare parts from the headquarters. The local subsidiaries were paid directly by the customer based on the work they performed. After the transition, the ownership of the service business moved to the headquarters, who also received the revenue from the service business and distributed this to the local subsidiaries. In this new setup, local subsidiaries had the overall responsibility of contributing to the common global profit, while the headquarters was tasked with distributing income from service contracts to local subsidiaries. This required local subsidiaries to service global customers and to service local customers only when availability permitted. In other words, in the

global-service setup, local subsidiaries were required to prioritise customers with global service agreements over local customers without contracts.

4.3.1 Employee reactions

Service-delivery units resisted this transition, as the director of owners agreements explained:

Many people had doubts – and, actually, we still have countries that have doubts about this and don't want to do it. [They worry about] ‘why do it like this, because as long as I open the door [service business] is coming in. Why should I start putting an agreement and giving a discount?’

This quotation shows that local service-delivery employees and managers did not understand the purpose or need for the transition and, in turn, were doubtful about the financial validity of long-standing framework agreements with lower prices per service visit. They preferred the '*old way of working*' in terms of payment per individual service provided, where profit margins were ultimately higher. In addition, the framework agreements created a strong dependence on the global network because global service contracts were signed and delivered in different local subsidiaries. This resulted in a change in internal financial flow, where all earned revenues would go to headquarters and then be distributed to the local subsidiaries. Previously, local subsidiaries had received and retained their own cash flows. The senior vice-president for global services explained the reaction: '*The service stations in the beginning could not understand: "Why don't I get 100%? I do the job"*'. This resistance manifested itself in service delivery prioritising local customers over customers with global framework agreements. The director of owners agreements explained:

They [in the local subsidiaries] do a lot of service for their customers who call them without a contract. Actually, we don't have any type of [centrally prescribed] prioritisation between those two. So, if they are fully booked with fishermen, they cannot do something for [a global customer] who comes in.

This illustrates the specific preference of local subsidiaries to maintain ownership of their service business and the traditional payment system. This prioritisation of local over global customers was a problem because it hindered the service delivery for global service contracts and consequently meant that promises to global customers were not kept. In other words, it reduced the service performance of global services.

4.3.2 Management responses

Initial doubts about the service-delivery employees were addressed through direct and close communication between headquarters and local subsidiaries. The senior vice-president for global services explained:

When you have to explain to your service manager in one country ‘why do we need to split the money’, you can use a model like this [pointing towards a service triangle: sales, service delivery and customer] to say, ‘They [service sales employees] make sure that you get your order and we [the headquarters], make sure that you are not over-delivering and he is not over-promising’.

This highlights that local service managers were encouraged to understand the wider service network (including headquarters and customer) and identify their role within it. Allowing them to understand the value chain and specific service-delivery responsibilities within the service network created an understanding of the collaborative effort required.

The decision to prioritise local customers over global customers received attention from top and regional management and was temporarily aided by interventions and explanations about the necessity to act as a globally integrated service business. However, it was an ongoing problem during data collection. The case company saw a further global change in the organisational setup as the solution. The director of owners agreements explained, *‘This is something we are changing now. I would say they are, basically, kings of their little domain and that is still the case today, we still have problems (...). It’s not 100% aligned globally’*. This conveys the

continuous nature of the transition, which requires ongoing management response to employee reactions. At the time of the data collection, further changes related to this specific challenge had not yet been defined.

4.4 Logistics

Before the transition, the logistics functions consisted of local service planning and global logistics. While the predominantly service-related logistics were handled locally, global logistics concerned the optimal positioning and stocking of product warehouses. After the transition, global logistics became much more complex due to the interconnected and interdependent nature of operations between local subsidiaries. The senior vice-president for global services explained this as follows:

Now we have customer service planners that talk to the customer and local service planners that ensure that the [internal] flow is optimised. Because the customer service planner is like a sales person, you are in daily contact with the customer, you have to sell more, you have to be outgoing, outspoken, looking for a relationship, building a relationship and so on. A local service planner who has to optimise is a people manager, is a person who wants to go into details.

