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Journal of Excellence in Sales

#Sales Excellence Center

What Keeps Sales Managers Up at Night?

Can Sales Studies Change Your Life?

Do You Master International Selling?

Sales Talents Enjoying Selling

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Journal of Excellence in Sales

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Editor's Letter

Sini Jokiniemi
Principal Lecturer at TUAS, Sales Excellence Center

Each spring term all second-year sales Bachelor students enjoy a course called sales training. Some want to escape the course, others try to make themselves invisible in the class room and the rest accept their fortunes and courageously take steps on uncomfortable terrain. After a few weeks of B2B sales simulation exercises, almost everyone finds a good balance and starts to build confidence and identity as a true sales professional. Peer support from classmates and advice from senior students as mentors – Johanna Heikkilä and Joni Jakonen this spring – make all the difference in building one's sales competences. After two months of training, four students out of 40 were selected to represent TUAS at the national Best Seller Competition in Helsinki, 19 April 2018 (on the cover: Heikki Veiste, Henri Lähteenmäki, Sonja Hakala and Kustaa Kangas). After an intensive competition day with the semifinals and the final, the festive gala with company representatives and students and teachers from six universities is the cherry on the (sales) cake!

The tenth national Best Seller Competition (in Finnish) will be held in Turku on 11 April 2019. It is our pleasure to welcome you to enjoy the best Finnish education offers in sales.

Enjoying the Best Seller Competition Gala, from left to right: Sini Jokiniemi, Johanna Heikkilä, Maija Juntunen, Kustaa Kangas, Sonja Hakala, Henri Lähteenmäki, Heikki Veiste, Joni Jakonen and Miki Hauninen. Photo: Aino Lindroos.

Leadership. Selling. Do They Have Something in Common?

Liisa Kairisto-Mertanen
Executive Lecturer at TUAS

There are many definitions to leadership and management. The English language is good because it defines by different words the two separate functions of a manager. People in a managing position have the responsibility of carrying out functions of planning, organizing, leading and controlling within their organization.

Leadership can be understood as the part of manager's job which has to do with people. It is needed to make a group of people perform more effectively than they would without leading. Many definitions emphasize the fact that leadership is a means for the organization to reach the aims set for it. **Alf Rehn** states in his most recent book, published in 2018, that leadership is not just one thing but it is a paradox. It is simultaneously fast and slow, visible and invisible, showing without showing anything and creating space without limiting space.

Using the word "selling" as a search word in the Internet produces the following definition by BusinessDictionary: "The last step in the chain

Photo: Martti Komulainen.

of commerce where a buyer exchanges cash for a seller's good or service, or the activity of trying to bring this about." (Read more: http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/selling.html). Quite a limited definition of selling at least if you consult the ideas of **Daniel Pink** where he defines that selling is needed everywhere, also in everyday interaction situations. I myself learnt as a young sales negotiator that selling is "the art of interaction leading to an impact".

Leadership and Selling

Leadership and selling have very much in common. Both have something to do with people, working with them, interacting with them and influencing them in order to guide to the direction set by the organization employing the manager or the salesperson. Being sensitive to situations and understanding something which is not necessarily said aloud is essential in both. They are about helping and making things possible and also about having a good vision – understanding the direction to take is needed in both.

It seems that "leadership" is mostly associated with several neutral or positive attributes while "selling" and "sales" still have negative associations. However, both are important means of guaranteeing that the aims set for an organization will be reached. Both are needed when working with the organizations' internal as well as external stakeholders. Both are measured with results. The measurement tools and scales used in both speak about the results achieved, be it the revenue reached, sales made or satisfied personnel in the organization.

Good Manager. Good Salesperson.

A good manager is a good leader who respects their team and gives freedom for everybody to act according to their motivation and find their strengths. People treated this way are willing to give their best and even occasionally excel themselves. A good manager can create an atmosphere where only reaching the best is good enough but at the same time there is space for mistakes. Risks have to be taken to understand where the limits are. The aim is not to make mistakes but when they do happen, they are viewed as opportunities for learning and doing it better next time. Through taking risks in a safe atmosphere it is be possible to reach completely new spheres and bring possibilities to improve organizational operations further. As Alf Rehn puts it, "leadership means living with the feeling of not succeeding" and "not losing one's enthusiasm in spite of constant failures". A good manager listens to the people in the team and is able to read them and the situations as well as to understand their hidden agendas. A good manager is a good coach.

A good salesperson is oriented towards reaching good results and can set realistic and reachable aims for their work. A good salesperson is also good in interpreting the situations of the customer and in understanding hidden agendas. Acting in an adaptive way is characteristic for excellent sales people. It means listening to the customer, understanding the right message and helping the customer understand future possibilities and leading their organization to the path of prosperity and success. Good sales work means coaching the customer and the respective organization to new levels.

