

# Living Corporate Culture

A Case Study on Novo Facilitations  
and their Applicability in other Companies

Stefanie Sohm





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# To the Reader



Liz Mohn

Today's corporate world is challenged by ever more rapidly increasing external forces that are nearly impossible to influence from the inside of a company. Globalization, demographic change, stunningly quick progress in new technologies – these are but a few of the framework conditions that have an impact on corporate success in international competition and thus determine corporate decision-making. Readiness for change and adaptability has become the needs of the moment for most industries.



Lars Rebien Sørensen

A corporate culture that takes these framework conditions into account and lives by them will increasingly become a decisive competitive advantage.

An example proving the connection between corporate culture and economic success is Novo Nordisk. The Novo Nordisk Way of Management sets a high standard for all employees indeed to “try to do right things right.” The Novo Nordisk Way of Management, formulated in the early 1990s, is the set of the company's values, business principles and commitments binding for all employees and managers worldwide.

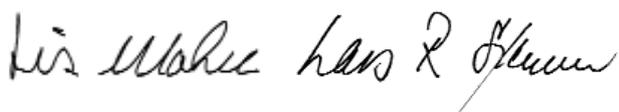
Core elements of the company's vision are competitiveness and the historically founded attitude that “everything can be done.” In consequence, accountability, ambition and the readiness for change play a major role among corporate values. Ultimately, the company's fundamentals

break this down to individual unit and employee levels. “Each unit must share and use better practices” ranks first in a set of fundamental principles that logically end with the individual: “Everyone must continuously improve the quality of their work.”

With its dialogue-oriented facilitation process, the company has developed its own system to sustain corporate culture and analyze the compliance of the organization with the desired culture, thus ensuring continual review of adherence to the given management principles. The system is deeply rooted in the company's culture, yet a clear feedback process can also lead to culture change – Novo Nordisk has, so to speak, succeeded in implementing a systematic approach to culture-based change management.

The following case study describes the facilitation process and places a special focus on the corporate culture background under which this system is “most workable.” The Novo case study is the second in a series of case studies on approaches to assess and evaluate corporate culture, which were successfully and satisfactorily created and applied in companies. The case studies were developed within the framework of the International Network Corporate Culture, whose aim is the exchange, transfer and dissemination of knowledge on practice-oriented instruments to shape corporate culture.

We would like to thank the author, Stefanie Sohm, and all employees at Novo Nordisk, whose open and honest comments helped to develop this case study. Particular thanks are due to Lone Hass and Dr. Markus Leyck Dieken.

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# Preface

The majority of companies today consider their own culture a competitive advantage. They are aware and proud of specific cultural features, whether they refer to customer relations, to employee- and participation-oriented leadership, etc. Companies are equally aware that the extent to which the corporate values are lived by all corporate actors is highly important for the success of the business.

Only few companies, however, have created and perfected systems to assess to which extent corporate values are indeed lived and deduce measures to improve the results.

The Danish pharmaceuticals company and world leader in diabetes care, Novo Nordisk, is a positive example in this respect. Novo Nordisk is an active member of the International Network Corporate Culture, which was established as a follow-up initiative of the 2003 Carl Bertelsmann-Prize awarded for lived corporate culture and exemplary leadership. Novo Nordisk was then among the top three out of 66 European companies, not least because of the Novo Nordisk Way of Management, which convinced the jury of the Carl Bertelsmann-Prize.

The Novo Nordisk Way of Management unites the company's vision, its values and a number of fundamentals that determine the behavior of both managers and employees worldwide. To ensure compliance with this internal framework, Novo Nordisk developed the so-called Facilitations, a dialogue-based assessment tool by which to promote the implementation of the Novo Nordisk Way of Management and to

ensure that corporate culture is maintained in the long run.

With transfer of knowledge, experience and good practice lying at the heart of the exchange in the International Network Corporate Culture, the Facilitations system was given particular attention within the framework of the network's first year of activities. Network activities concentrated on the search for applicable and transferable instruments in the field of (a) assessing corporate culture against the background of economic performance and (b) thence deducing potential for improvement in specific areas of culture implementation.

Corporate decision-makers' interest in applicable and, ideally, easily transferable methods and instruments has, not only among network members, always been great. Especially in context with corporate culture, however, we overlook that transferring specific instruments developed in and by individual companies to others is not that easy. Transfer usually requires either adaptation of the instrument or even transformation of the given culture, which actually happens upon implementation of certain new methods, approaches and instruments. They will always bear an impact on the company's individual culture.

Against this background, Novo Facilitations were surveyed with a view to their transferability to other companies. The following case study describes the instrument and places a focus on the environment in which it works best.

One of the key findings is indeed that the existence of a specific culture has a deep impact on the functionality of Facilitations. Interestingly, the case study also revealed that Facilitations' results can likewise feed back on the culture.

Corporate strategy, size and staff fluctuation were identified as having an impact on the successful implementation and adaptation of Facilitations but a specific organizational and cultural background seems to be at least as, if not even more important.

Facilitations require a particular structural and procedural organization if they are to become a useful tool. The most important structural preconditions are the Facilitators' independence from top management or individual units as well as their high hierarchical level. Both characteristics give them high credibility and trust among all corporate actors. In terms of procedure, it is exactly this trust, paired with the binding character of the Facilitations' results, the interplay between Facilitators and facilitated unit manager as well as the individual unit's freedom in how to tackle the results that are vital for the success of the process.

If a company wishes to adapt the instrument it ought to be highly aware of general corporate culture requirements. The case study clearly points out that Facilitations cannot be used as a stand-alone approach towards assessing culture, not least because the instrument was developed in accordance with the Novo Nordisk Way of Management.

Given the preconditions the case study describes, Facilitations seem to be an excellent instrument to maintain and further develop a company's culture.

Novo Nordisk has created an intricate but highly applicable system not only to assess lived corporate culture but also to develop measures to foster compliance with a given set of values on all corporate levels.



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# 1. Background and Purpose of the Novo Facilitations Case Study

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Implementing, spreading and sustaining a functional corporate culture is one of the company's top management's most challenging tasks. Novo Facilitations – the object of investigation of this case study – as an instrument to sustain corporate culture, analyze the compliance of the organization with the desired culture. They assess the degree to which managers assume their task as a promoter of the company culture and identify room for improvement concerning the application of the company's values in organizational daily life.

The purpose of this case study is to provide a deeper insight into the organization of Novo Facilitations, to illustrate the conditions under which they are applied at Novo Nordisk and to inspire other companies to implement a similar instrument.

To identify the relevant prerequisites of Novo Facilitations' successful application at Novo Nordisk, a qualitative research was conducted. Besides the analysis of internal documentation of Novo and Novo Nordisk, interviews with representatives of all stakeholders in the Facilitation process, i.e. the head of the Facilitations & Development Department, Facilitators, recent Facilitation Hosts as well as their managerial and operative staff, substantially contributed to the significance of the study's results.

After a brief introduction to the Novo Nordisk company, its economic performance and cultural profile, this case study depicts the structural and procedural organization of Novo Facilitations. Based on the interview data, the critical

aspects of the successful application of Facilitations at Novo Nordisk are illuminated, and finally conclusions on their applicability in other companies are drawn.

# 2. Introduction to Novo Nordisk

## 2.1 Novo Nordisk's Company Profile

Novo Nordisk A/S is a Danish healthcare company headquartered in Denmark that holds affiliates in 79 countries. With diabetes care being its core business, the company is the world's leading manufacturer of insulin with a total market share of 51%. By marketing its products in 179 countries all over the world, Novo Nordisk realizes 95% of its revenues in foreign markets, predominantly in Europe and the United States. Besides the diabetes care range, Novo Nordisk's product portfolio comprises biopharmaceutical products such as haemostasis management, growth hormone therapy and hormone replacement therapy. In 2005, Novo Nordisk with its 22,460 employees worldwide generated sales of a total of 4,525 million Euro.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2 Novo Nordisk's History

Novo Nordisk's history goes back to the year 1923, when the Danish scientists August Krogh and Hans Christian Hagedorn founded the Nordisk Insulinlaboratorium. In 1925, their first two employees, the Pedersen brothers, left the company to establish the Novo Terapeutisk Laboratorium and to start their own insulin production. Over the years, both companies broadened their activities: while Novo entered the field of enzyme and antibiotics production, Nordisk added growth hormones to its product range.