This indicates that the transition towards becoming a global service provider required the case company to consider different job descriptions and characteristics of employees involved in the planning function. While local planning was already being conducted by local subsidiaries, customer planning was added, which required hiring new customer- and sales-oriented employees. Furthermore, new responsibilities, such as managing products for the global service contracts, were added to the logistics roles.

4.4.1 Employee reactions

Operational difficulties for global logistics employees resulted in a lack of commitment towards this transition. The director of owners agreements explained this as follows:

They [logistics employees] did not realise that every [core product of the company] that we ship out of this place goes to a [service] agreement. So, they sometimes forget this is actually 50% of what we do. But they build up their internal room in logistics for the other 50% and neglect this part of it because the whole company [hasn't yet] transformed in this, and that will take many years. [The product side] is still a catalyst for what we do, so this is difficult to change.

This insight shows the product orientation of the case company and resulting lack of commitment of logistics employees to the service-based setup with a preference towards known procedures of product-based logistics.

4.4.2 Management responses

In response to the lack of commitment of logistics employees, headquarters enabled alignment and collaboration between employees and managers from different functions with cross-disciplinary meetings. The corporate sales manager explained,

What we are doing internally with the people [involved in the service business] is that we meet every three weeks (...) to have the whole value chain of people that are in logistics, planning, IT, sales and so on to share all of these things and understand that 'Okay, if this is what we want to achieve from sales then what does that require from all of the other ones? (...) If you need to do this in logistics then maybe I should not sell this, maybe I should sell that instead'. So we meet here to get more and more common ground on what it is that we are doing and having a bit understanding of each other in this.

In other words, alignment meetings within the entire service business had as main purpose the understanding of logistics role and overcoming the difficulties that other units might create for the logistics.

This approach was supplemented by digitalising the logistics processes through specific IT infrastructure that supports the administration of the global stock levels. The senior vice-

president for global sales explained, '*We developed like a track and trace system where we can constantly monitor [local subsidiaries and service partners] so there are more than 100 places in the world where we constantly control our stock*'. In this way, logistics employees were supported on the operational level through digital technologies to simplify the complex operations and ensure product availability in due time according to the global service contract.

4.5 Transition outcome

The transition resulted in optimised processes that increased the efficiency of local subsidiaries. The senior vice-president for global services explained the transition effect on internal productivity as follows:

With the same physical capacity, the same number of people and reduced overtime, we have tripled our productivity (...) [without service contracts] these people would have been sitting, waiting, doing nothing, waiting for the vessel to come in, do one job, put it back, waiting again and so on. But by doing the asset play with the exchange, we suddenly could optimise the resources to deliver the service.

This benefit of the transition was confirmed by one of the interviewed service managers: '*I think the biggest impact is on efficiency. I think we, as service station, were able to be more efficient than in the past*'. By engaging in service contracts, the local subsidiaries were able to service global customers and obtain an increased number of service requests. This ultimately resulted in local subsidiaries retaining their position in the local market, as one of the service managers confirmed: '*If we wouldn't have had a step to agreements, we wouldn't have survived*'.

Therefore, the transition was deemed to respond to customer needs in terms of stable expenses related to their safety equipment and resulted in a global service enterprise that adjusted their working processes with outcomes in their internal overall efficiency. Table 2 summarises the findings of the three core functional units focusing on employee reactions and management responses.

Table 2. Summary of findings.