Good Subordinate. Good Customer.

A manager needs a team of good subordinates in order to succeed. Without people to manage and lead, no manager will be needed. The most important task of the manager is to find opportunities for the team members to shine and develop their talent further. It has also been said that a good manager gradually makes themselves invisible, which focuses all the potential on team members.

A salesperson cannot choose the customers to work with. But sales is also about finding opportunities for customers and helping them to achieve better performance. In sales there are always two processes going on simultaneously: the sales process and the buying process. It is the task of the salesperson to make buying as easy for the customer as possible. The best salespeople can anticipate customers' aims better than the customers themselves; they make their customers shine.

Trust

Trust between partners is essential in all relationships. It is not a coincidence that a relationship between the seller and the customer has been compared to marriage. The different stages before a commercial relationship begins, starting from attraction, are similar to starting a romantic relationship. But trust is crucial in making the relationship last and develop.

Trust is needed also in management. Without trust it is hardly possible to inspire team members to top performance. It is needed both ways: the manager must trust the subordinates and the subordinates must have a feeling that they are being treated as trustworthy and important members of the organization.

INFOBOX: Global Sales Perspectives

There is a reason why young talents are encouraged to network on a local and global scale. Both of the articles in this section are the result of long-term networking between universities and professionals. Although these articles stem from global perspectives, they easily resonate with local experiences and offer peer support as well as tips for a successful selling worldwide.

What Keeps Sales Managers Up at Night

Deva Rangarajan

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Demanding customers, stiff competition, focus of companies on short term gains has meant that the sales manager today is under tremendous pressure to cope with these problems or run the risk of seeing declining revenues, decreasing margins, dissatisfied customers and loss in market shares for their companies. Based on interviews with 40 sales executives, we identify five key problems facing the sales manager and how they manage these problems.

A recent decision by the British based medical device manufacturer Smith & Nephew to go rep-less for its no frills solution Syncera raised quite some eye-brows from sales pundits with one analyst going so far as to term the phrase "Death of the Device Salesman" (Eisner 2014). While the jury is still out about the long term effectiveness of this sales approach, the medical industry today has been forced to reconsider the way it deploys its sales resources. To put things in perspective, a recent article suggests that top pharma companies spend close to 875 million USD each on their sales force, despite reports from consulting companies like ZS associates in the US that only 51% of the doctors in their sample prefer a face to face (F2F) visit from a sales rep and similar numbers being reported in an European sample of 375 specialist doctors (Schenck, 2015). Interestingly enough, across some big European countries, specialist doctors increasingly preferred to engage with pharmaceutical companies through a multichannel marketing and sales approach (Schenck 2015). This has led quite some pharmaceutical companies to reconsider the traditional F2F selling model and an increased focus on a multichannel marketing and sales approach towards the customer.

Interestingly enough this situation is not restricted to the medical industry. A review of the financial statements of three major tech companies, IBM, Microsoft, and Apple indicates that these companies spend on an average 50% more on marketing and sales than on their R&D budgets (Dainty 2014), while a company like GE spent around 30 billion USD on SG&A in 2014 on revenues of around 150 billion USD (Marketwatch 2015). While these numbers do not indicate problems as such, a recent study by the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) suggests that not only do B2B buyers complete 57% of their buying decision before seeing the sales rep, close to 77% of the buyers indicated that they would talk to the salesperson only after they had done their own research (Zelaya 2014). If buyers are increasingly trying to bypass the salesperson and if the users (as in the case of doctors above) prefer other ways to interact with their supplier organizations besides F2F meetings with salespeople, sales organizations today have no other choice but to rethink their complete sales approach towards their customer base. Not taking into consideration the above changes could result in sales organizations seeing their revenues and margins decrease, alienation of their customer base thus giving an opportunity for a more agile competitor (or a complete newcomer) to sneak in, decreased customer satisfaction consequently leading to a decrease in market share.

In order to understand the various challenges faced by sales managers, I set out to understand the main challenges facing them and how they cope with these issues. Based on extensive in-depth interviews with over 40 sales directors/managers from both local and multi-national organizations, active in both the B2B and B2C spheres, I identified five main trends that sales managers are busy with today. While these five trends by themselves seemed obvious and almost ubiquitous, most sales executives were not sure about the impact each one of these five trends were likely to have on their sales management practices and how to actually going about dealing with this to ensure the effectiveness of their sales efforts.

Five Major Trends

The data for this research was collected based on personal interviews with sales executives from industrial companies, technology-oriented companies, financial services companies, consumer goods manufacturers, and a couple from the health-care sector. The five trends that I identified were raised as concerns by almost all sales executives across the industries represented in my research, while the impact of these trends on sales effectiveness varied according to the industry.