During the following years, the companies developed differently. Right after its foundation, Novo started operating foreign markets and became one of the world's leading insulin manufacturers

in the 1950s. By the time Novo went public in 1974, Novo Insulin was marketed in 50 countries and the company ran 14 affiliates all over the world. About the same time, Nordisk was stuck in a critical situation. The company had focused too strongly on research activities and neglected its marketing strategies, so that Nordisk strongly depended on its Danish home market. During the 1970s, a new management team implemented a new marketing strategy enabling Nordisk to gain substantial foreign market shares. In 1986, Nordisk followed the example of Novo and went public.

By the end of the 1980s, Nordisk had become the world's third largest insulin manufacturer. At the same time, Novo held the second position in the insulin market and was leading in the enzyme business. Both companies had achieved an export share of more than 90% and were internationally represented. In 1989, after more than 60 years of competition, Novo and Nordisk decided to join their forces under the name of Novo Nordisk A/S.

In 1990, Novo Nordisk A/S had to cope with a quality crisis, which caused its management to thoroughly investigate the company's business processes and corporate culture. As a result, Novo Nordisk was one of the first companies that aligned its businesses with the Triple Bottom Line. Since then, the company has balanced its decision-making in a way that promotes economic success as well as the achievement of environmental and social targets.

<sup>1</sup> Information taken from [www.novonordisk.com](http://www.novonordisk.com)

The new strategic focus on the two core competencies health care and enzyme business, which was set in 1994, finally led to a de-merger in 2000. Novo Nordisk A/S should henceforth be the name of the health care business area, while the enzyme business was given the name of Novozymes A/S.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3 The Novo Group

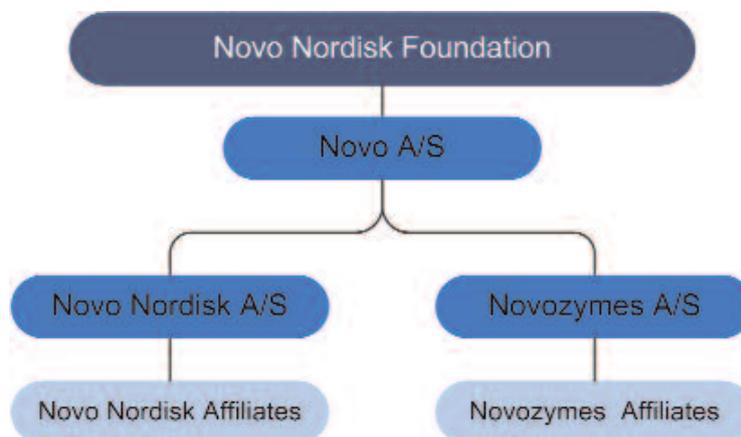
With the de-merger in 2000, the Novo Group comprising the two operative companies Novo Nordisk A/S and Novozymes A/S, the holding company Novo A/S and the Novo Nordisk Foundation was established.

Novo A/S, which is fully owned by the Novo Nordisk Foundation, is the majority shareholder of Novo Nordisk A/S and Novozymes A/S.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Information taken from [www.novonordisk.com/images/about\\_us/history/history\\_uk.pdf](http://www.novonordisk.com/images/about_us/history/history_uk.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Information taken from [www.novo.dk](http://www.novo.dk)

Figure 1. Structure of the Novo Group



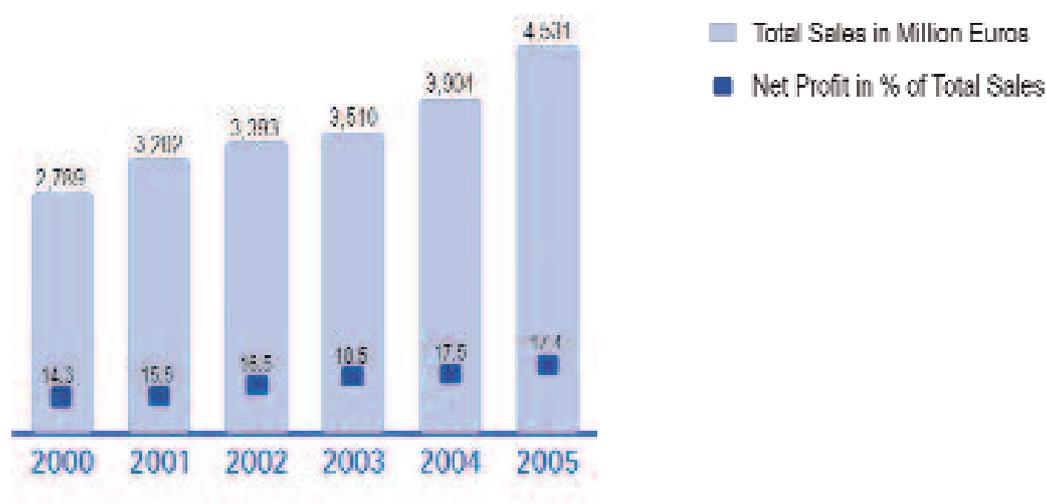
## 2.4 Novo Nordisk's Economic Performance

Figure 2 shows the financial performance of Novo Nordisk since the de-merger in the year 2000. The company raised its sales from almost 2.8 billion  $\text{€}$  in 2000 by 62% to 4.5 billion  $\text{€}$ . At the same time, net profits rose from 414 million  $\text{€}$  (14.3% of total sales) to 787 million  $\text{€}$  (17.4% of total sales).

Novo Nordisk's constant growth is also reflected by the number of its employees. Whereas the company counted 13,800 employees in 2000, today, almost 22,500 people are working for Novo Nordisk.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Information taken from Annual Reports 2000 and 2005 at [www.novonordisk.com/investors/download-centre/default.asp](http://www.novonordisk.com/investors/download-centre/default.asp)

Figure 2: Novo Nordisk's economic performance



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## 2.5 The Novo Nordisk Way of Management

The Novo Nordisk Way of Management (NNWoM) is the set of the company's values, business principles and commitments. It is based on the Novo Way of Management, which was formulated in the early 1990s as a result of the quality crisis the company had gone through and is adapted to Novo Nordisk's specific needs and its business environment. With the NNWoM, which is binding for all employees and managers worldwide, the company clearly communicates how important corporate values are and what doing business in the right way means at Novo Nordisk.

The Novo Nordisk Way of Management comprises Our Vision (see figure 3), The Charter and the Policies. Whereas The Charter containing the Values (see figure 4), the Fundamentals (see figure 5), the Commitments and the Methods to supervise and control the company's performance, applies to all Novo companies, Our Vision and the Policies represent the specific objectives and

business practices of Novo Nordisk. Each formulation within the vision and every value is endorsed with a concise statement of how it is to be interpreted.<sup>5</sup>

"If people deliver the financial results without being in accordance with our values, we run a risk of exposing our business and ruin our future license to operate."  
(Senior Vice President Facilitation & Development at Novo A/S)

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<sup>5</sup> Information taken from [www.novonordisk.com/about\\_us/about\\_novo\\_nordisk/introduction.asp](http://www.novonordisk.com/about_us/about_novo_nordisk/introduction.asp)

### Figure 3: Novo Nordisk's Vision

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#### Our Vision

We will be the world's leading diabetes care company.

We will offer products and services in other areas where we can make a difference.

We will achieve competitive business results.

A job here is never just a job.

Our values are expressed in all our actions.

Our history tells us, it can be done.

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**Figure 4: Novo Nordisk's Values**

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**Our Values**

- Accountable
  - Ambitious
  - Responsible
  - Engaged with stakeholders
  - Open and honest
  - Ready for change
- 

**Figure 5: Novo Nordisk's Fundamentals**

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**Fundamental**

1. Each unit must share and use better practices.
  2. Each unit must have a clear definition of where accountabilities and decision powers reside.
  3. Each unit must have an action plan to ensure improvement of its business performance and working climate.
  4. Every team and employee must have updated business and competency targets and receive timely feedback on performance against these targets.
  5. Each unit must have an Action Plan to ensure the development of teams and individuals based on business requirements and employee input.
  6. Every manager must establish and maintain procedures in the unit for living up to relevant laws, regulations, and group commitments.
  7. Each unit and every employee must know how they create value for their customers.
  8. Every manager requiring reporting from others must explain the actual use of the reports and the added value.
  9. Every manager must continuously make it easier for the employees to liberate energy for customer related issues.
  10. Every manager and unit must actively support cross-unit projects and working relationships of relevance to the business.
  11. Everyone must continuously improve the quality of their work.
- 

One of the methods the Novo Group applies to ensure the compliance of the companies with the Way of Management are the Novo Facilitations.

# 3. Novo Facilitations

## 3.1 Background and Purpose of Novo Facilitations

The Novo Facilitations were established in 1997 to sustainably promote the implementation of the NNWoM and to ensure that corporate culture was taken care of on a long-term basis. Their mandatory application is fixed in the group's criteria that are binding for all companies belonging to the Novo Group.