	Employee reactions	Management responses	Transition outcome
Service sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority accepted Some resisted selling global service contracts, selling to new types of customers or selling via meetings rather than phone calls Some sought external opportunities and left the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct support in selling the contracts with a sales expert (training while selling) Local discussions about difficulties and help in overcoming them Centralised point of support Defined KPIs according to the new sales approaches Opened internal positions to create opportunities to change jobs 	Centralised service sales in terms of service contract pricing and sales procedures implemented through local sales employees.
Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many doubted the necessity of the transition Many expressed concerns regarding the new financial flow within the global setup Prioritisation of local customers over the global customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create understanding for the role of local subsidiaries within the new global value chain Future establishment of new organisational procedures for prioritising service delivery 	Centralised ownership of the service business with local implementation and service delivery in the local subsidiaries.
Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of commitment from global logistics visible in regression to product-based logistics processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-disciplinary meetings for clarifying the role of global logistics within the new global value chain Operational support through digital technology that facilitates global logistics activities 	Global logistics network with customer service planners who plan the geographical need for service delivery based on customer input.

5. Discussion

This section discusses our case findings in relation to the three areas of employee reactions, management responses and the transition outcome as summarised in Table 2.

5.1 Employee reactions in the global service transition

The observed employee reactions to the global transition spanned from rejection to acceptance of the new global service strategy, which aligned with the literature on organisational behaviour (Rese and Maiwald 2013; Herscovitch and Meyer 2002). Illuminating the specific units affected

by the global service transition (i.e., service sales, service delivery and logistics) revealed a more nuanced picture. In service sales, the employee reactions were mainly related to the new types of offerings that changed their daily work. Many sales employees expected changes to the service business to better target customer needs and hence welcomed the global service transition. We relate these observations to the importance of internal motivation in service sales employees, which is based around customer needs (Kreye 2016). For the remaining employees, resistance and turnover behaviour resulted from a lack of alignment in the employees' skills. Resistant employees were committed to selling products, and the global service transition threatened their mindset and comfort zone. This resistance of sales employees has also been described in the servitization literature (Ulaga and Loveland 2014). Our findings expand this phenomenon into the global service setting, as we also show the relevance of employee resistance for sales in these transformations.

In service delivery, the findings showed resistance to the global service transition in the form of complaints and continuous focus on their own local service business. Our case observations connect to discussions on network collaboration in GES provision (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016) and shows the potential misalignments in interests between headquarters and local subsidiaries in global services. This specifically related to the changes in decision-making power, which moved to the headquarters after the global service transition (Kowalkowski, Kindström, and Brehmer 2011). In other words, our findings indicate potential resistance to network collaboration due to perceived misalignments with local subsidiaries' priorities for service delivery.

In logistics, the specific reaction (i.e., lack of commitment to the global service business) resulted not only from increased complexity of the global service operations with a strong need

for network coordination (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016), but also from collaboration between product and service business (Sousa and da Silveira 2019). Despite the emphasis in the literature on complexity (Kreye 2019) and cross-organisational connections (Sousa and da Silveira 2019), logistics is rarely discussed in the servitization literature. Our study showed the manifestation of operational complexity during the global service transition for the logistics unit. Our research indicates that these concerns become critical during the global service transition.

5.2 Management responses in the global service transition

This research further identifies specific management responses to the observed employee reactions to the global service transition. The presented case evidence demonstrated that to overcome resistance to the organisational transition, the case company headquarters took responsibility for changed procedures and operational processes, enabling their employees to develop new capabilities under guidance from managers. This specific connection between resistance (i.e., especially in service sales) and the need to provide capability development has been described in the servitization literature (Gebauer and Fleisch 2007; Baines et al. 2013). We extend these insights by illustrating the specific relevance and nature of the management responses in global services. In this setting, headquarters not only enabled the capability creation for the new global service setup, but also took responsibility for developing these capabilities, testing them and closely managing the global rollout process.

In addition, to create the necessary conditions to apply the newly acquired sales capabilities, headquarters created performance measurement indicators for the new sales approaches. This aligned with previous research that states the importance of adjusting KPIs to the service business (Baines et al. 2013). Moreover, management responses extended to creating internal opportunities for employees who were not willing to shift to selling services by offering them an

internal transfer to a different position or unit. This extends the empirical insights on the process of preparing employees to support service-related roles (Gebauer and Fleisch 2007) with a specific example of covering service-related roles while supporting employees to find their place in the global service business.

