

# **Interventions in Customer Centres through Benchmarking and Networking**

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Arbejdsmiljøløsninger i callcentre drevet af benchmarking og videndeling i netværk

# Purpose

The aim of the project is to investigate the possibilities for improving the psychosocial working environment for employees in call centres through benchmarking activities in networks



# Facts

- Three year intervention project (2007-2010)
  - Abbreviated “AmiCa”
- Carried out by researchers at
  - The Technical University of Denmark,
  - The National Research Centre for the Working Environment and
  - Team Work Life
- Financed by The Danish Working Environment Research Foundation
- Participation of 8 very different customer centres
  - in-house/ subcontractor, inbound/outbound, different industries, private/public, different sizes
  - More than 1300 employees all together



# Background

- Call centres/customer centres are cost effective with a strong management focus on digits and control
- Working environment is characterized by surveillance, control and lack of influence and development opportunities for the employees
- Previous research has shown: it is possible to improve working conditions within the call centre concept
  - with a extensive external support



# Why benchmarking and networking?

- Benchmarking and networking is widely used in Call Centres and between Call Centres
  - Internal competitions between teams
  - "National Championship in Customer Service"
  - Network between Managers
  - Annual conferences
- Focus is on customer service, technology and business strategies
  - Working environment and job satisfaction is only indirectly part of it
  - The employees are very seldom directly involved



# How benchmarking and networking?

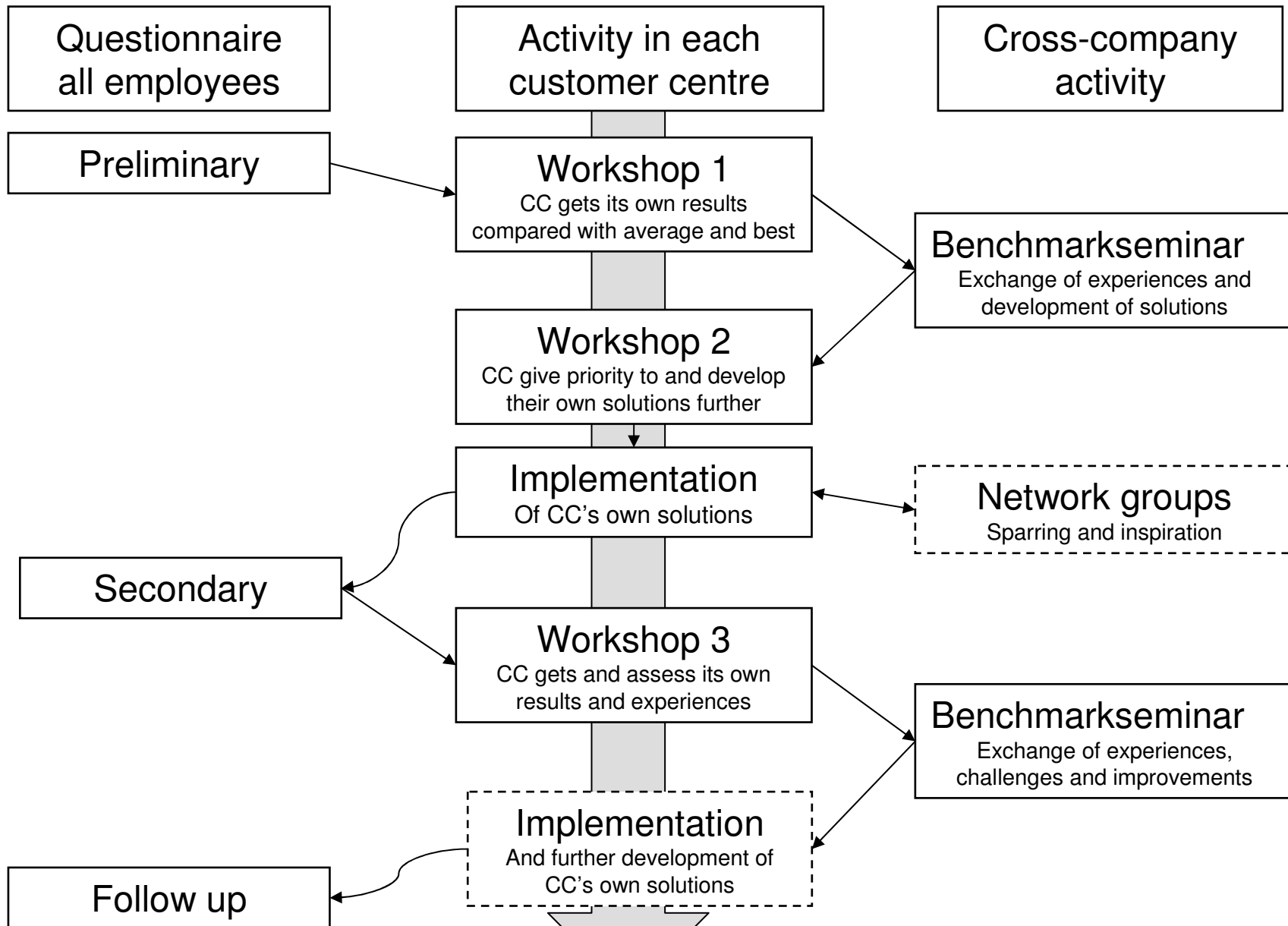
- We introduce working environment as a new comparative parameter
  - Based upon the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire supplemented with questions directed specifically towards work in customer centres (developed in a previous research project)
- We offer the customer centres a new context
  - A network in which they can be inspired by other customer centres
  - A network, where they are regarded as a unit in their own right (and not – as is often the case - as an appendix to the core business of their organisation)



# Methods and activities



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# Our intentions

- Competition was introduced by us in the form of benchmarking
  - But not in an instrumental way: focus is on learning
  - “Red” and “green”-reports were not important in itself
- Involvement was a goal as well as a mean
  - Participation of employees in the internal project group and on the benchmark seminar was mandatory
  - By the method used we wanted to demonstrate that the trust you show employees involving them in the process is rewarded with engagement and responsibility



# The results so far

- Benchmarking was used as an opportunity for self-reflection
  - “How similar and how different we are”
  - “A paragon of virtue” and “somebody is worse off than we are”
- The seminar gave motivation and inspiration
  - to make changes suited the individual customer centre
  - not just take over a ready-made solution
- The awareness of employee involvement has increased
- The network has in fact been used
  - Primarily bilaterally



# Questions still to be answered

- Will the solutions in fact be fully implemented?
- Will they make a marked and positive change for the employees?
- Will the project leave permanent traces in the ongoing organization of the customer centres?
- Will we, as researchers be able to understand and explain why something succeeded and something else didn't?
- Will this knowledge be of interest beyond the (Danish) call centre industry?



# Thank you for your attention!

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