“Present as well as future companies in the Novo Group must demonstrate willingness, ability and resolve to live the Novo values and business conduct principles as defined in the Novo Way of Management.”  
(Fifth Criterion of the Novo Group)

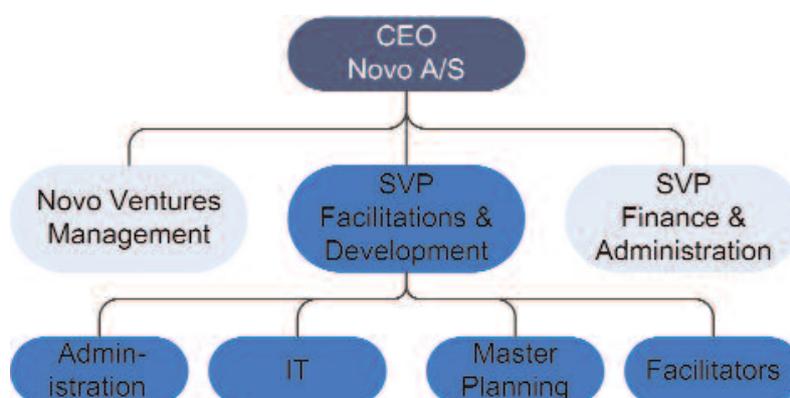
By applying the Novo Facilitations, Novo Nordisk promotes the achievement of its Vision, its financial, environmental and social goals whilst complying with the company's values and fundamentals. In order to support compliance with the way of management and foster continuous improvement, the entire company is facilitated against the NNWoM at least every four years.

“If you want something done you need to follow up. We have always spent a lot of resources on following up on financial results. However, follow-up on compliance with our values was weak. It was in this context that the idea of facilitations came up.”  
(Senior Vice President Facilitation & Development, Novo A/S)

## 3.2 Organization of Novo Facilitations

Since the de-merger in 2000, Novo Facilitations are organized as a profit center in the Facilitations & Development (F&D) Department of Novo A/S, which offers its services to the companies of the Novo Group. The department consists of 14 Facilitators, three supportive functions (administration, IT and Master Planning) and is headed by a Senior Vice President (SVP) who directly reports to the CEO of Novo A/S.

Figure 6. The Facilitations &amp; Development Department at Novo A/S



### 3.3 Facilitators

#### 3.3.1 Facilitators' Task

The Facilitators are in charge of the execution of Facilitations. They assess the company's compliance with the NNWoM, assist its managers in transforming the values into working practices and applying the fundamentals and report the results of their assessments as well as the measures taken to promote compliance to the company's top management. By supporting a steady exchange of better practices amongst the different business areas and departments, the Facilitators substantially contribute to the company's continuous improvement.

"You can have screens and posters saying this is our company culture. But that is not enough. If it is just something you talk about, then it isn't culture. Culture is lived because it makes sense to people, they can rely on it, they can understand it. That is real corporate culture."  
(Facilitator at Novo A/S)

#### 3.3.2 Facilitators' Profile

To provide sufficient capacity to facilitate the Novo Group's companies with their 28,000 employees, the Facilitators team at Novo consists of 14 Facilitators. All of the Facilitators look back on at least seven years of international work experience within the company. They have a

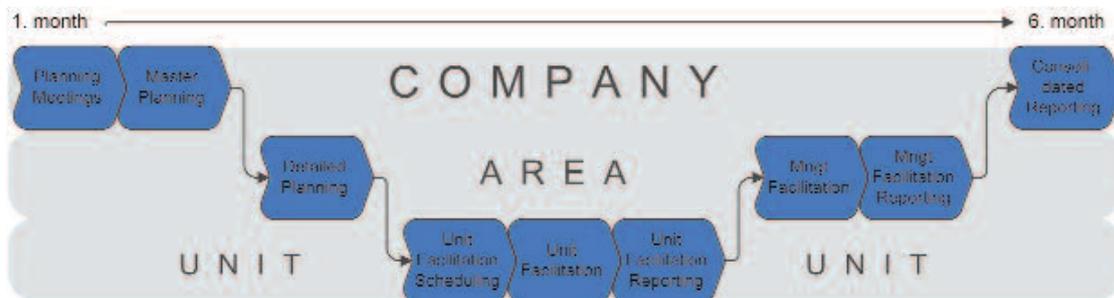
profound knowledge of the company’s structure and processes, its markets and customers and its corporate culture. Their analytical and methodical skills, their communicative as well as their empathic and conflict resolution abilities are complemented by a qualification as an auditor. All of the Facilitators stem from a position of at least a Vice President (VP) as these requirements can only be met by ambitious and highly qualified candidates.

The Facilitator team is composed according to different criteria. Thus it does not only reflect the internationality of the company, but also all of its business areas. It covers the company’s requirements by employing Facilitators from seven different national backgrounds with experience in the different business areas such as marketing, production or finance to guarantee an utmost competence in understanding the specific needs of the different departments worldwide and in supporting them adequately.

### 3.4 Facilitation Process

The overall Facilitation process can be split into nine sub-processes that run through three organizational layers (see figure 7). It starts with a planning stage on a company-wide level (Planning Meetings, Master Planning) that is pursued in Detailed Planning for the company’s areas represented by its Senior Vice Presidents (SVPs). Further on, the Areas are split into Units and the planning phase ends with the Unit Facilitation Scheduling. The actual Data Collection, Evaluation and Reporting of the results is referred to as Unit Facilitation and Unit Facilitation Reporting. The process then reenters the Area level where the Management Facilitation and the Management Facilitation Reporting take place respectively and finally leads to the Consolidated Reporting.

Figure 7. The Facilitation Process

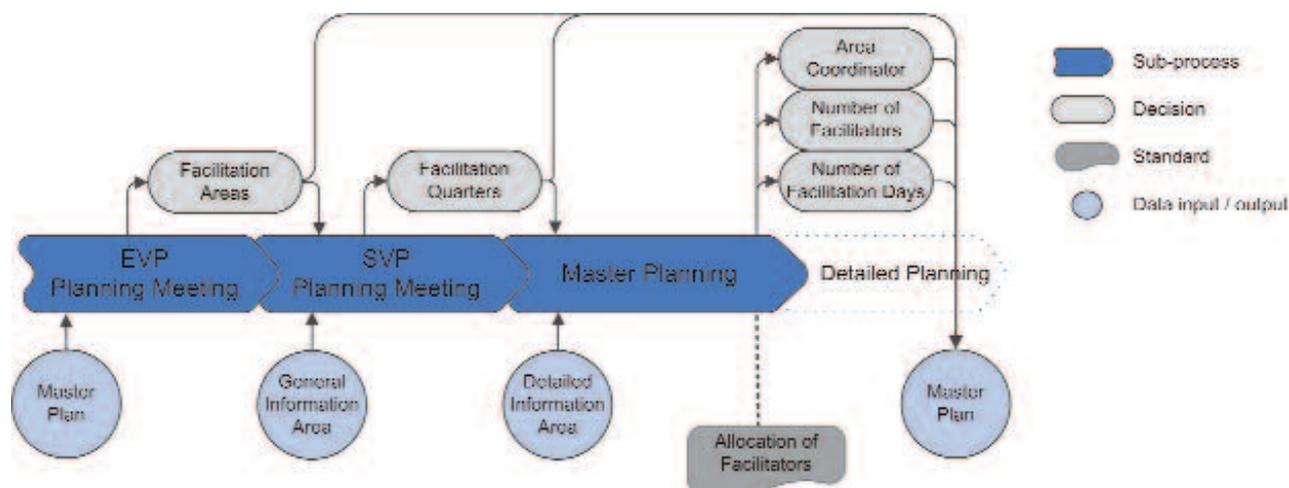


### 3.4.1 Planning Meetings and Master Planning

The Planning Meetings (see figure 8) take place twice a year with the F&D Department of Novo A/S and the Executive Vice Presidents (EVPs) and Senior Vice Presidents (SVPs) from Novo Nordisk. In the course of the meeting with the EVPs, the F&D Department reports on the conducted Facilitations, reviews the further planning fixed in the Master Plan, evaluates possible changes to be made and chooses the Areas to be facilitated within the next two years. The purpose of the succeeding Planning Meeting with the SVPs is to inform about the decisions taken in the EVP Meeting, to collect the SVPs' feedback on previous Facilitations and to define a time frame of three months, in which an SVP Area is to be facilitated. Furthermore, the F&D gathers information about the SVP Area's business activities and

discusses the rough execution of the Facilitation. Master Planning designates the company-wide scheduling of Facilitations on a three-year basis and is taken care of by the Planning Coordinator of the F&D Department, who constantly updates the Master Plan in accordance with the decisions taken in the Planning Meetings. Moreover, the Planning Coordinator procures detailed information on the SVP Areas such as business activities, number of employees and organizational structure to estimate the Facilitation's work load. Depending on the expected number of Facilitations Days, the Area's cultural characteristics and business focus, the Coordinator assigns a group of Facilitators to the Area that meets the quantitative and qualitative requirements. One of them is nominated as Area Coordinator and will be in charge of the Detailed Planning.