Employee support was used to further engage other employees and create a positive expectation and general opinion towards the transition aligned with the literature on organisational behaviour (Erwin and Garman 2010). This research integrates these descriptions into the Operations Management (OM) literature by noting the specific connections for the global service transition and showing which specific management responses apply to the employee reactions. This is an important step in creating a theoretical basis for global service operations as a field of academic enquiry.

5.3 Transition outcome

The observed transition outcome aligns with characteristics of professional services with a specific focus on customer-oriented processes and services, alongside the employees who ensure the service operations (Silvestro et al. 1992; Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016). Even after the transition, the case company's internal focus is on the performers of processes and services (i.e., employees; Rese and Maiwald, 2013). The case observations of improved efficiency align with descriptions in the global operations literature (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016; Blomqvist and Turkulainen 2019; Feldmann and Olhager 2019). Nonetheless, the case findings offer specific details for improved efficiency in the global services operations, where service networks must coordinate their activities in line with a specific strategy (Zhang, Gregory, and Neely 2016).

5.4 Limitations

The limitations of this research arise from the choice of a single case study to derive empirically based insights to develop a theoretical perspective. The presented insights are hence context specific (Flyvbjerg 2006) and require further work to enable generalisation and theory development. The methodological choice aligns with the purpose of this research to provide exploratory and detailed empirical insights for the transition towards a global service strategy. Furthermore, case study research is often criticised with regards to observer bias and subjectivity in interpreting the findings (Yin 2018). These limitations were mitigated by triangulating our insights between multiple primary (i.e., interviews and observations) and secondary data sources (Voss, Tsikriktsis, and Frohlich 2002). This enabled us to provide detailed insights based on a rigorous study design.

6. Conclusion

This research investigated how employees affect the process and outcome of a manufacturer becoming a GES provider. Based on evidence from a single case study, this research developed detailed insights into specific employee reactions and management responses and their joint and dynamic effects on the transition outcome of becoming a GES provider.

The primary contribution of this research relates to the global operations literature (Kowalkowski, Kindström, and Brehmer 2011; Cheng, Farooq, and Johansen 2015; Cheng et al. 2019) by exploring the roles of employees in the organisational transition. This extends existing works by (i) exploring the specific nature of global service operations and (ii) illustrating the micro-level dynamics of the organisational transition towards a global business. This research provides insights into the transition outcome of a GES provider based on the dynamic interplay

between employee reactions and management responses. As identified in the introduction, this is a novel contribution to the OM literature, as such an organisational transition has not previously been studied with regard to operational implications. The case evidence showed that the transition depended on the management's ability to support employees and iteratively use resistance to define a global service strategy which integrated the needs of all aspects of the complex global service business. This study contributes to the emerging global operations literature (Cheng, Farooq, and Johansen 2015; Cheng et al. 2019) by providing insights into the operational and managerial needs during the global service transition. The secondary contribution of this research is to the servitization literature (Kreye 2016; Hakanen, Helander, and Valkokari 2017; Reim, Sjödin, and Parida 2019), by providing insights into employee roles and behaviours to study specific management responses. Here, our findings indicated the strong differences between employees of three functional units affected by this transition: service sales, service delivery, and logistics. The identified management responses form the basis for the managerial implications of this research as indicated in the discussion above.