Figure 8. Planning Meetings and Master Planning



### 3.4.2 Detailed Planning

In the Detailed Planning phase (see figure 9), the Area Coordinator arranges the precise execution of the area’s Facilitation. That includes dividing the Area into Facilitation Units (organizational entities represented by at least a Vice President and having a size of at least 20 employees), grouping the Facilitators into Facilitation Duos, and defining the sample size to be taken from each Unit.

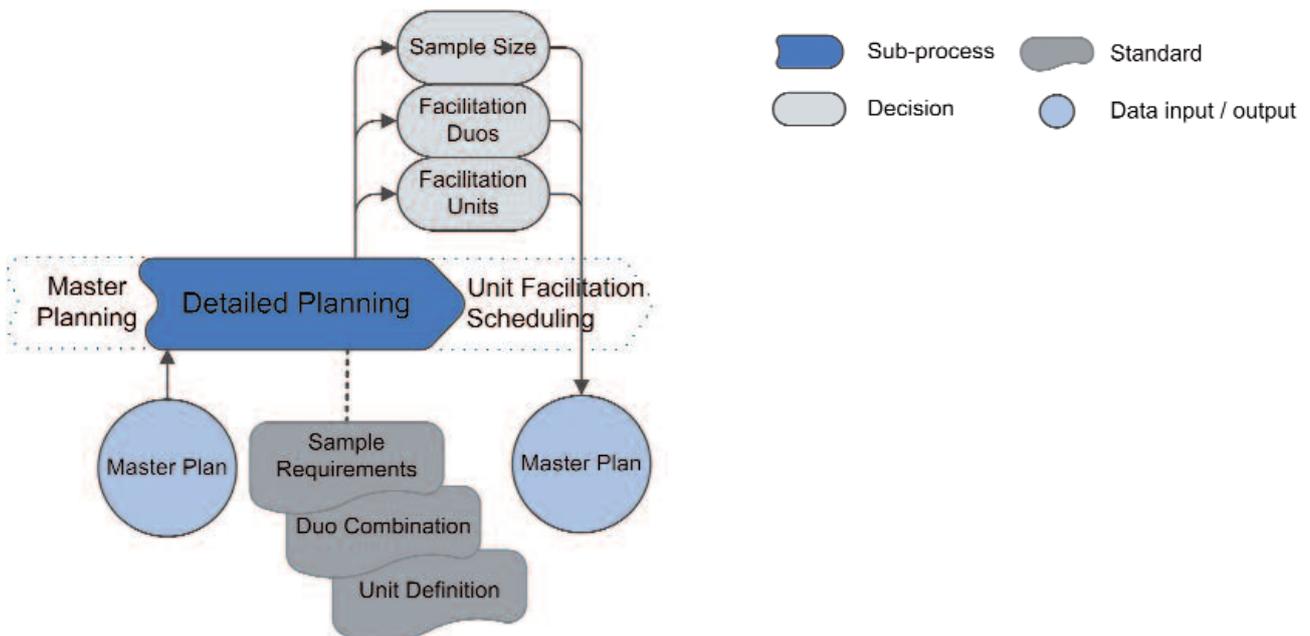
The assignment of two Facilitators to one Unit provides higher advisory skills the Unit will benefit from. The Facilitator Duo Combinations must show the following characteristics: one of

them has a long record of Facilitations, one of them knows the Unit’s business, one of them knows the Unit’s national culture. Combining the Facilitators in preferably new Duos ensures more objectivity and an exchange of experience, thus contributing to the Facilitations’ high quality standard.

The sample to be interviewed in a Facilitation must represent all of the Unit’s functional areas and be large enough to ensure anonymity of the gathered data. Depending on the organization of the Unit, sample sizes differ between 20% and 100%.

All decisions taken during the Detailed Planning are recorded in the Master Plan.

Figure 9. Detailed Planning

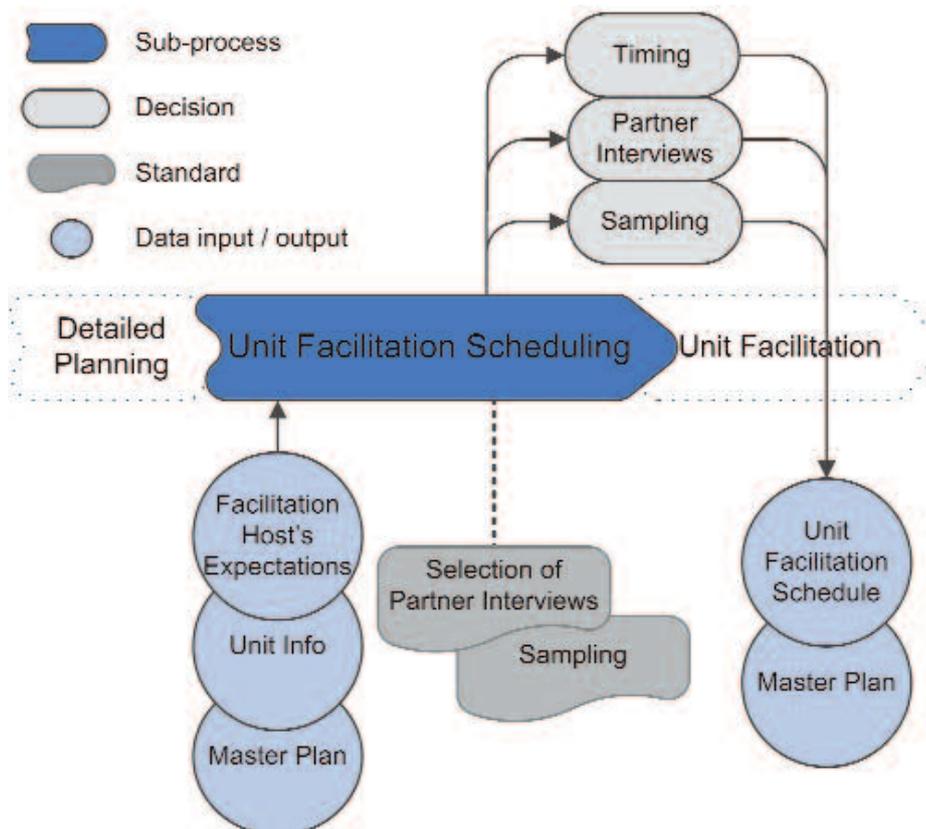


### 3.4.3 Unit Facilitation Scheduling

The Facilitation Duo assigned to the Unit assumes the last step in the planning phase: establishing the Unit Facilitation Schedule (see figure 10). That includes collecting background information on the Unit to individually prepare relevant topics and gain a first impression of the Unit's compliance with the NNWoM. Sources of information can be the Unit's business plan,

personnel development plans, working climate surveys, organizational charts and all further indicators the Facilitators consider as relevant. The Facilitator Duo then contacts the Unit's manager (designated Facilitation Host) to clarify his expectations of the Facilitation and to discuss potential focus areas and specific requirements the Unit has and which should be covered within the course of the Facilitation.

Figure10. Unit Facilitation Scheduling

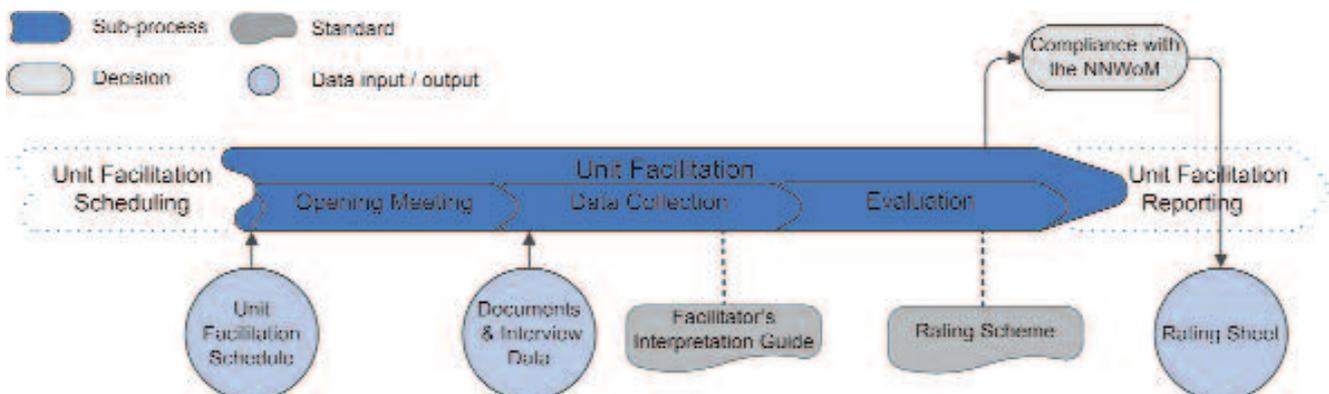


Furthermore, the Duo chooses the interviewees (Sampling) and decides on the interview types to be applied. It is mandatory to conduct individual interviews with all managerial staff in the Unit. The interviews with other employees can be done as individual interview, group interview or as focus group. The Duo has the possibility to conduct so-called Partner Interviews with people from outside the facilitated Unit to investigate its relationships with and behavior towards other departments. Partner Interviews become especially important in case the Unit's tasks are vital to preceding or succeeding process owners or if it has a servicing function. Once the Facilitation Duo elaborated the Facilitation Schedule, the Unit is informed by the Facilitators about the proceeding of the Facilitation.

### 3.4.4 Unit Facilitation

The actual Facilitation of the Unit consists of three phases: Opening Meeting, Data Collection and Evaluation (see figure 11).

Figure 11. Unit Facilitation



In the Opening Meeting that is held at the beginning of the Unit Facilitation with the entire Unit, the Facilitators introduce themselves and explain purpose, scope and proceeding of the Facilitation to the employees.

After the Opening Meeting, the fact-finding process starts, with the interviews being the most important research method in addition to the analysis of documents. During their research, the Facilitators cover the subjects relevant to evaluate the Unit's compliance with the NNWoM, e.g. the interviewees' knowledge of the company's and Unit's goals, the Unit's manager's approach to leadership concerning empowerment, management by objectives, HR development and role-modeling, the Unit's customer orientation, measures to steadily improve quality and working climate as well as sharing better practices with other departments.

A standardized instrument which gives the Facilitators guidance in collecting the relevant information is the Facilitator's Interpretation Guide. The Interpretation Guide can be considered as the operationalization of the NNWoM. Figure 12 shows an exemplary extract from the Facilitator's Interpretation Guide.

Figure 12. Facilitators Interpretation Guide (extract)

Category	Indicator
<b>Compliance with Our Vision</b>	Unit employees demonstrate a clear understanding of how their own and their Unit's actions, practices and contribution support the Novo Nordisk vision.
<b>Compliance with Our Values</b>	Do all employees feel that their managers and colleagues behave according to the Novo Nordisk values? Are there clear examples of how the values are applied to practices and decision making in the Unit?
<b>Compliance with Fundamental 1</b> Each Unit must share and use better practices.	There must be a working practice for the identification and adoption of better practices.
<b>Compliance with Fundamental 5</b> Each Unit must have an action plan to ensure the development of teams and individuals based on business requirements and employee input.	The development activities should secure continued or improved employability of individuals. Either group representatives or the individual employee must give input to the development plan regarding wishes for future development activities.
<b>Compliance with Fundamental 9</b> Every manager must continuously make it easier for the employees to liberate energy for customer related issues.	The Unit manager must actively encourage a learning culture in which innovative solutions to well-known practices are continuously sought. The resulting liberation of energy should be used to allow for further delegation of tasks and empowerment of employees.
<b>Compliance with Our Policies</b>	How has the Unit identified relevant policies and how are they incorporated into the working practices?

Typical questions in a Facilitation interview relate to the working atmosphere in the department, current issues and challenges, the employee's tasks and responsibilities as well as the interaction with colleagues, managers and other departments. Instead of strictly following a list of questions, the Facilitators encourage an open discussion that provides the interviewees with the opportunity to emphasize certain subjects or to bring up topics by themselves. Thus not only the subjects covered in an interview affect the quality of the Facilitation's results but also the setting in which the interview is conducted and its mode. The interview lasts up to one hour and usually takes place face to face and in surroundings with which the interviewee is familiar in order to create a comfortable atmosphere. To promote the confidential character of the interview, the Facilitator will not record the

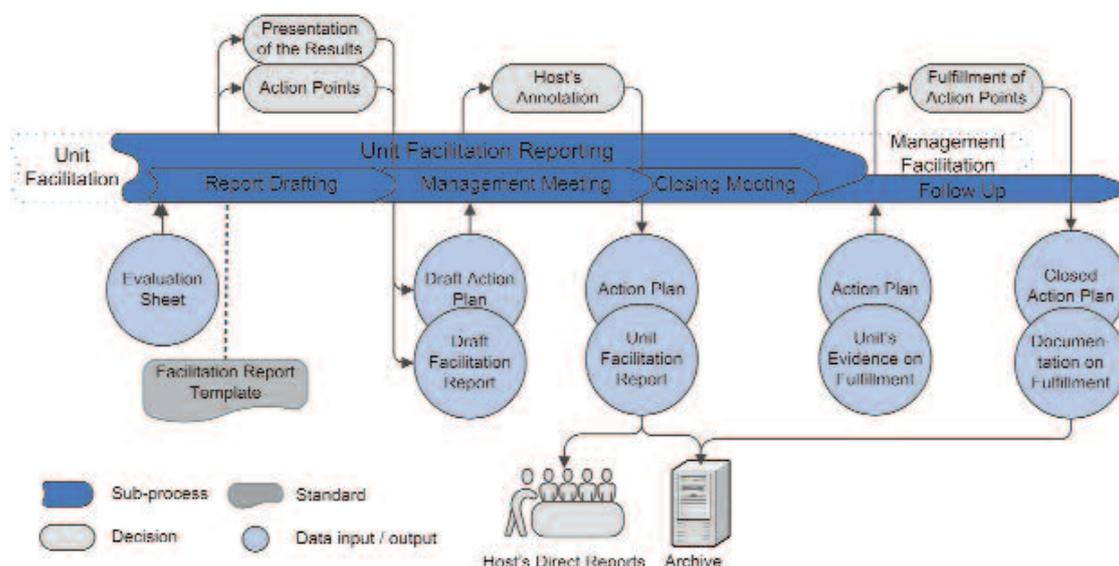
talk but only take notes that will later on allow him to assess the Unit's compliance with the NNWoM.

To finally evaluate the Unit's compliance with the NNWoM, Facilitators use a standardized rating scheme and a rating sheet that promote a uniform and objective assessment and reporting of the results.

### 3.4.5 Unit Facilitation Reporting and Follow Up

Figure 13 shows the proceedings during the Reporting and Follow Up phase: Based on their findings, the Facilitators depict the results according to a standardized template that includes a brief description of the Unit, a detailed and a comprehensive presentation of the findings, as well as a verbal and a numeric evaluation and an Action Plan containing Action Points.

Figure 13. Unit Facilitation Reporting and Follow Up



Action Points are measures the Unit has to take if the Facilitators find that the Unit still has room for improvement concerning its compliance with the NNWoM. The Facilitators then issue Action Points in terms of an Action Plan that is part of the Facilitation Report. Action Points indicate where improvement is possible but leave it to the Unit how it accomplishes the Action Point. Figure 14 shows an exemplary Action Plan, stating the Fundamental the Facilitators identified not to be fully complied with, the issued Action Point and their deadline.

Figure 14. Exemplary Action Plan

Fundamental	Action Point	Deadline
No. 6: Every manager must establish and maintain procedures in the Unit for living up to relevant laws, regulations, and group commitments.	Secure that material and interpretations related to the NNWoM are relevant to the department and team and are updated.	01-01-2007
No 5: Each Unit must have an Action Plan to ensure the development of teams and individuals based on business requirements and employee input.	Develop, implement and evaluate a performance improvement plan to increase group collaboration and functionality.	01-10-2007
No 8: Every manager requiring reporting from others must explain the actual use of the reports and the added value.	Create and implement a process to address requests that are unclear in terms of use, content and added value or have unrealistic deadlines.	01-05-2007

In a meeting with the Unit Host and his management team, the Facilitators then discuss the Facilitation Report and the Action Plan. The Host has the opportunity to add an annotation to the Report or to prevent misunderstandings before the Report is signed and sent to the management in the line above the Unit as well as to the Facilitation & Development Department's archive.

After the Management Meeting, the Closing Meeting with the whole Unit takes place. The Facilitators present their findings to the staff, point to positively outstanding working practices and attitudes as well as to the areas that have to be further improved and comment on the Action Points they issued.