This study provides practical implications for managing global service transitions. In addition to the two service units affected by servitization, the global service transition also involves logistics. Each of these three units has specific needs and concerns as outlined by our findings (summarised in Table 2). Specifically, employees from service sales units needed specific new skills and were mainly concerned about the change within the customer base. In service delivery units, differences in the financial flow and the related changed locus of profits in the global service business were the main concerns. In logistics, the increased complexity of logistics flow to support the global service business was an ongoing challenge for employees. An initial creation of a central task force that was closely involved with concerns in the local subsidiaries

was a useful tool which enabled close involvement and monitoring of local employee reactions. Implementing a global service transition was also a long-term process involving a dynamic interplay between employee reactions and management responses, which required constant employee involvement to monitor their reactions not only to the transition but also to the specific management responses.

Future research is needed to extend the insights provided in this paper regarding the role of employees in global services by exploring the organisational and external aspects that influence their role and reactions. Future studies could further illuminate the heterogeneity of employee reactions across the different local subsidiaries within the global network. One relevant case insight was the differences between employee reactions in the local subsidiaries. Future research could expand the case-based insights of our study through broader study of the causal relationships between employee reactions and management responses. This would enhance the statistical generalisability of the identified management responses for global service providers. Furthermore, the two emerging insights related to the lack of ownership of service-delivery employees and the increased complexity in global service logistics require further research. Exemplar studies could explore the role of ownership in employee support of a global service setup. Similarly, the need for greater network collaboration to enable management of the increased service complexity requires more detailed understanding. Therefore, future studies should investigate the conditions of collaboration between central managers and subsidiary managers in integrating the global service businesses at a local level. Finally, the role of digital technology in the context of globalising services needs further attention. Given recent developments in industry (Industry 4.0 etc), digital technology may further enhance the performance effects of global services.

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Appendix

Interview questionnaire for employees from before the transition

A. Changes in the company

1. In this period of providing services (pointing to a timeline), how did (company name) change internally (e.g., structure, processes, culture)? – *adapted according to the starting period of employment of the interviewee*
 - How were you informed about those changes?
 - How have you informed the others about the changes?
 - In your observation, what were the main categories of employees involved in those changes?
 - How were you able to influence the changes?
 - How did the others empower you to be involved in the changes?
 - How did you empower others to contribute?
 - What was your reaction to the changes?
2. How would you define the organisational identity during the aforementioned period (i.e., shared goals and standards of the organisation)?
 - Did you observe a change in the organisational identity during this period?
 - If so, how did you accept this change?
 - How have you supported this identity?

B. Individual side of the changes towards the services

3. How did your role change during this period in order to support the (transition to) services?
 - What was your personal involvement in the changes?
 - How did your work routine change during this period?
 - New requirements – What knowledge and skills should you have to support the services?
 - What motivated you personally to support the changes?
 - How did the (transition to) services change your interactions with customers and colleagues?
4. What were the most difficult aspects for you during this period of change?
 - Which aspects made you feel uncertain about the (transition to) services?
 - How did leaders monitor the effects that adding services have on you?
 - Overall, how did those changes make you feel?
 - Have you observed any differences in your reactions to changes during different periods?

C. Further changes

5. What is happening at (company name) currently in terms of changes?
6. In your opinion, how would a servitized (company name) look?

7. How will you be involved in this further servitization process?

Additional information

8. Are you a member of any organisation which discusses the work environment? Was this topic discussed?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add or clarify?
10. Could you please point out any documents that could help my research project?
11. Do you know anyone who could be relevant to speak to on this topic?
12. May I contact you again?

Interview questionnaire for employees after the transition

1. What was the image that you had about (case company name) in terms of offerings, before you started working here?
2. How did this image change?
3. What are the services offered by (case company name)?
4. How does your team support you in contributing to those services?
5. Until now, what have been the most difficult aspects related to the services offered?
6. What is happening at (case company name) in this period in terms of changes?
7. In your opinion, how would a servitized (case company name) look?
8. How will you be involved (or how would you like to be involved) in this further servitization process?
9. Are you a member of any organisation which discusses the work environment? Was this topic discussed?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add or clarify?
11. Could you please point out any documents that could help my research project?
12. Do you know anyone who could be relevant to speak to on this topic?
13. May I contact you again?