The Follow Up starts right after the Closing Meeting and designates the phase where the Unit has to tackle the Action Points and implement measures to fulfill them. Usually, the Units act independently but have the opportunity to contact their Facilitators in case they need consultation or support in accomplishing their Action Plan. When an Action Point becomes due, the Facilitators ask the Unit for evidence of fulfillment. The decision whether the Unit has successfully accomplished its Action Point is up to the Facilitator, who will then close the Point or request further documentation or the implementation of other measures.

During the Follow Up phase in one Unit, other Unit Facilitations in the same Area or the Management Facilitation may start.

### **3.4.6 Management Facilitation and Management Facilitation Reporting**

As soon as all Units of one Area have been facilitated, a Management Facilitation will be conducted. According to the results from the Unit Facilitation, the Facilitators tailor-make the Management Facilitation and delve into the problems the Area's Units have in common to find out if they stem from the leadership team at the top of the Area. In case the Units all showed a high compliance with the NNWoM, the Management Facilitation will be rather lean, in case the Facilitators found deficiencies in the compliance or even offences against the NNWoM, the leadership approach in the Area will be thoroughly assessed. Although a Management Facilitation is not as highly standardized as a Unit Facilitation, it basically proceeds likewise and yields a Management Facilitation Report including a respective Action Plan.

### **3.5 Consolidated Reporting**

Based on all Unit Facilitation and Management Facilitation Reports, the F&D compiles a Consolidated Report that is presented to the CEO and the Executive Vice Presidents twice a year (see figure 15). The Consolidated Report indicates the state of the company's compliance with its Way of Management, highlights positive and alarming developments.

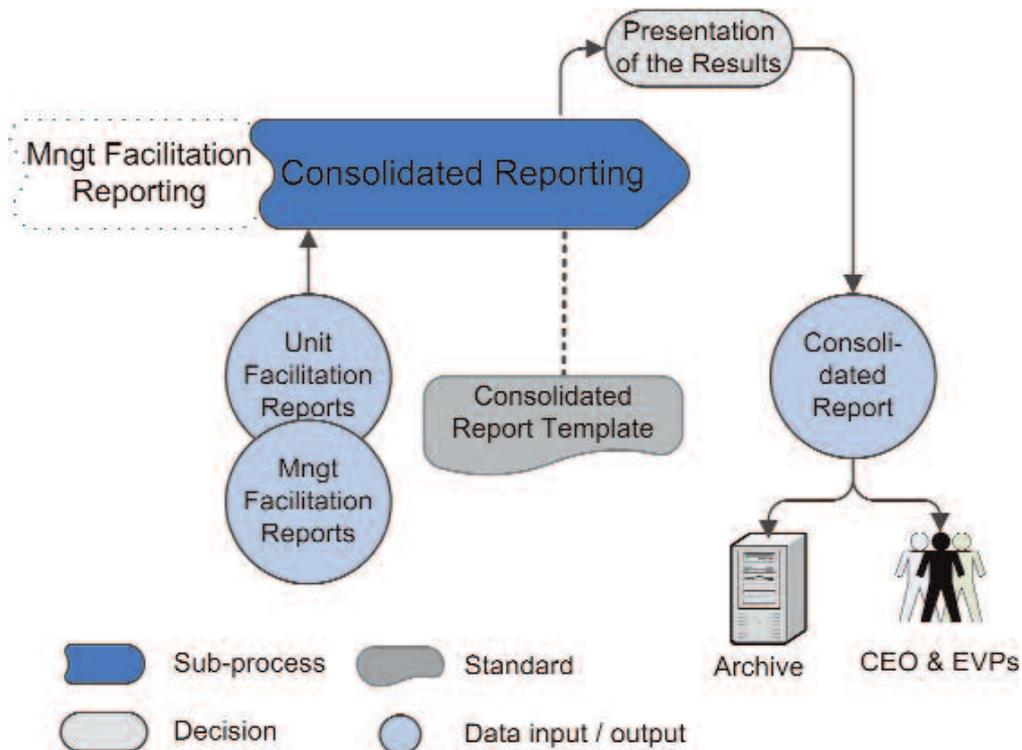
By statistically evaluating all Facilitation Reports, the Consolidated Report outlines the NNWoM elements that are complied with least and the Action Points issued most frequently.

It is up to top management to decide what organizational consequences misalignments with the NNWoM have and if company-wide measures are to be taken to promote the living of the NNWoM.

Moreover, the Facilitators inform top management about new trends in working practices and

about the development of corporate culture. If top management considers the observed changes as valuable and more functional than prevailing practices and cultural characteristics, it promotes and spreads them throughout the whole organization. Thus, the Facilitation contributes to the continuous revision of the company culture's functionality.

Figure 15. Consolidated Reporting



### 3.6 Quality Management of Facilitations

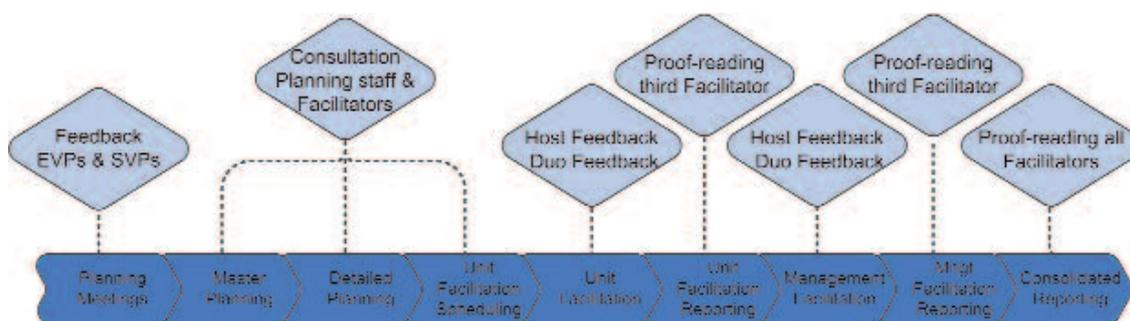
Quality management of Facilitations at Novo Nordisk is a comprehensive approach that includes the standardization of the process, process-attendant measures to secure quality and quality review meetings.

The standardization of the process is achieved by the extensive procedure documentation, the use of uniform evaluation methods and rating scales

as well as the Report templates that ensure a unitary structuring of the results. For each stage in a Facilitation, stakeholders and the data basis to be used and forms to be applied are clearly defined. The F&D Department is in charge of supplying and continuously revising the standardized material.

The process-attendant measures that ensure the quality of Facilitation include formal as well as informal evaluations at each stage of the process chain (see figure 16).

Figure 16. Process-attendant Quality Management of Facilitations



In the Planning Meetings, the F&D Department collects feedback from the Executive Vice Presidents and Senior Vice Presidents of the recently facilitated Areas and Units. During the planning stage, the Planning Coordinator, the Area Coordinator and the Facilitators are in constant exchange to adjust the stakeholders' requirements and ensure a smooth proceeding of the Facilitations. After the Facilitation on Unit- as well as Area-level has been conducted, the Facilitators get feedback from the Facilitations Host and additionally evaluate each other (Duo Feedback). The Report quality is secured by the proof-reading for consistency

and data support by a third Facilitator, in case of the Consolidated Report by all Facilitators.

The one-week quality review meetings the F&D Department holds off-site three times a year constitutes the third instrument to maintain the Facilitations quality standard and to further develop the process. On the occasion of the meeting, Facilitators exchange their experiences, evaluate the feedback from the Facilitations' hosts, identify changing conditions the Facilitations have to be adapted to, and organize workshops and training seminars for the Facilitators.

# 4. Factors of the Successful Application of Novo Facilitations at Novo Nordisk

## 4.1 Positive Perception of Novo Facilitations

The majority of Novo Nordisk employees questioned within the scope of this study emphasized the supportive character of the Facilitations. They appreciate the Facilitations because they see them as a help to continuous improvement.

“Facilitations are about continuous improvement. They assess the quality of the working practices and support us in improving them.”  
(Sales Manager at Novo Nordisk A/S)

Moreover, managers as well as employees think it is important to spread and maintain the NNWoM throughout the whole organization and see the Facilitations as an adequate instrument to do so.

“The purpose of the Facilitations is to verify if we live the NNWoM. In such a big company like ours it is important that everyone is working according to the same standards. It is very important for us to have a common ground.”  
(Vice President at Novo Nordisk A/S)

The research also revealed that employees use the opportunity of a Facilitation to broach issues they would not necessarily talk about so openly with their line manager even if they consider the working atmosphere in general to be very overt and honest. Managers are well aware that not every employee confides in them and thus value this additional function of the Facilitations.

“Facilitations indicate how I am perceived by my employees, what are my strengths and weaknesses as a leader, what are the coffee break topics. That makes it a lot easier for me to approach things that otherwise are difficult to substantiate.”  
(Vice President at Novo Nordisk A/S)

Although some managers consider the Facilitations to be a top management instrument to assess their work as a leader, they nevertheless acknowledge that Facilitations are more than just an ordinary evaluation because they give support in upgrading the working quality.

Apart from their supportive character, Facilitations have a motivational impact on the company's employees as they are perceived as a sign of top management's interest in the staff's well-being and opinion.

“To me, Facilitations are a proof of the top management's interest in my opinion, my feelings and the things that are important to me. They care about what I'm thinking and this is what makes the difference.”  
(Assistant at Novo Nordisk A/S)

The positive perception of the Facilitations certainly is crucial to the staff's constructive participation as well as to the acceptance of Facilitation results. To find out why there is this positive perception, the study further investigated the relevance of the structural as well as procedural organization of the Facilitations and their consistency with the company's culture.

## 4.2 Critical Aspects of the Facilitations' Structural Organization

The Facilitation's structural organization turned out to have five critical aspects that influence the successful application: a central steering department, standardization of the process, independence from top management as well as from the Units and a high hierarchical level.

The home base team of the F&D Department that centrally steers the Facilitations and organizationally supports the Facilitators in their work enables smooth proceedings of the Facilitations. The central Facilitations Department moreover accounts a high standardization of the process, a second vital aspect of the successful application of Facilitations. Only if Facilitations are an objective assessment that applies the same standards to everybody they are experienced to be consistent and fair.

"It requires that you have strong and standardised processes. We have 14 facilitators and they are supposed to go to different places in the organisation and perform the same process. You need to support them with standard tools and processes." (Senior Vice President Facilitation & Development at Novo A/S)

The third organizational aspect to consider when inaugurating Facilitations is to secure their independence from top management. It is fundamental that Facilitations also assess the top management's compliance with what is stated in the Way of Management and that Facilitations cannot be influenced to be advantageous

to anybody. For the Facilitators themselves it is important that they are not seen as management's extended arm to sneak in but as a neutral support function.

"We are not here to paint an overly nice picture. We are here to paint a true picture. That is a lot easier when you are independent from daily management."

(Senior Vice President Facilitation & Development at Novo A/S)

The high organizational level of the F&D Department at Novo indicates that the company is serious about Facilitations. As Facilitators also have to work with the company's hierarchical top, they need to have a secured standing. Being seen as too junior would undermine their authority and derogate the acceptance of a Facilitator's work.

Their independence from the operating companies and especially from the Units provides a distance between the Facilitators and the facilitated that, on the one hand, promotes the required anonymity, and, on the other, creates an external perspective that may unveil things the Unit itself does not question or is not aware of.

"We all have a selective perception. What is seen always depends on who is watching. That's why it is important to have the Facilitators who look on the Units with fresh eyes. I think it is important that a company has the heart to assign Facilitators who evaluate it objectively and critically."

(Product Manager at Novo Nordisk A/S)

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### 4.3 Critical Aspects of the Facilitations' Procedural Organization

During the process of a Facilitation there are six aspects which are vital to success: the individual preparation of each Facilitation, the binding character of a Facilitation's results, trust towards the Facilitators, anonymity of the data, the conferring between Facilitators and Hosts and the Unit's freedom in tackling an Action Point.

By individually preparing each Facilitation, taking into consideration the responsibilities of a Unit and studying the Unit's documentation on relevant issues, Facilitations become something different from an ordinary management audit. The Facilitators thus are able to understand what living the NNWoM means to the Unit and support it according to its specific circumstances.

"I was surprised that the Facilitators really understood what we are doing here, although it is very special. They uncovered issues we maybe wouldn't have looked at. I am convinced that it was good to have a Facilitation."  
(Manager Data Management and Statistics at Novo Nordisk A/S)

Not only from the top management's point of view is it important that the results of a Facilitation are binding. Also the facilitated Units perceive the results' bindingness as a proof for the relevance of the NNWoM. It shows them that Facilitations not only absorb resources, but take the employees' opinions seriously and really abide to what is proclaimed in the NNWoM.

"The gathered data must be evaluated and applied in the Unit. If I was asked for my opinion and afterwards nothing would happen, I wouldn't feel taken seriously. To me, it is important that a Facilitation's results are binding."  
(Manager Data Management and Statistics at Novo Nordisk A/S)

The trust the employees have towards the Facilitators is crucial for the successful application of the Facilitations. Without honest answers from the interviewees, the results of a Facilitation are worthless. The anonymity of the data is one element that fosters the interviewees' trust, but also the personality of the Facilitators and the corporate culture in general at Novo Nordisk contribute to it.

"Trust is very important. If people do not honestly say what they think, the Facilitation won't be of any value to the Unit."  
(Assistant at Novo Nordisk A/S)

The Facilitation Hosts appreciate the opportunity to discuss special circumstances in the Unit before and after the Facilitation. They take it as a chance to prevent misunderstandings and to comment on the results. Both Facilitators and the facilitated agreed that the Unit should decide on their own how the issued Action Points can be approached. The Facilitators' task is to point at the direction but not to carry out changes in the organization.

#### 4.4 Relevant Characteristics of the Facilitators

Besides the candidate profile defined by the F&D department, there are two crucial characteristics a Facilitator must show: empathy and knowledge of the company.

The Facilitators' empathic skills help them to gain the interviewees' trust and create a relaxed atmosphere so that people talk openly and confide in the Facilitators.

“I think the Facilitators are so good because they can sit and listen and then they can extract what is a problem and pick that up and talk about it. They really get a lot out of me.”  
(Laboratory Technician at Novo Nordisk A/S)

“Once the interviewees sit in the room, they end up relaxing. They give me a lot of interesting information. That is for me a sign of having a good rapport to people. I think that is important for all of us.”  
(Facilitator at Novo A/S)

The long experience the Facilitators have at Novo Nordisk and the fact that they know the company's structure and culture so well enables them to create an extraordinary value for the Units. Neither the Facilitators nor the facilitated think that anybody from outside the company could do the Facilitations with the same success as Novo Facilitators do.

“One of our strengths is that we know the company so well. We know exactly what people are talking about because we are part of it. Can you go and measure if people live with the NNWoM if you are not from within the company? I don't think so, you have to be part of that culture.”  
(Facilitator at Novo A/S)

#### 4.5 Corporate Culture as Carrier of Facilitations

The study revealed that there must be at least the basis of a certain corporate culture that allows and promotes the application of Facilitations.

To narrow down what cultural elements are critical to the successful application of Facilitations, the study aimed at the prevailing values, the approach to leadership and the employees' identification with the company.

“It is part of our culture that we do Facilitations. There must be a corporate culture where Facilitations are possible.”  
(Assistant at Novo Nordisk A/S)

The values that predominantly mark corporate culture at Novo Nordisk are honesty and openness, ambition and quality thinking, as well as a readiness to learn from mistakes. Being an instrument to spread and maintain values, Facilitations, on the one hand, promote these characteristics of corporate culture at Novo Nordisk. But on the other hand, they also depend on these attitudes as they rely on people's openness and the willingness to constantly improve the quality of their work.

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“It is one of our advantages that we are not afraid to honestly say what we mean. People dare to ask critical questions because they know it won’t be held against them.”

(Product Manager at Novo Nordisk A/S)

Honesty and openness at Novo Nordisk are certainly the basis for both its corporate culture and the successful application of the Facilitations. Novo Nordisk’s employees are used to share their opinion with colleagues and managers and be taken seriously. The mutual trust of management and employees contributes to the positive perception of the Facilitations, their smooth proceedings and high quality results. Considering that the Facilitations heavily rely on information gathered in interviews, an open and honest corporate culture becomes the vital aspect and can be seen as an indispensable carrier for the Facilitations.

“What really makes the difference at Novo Nordisk is the way we treat each other. People are very overt and doors are always open.”

(Assistant at Novo Nordisk A/S)

As Facilitations promote quality thinking and tie up to people’s openness and preparedness to learn they are consistent with Novo Nordisk’s corporate culture and thus are positively perceived and supported.

“I really identify with the culture in this company. There is no mismatch between my private and my professional attitude. That is very important for me.”

(Vice President at Novo Nordisk A/S)

Leadership at Novo Nordisk is understood as a delegative and supportive task where managers motivate their employees to actively participate in decision-making, to take on responsibility and to grant them room for the independent fulfillment of their work. Sharing information and giving feedback along and across hierarchical levels is an integral part of organizational life at Novo Nordisk.

“Leadership to me means telling our employees what you think and which values to apply. It is about showing your attitude and your personality.”

(Vice President at Novo Nordisk A/S)

By involving the employees, respecting their opinion and granting the Unit room for its individual resolution of an Action Point, the Facilitations take on this participative and delegative leadership approach.

Not only is top management convinced that corporate culture and living the NNWoM is of relevance to the company’s success, but also the employees. They feel that the management is role-modeling what it expects from them and authentically communicating what corporate culture is like at Novo Nordisk.

As employees identify with the company, they are interested in maintaining the corporate culture as the organization’s common basis and therefore support the Facilitations as a means to do so.

# 5. Facilitations' Requirements and Possibilities of Adaptation

## 5.1 Requirements for the Facilitations' Successful Application

### Top Management Support

Top management's constant communication and role-modeling of what corporate culture is like and how Facilitations contribute to its conservation and development is essential to gain the workforce's support. If top management is not convinced that corporate culture is of relevance to the company's success and that Facilitations are a powerful instrument to spread and maintain the culture, it will be very unlikely to allocate the required resources or to consequently use the Facilitations results, even more if they may imply less comfortable decisions.

As Facilitations also assess the compliance with the Way of Management on the highest organizational level, top management must be prepared to let the Facilitators work independently and thus give evidence to the whole organization that it is serious about an objective and critical analysis of the company. If the company has no possibility to organize the Facilitations outside the operative businesses like Novo did, other precautions must be met to ensure their independence, e.g. a direct access to the supervisory board.

### Cultural Traits

Although Novo Facilitations can be adapted to different structural and organizational conditions, they require at least a basis of a functional corporate culture employees are willing to

maintain, and thus cannot be used as a stand-alone approach towards culture. Even if it is not possible to define the degree to which corporate culture was as functional and as well established as today when Novo Facilitations were introduced, it can be assumed that there already prevailed certain cultural traits Facilitations further strengthened. The fact that they were implemented after the formulation of the NNWoM and had top management support emphasizes the necessity of top management's conviction of the corporate culture's relevance to success, a preceding examination of the company's corporate culture and the application of other measures to create the basis for a functional culture.

According to the study's results, openness, honesty, ambition, quality thinking as well as acceptance of mistakes and readiness to learn are elements that should, to some extent, already be part of the company's cultural program or at least be the target culture management is communicating. Facilitations depend on these elements as they require honest answers that are availed by the open atmosphere, the employees' willingness to constantly improve the quality of their work and the belief that mistakes imply a chance to learn from.

### Leadership Approach

Novo Facilitations reflect a delegative and participative leadership approach. The company's employees are used to autonomously execute their tasks and to take on responsibility for their work. Because the Facilitations involve the staff, provide space for criticism and, at the same

time, claim the self-dependent exploitation of room for improvement (Action Points), they are consistent with the company's leadership approach.

As Facilitations hold managers responsible to actively promote corporate culture, they must be given the chance to learn what corporate culture is about and how they can successfully assume their task to role-model and promote culture.

## 5.2 Possibilities of the Facilitations' Adaptation

Besides the requirements mentioned above, there seem to be three characteristics that have an influence on the successful implementation and adaptation of Novo Facilitations: strategy, size and staff fluctuation.

### Strategy

As Novo Nordisk's product portfolio is little diversified, i.e. the company concentrates on similar products in similar markets, its overall strategy is homogeneous. Due to the resembling business environments, the company's structure, processes and culture are also very homogeneous which enables the central steering and high standardization of Facilitations. The Facilitators' understanding for the requirements of the different areas and thus their counseling competence is very high as the areas function alike.

Companies that pursue similarly homogeneous business strategies in their markets should be

able to implement the Facilitations likewise. Companies, in contrast, whose operations are very diversified and that have differing structures, processes and cultural peculiarities may have difficulties standardizing the Facilitations on a company-wide level and recruiting Facilitators, who, on the one hand, know the specific needs of the business area, and, on the other hand, have sufficient distance to the area to conduct the Facilitations objectively and anonymously.

One possibility for companies with strongly diversified business activities would be – given that the area is large enough to grant the required independence of the Facilitators from the Unit – a standardization of the Facilitations on an area-wide level.

A chance to handle the challenge that derives from an insufficient area size may be to apply Facilitations only to promote and maintain those values being applied similarly in working practices that are relevant to the whole company, e.g. human resources development. Although this reduction of the Facilitations' scope of application also means a decreased exploitation of their potential, it is a chance to gain experience with the Facilitations.

### Size

To apply Facilitations, the company needs to have a certain size for three reasons: to grant the distance between Facilitators and the facilitated Units, to employ several Facilitators thus allowing Duo Combinations and to cost-efficiently employ the

Facilitators and the home-base department. The experience at the Novo Group shows that a company with approximately 28,000 employees that wishes to facilitate the whole organization on a four-year basis, needs 12 Facilitators<sup>1</sup> plus a home-base team consisting of four persons. Given that a Facilitator can conduct Facilitations that cover 600 employees per year, the company should be big enough so that it has the capacity to employ several Facilitators who work in different Duo Combinations in order to enhance quality in terms of the Facilitators' counseling competences and their objectivity.

Substantially smaller companies may consider employing Facilitators on a part-time basis, who will stay in line management and additionally conduct Facilitations. The challenges accompanying a part-time concept would be to organize Facilitations in a way that ensures the independence of the part-time Facilitators from the Units they facilitate and to clearly define priorities of their responsibilities as line managers and as Facilitators to avoid conflicts of interest.

Companies that are considerably larger than Novo Nordisk and will employ even more Facilitators will face fewer challenges as far as cost-efficiency, the Facilitators' repertoire of counseling competencies and the possibilities of the quality-ensuring Duo Combination are concerned. Instead, they would have to meet the demand of a high process standardization, which becomes more difficult the more Facilitators are involved in the evaluation of the company's compliance with its way of management.

Besides the formal measures Novo Nordisk applies to standardize the process, the relatively small group of Facilitators also communicates via informal channels which additionally contributes to an alignment of their working practices. A company, that employs a vitally larger group of Facilitators may think about establishing further structures and processes that serve the Facilitators as a platform to continually exchange on their experiences and proceedings.

### Staff Fluctuation

High employee fluctuation and growth rate are factors that complicate the maintenance of a corporate culture. For Novo Nordisk with an average employee fluctuation rate of 7.4%, the four-year interval of Facilitations as an instrument to spread and maintain corporate culture is sufficient to integrate new employees. In case of Novozymes, where the employee fluctuation and growth rate is lower than in Novo Nordisk, it proved to be adequate to conduct Facilitations in larger intervals.

Companies that want to implement Facilitations should therefore consider their necessity of integrating new employees into their corporate culture and may correspondingly shorten or extend the Facilitations' frequency.

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<sup>1</sup> Facilitators at Novo Nordisk additionally conduct social led Special Facilitations that are not the object of investigation of this case study. Special Facilitations cause a workload that can be handled by two Facilitators thus reducing the 14 Facilitators team to 12, who are in charge of the Unit Facilitations.

# 6. Conclusion

Novo Facilitations are an outstanding approach in the field of instruments to maintain and develop a company's culture. During the last decade, the Novo Group proved that they are a powerful tool and gave an example how Facilitations can be successfully applied. Although there is little practical experience concerning their adaptation to other companies' structural and cultural conditions, this study gives rise to the assumption that they are to some extent flexible in their application. The fact that Novo already consulted a company wishing to inaugurate the Facilitations according to their specific needs indicates that also other companies can profit from a similar approach. Nevertheless, Novo Facilitations will in the future have to prove that they are capable of developing in line with the changing environmental conditions that require a constant evolution of a company's culture.

The major challenge for any company that wishes to apply the Facilitations successfully lies in the corporate culture. It can not be stressed enough that the crucial values of the company culture that acts as an enabler to the Facilitations are honesty, openness and trust as they are found at Novo Nordisk. All interviews conducted in the framework of this research proved that these values are incorporated and highly appreciated by the company's employees and its managers. While critical factors of the organizational and procedural organization of the Facilitations can be designed within a relatively short period of time, it is the creation of the corporate culture that requires an ongoing and long-term effort.

This study of the Novo Facilitations wants to inspire both practitioners as well as researchers to implement similar instruments and further investigate possibilities of their successful application.

# The Author

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She studied Business Administration and Cultural Sciences at the University of Cooperative Education Mannheim, the Universidad de Córdoba, and the University of Applied Sciences Karlsruhe. She holds an MBA in International Management.



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