1. Move from Products to Solutions

All the sales executives in this research mentioned that a fear of commoditization of their product offering was forcing them to transition to provide more customer oriented solutions, in the hope that this would differentiate them from rather fierce competition, help create more value for the customer and in the process gain more margins. While this logic makes intuitive sense, getting the sales force to sell these solutions to the customer is a different story. Various reasons were cited for this issue:

1) A global manufacturer with a reputation for innovation decided to set up an innovation centre and use this to showcase to their customers, the extra value add of this service to the customer. However, the salespeople did not perceive the innovation centre as an extra value add to the customer and actually perceived that pushing the innovation centre to the customer only added to their already existing workload without creating any perceived benefit to the customer. A year into the launch of the innovation centre, the company is now taking stock of how to better position this offering not just to the end customer, but also towards the salespeople.

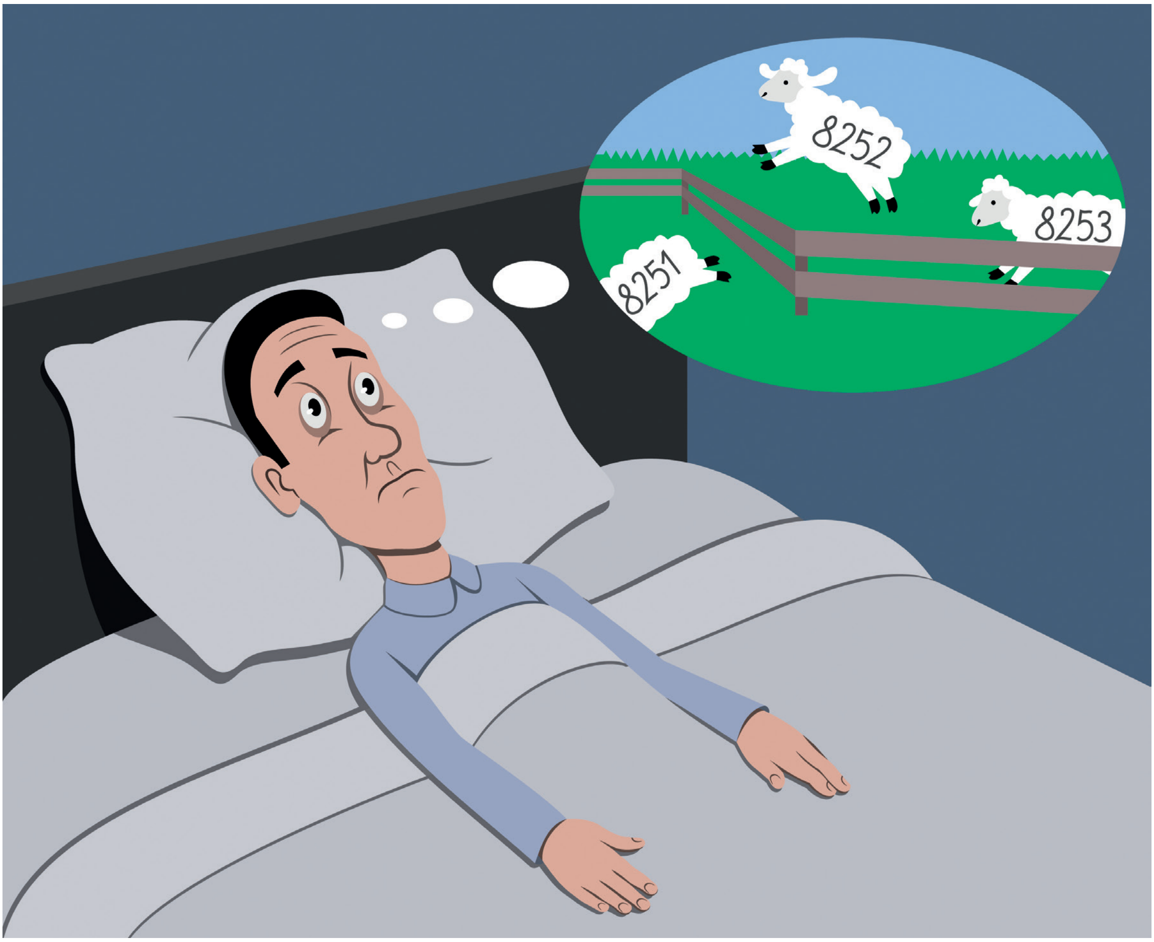
2) Solution selling involves a more complex sales process and dealing with multiple stakeholders in the customer's organization while product focused selling lends itself to relatively simpler sales process involving fewer stakeholders in the customer's organization. A leading medical devices manufacturer was facing a significant issue with their sales force. The traditional sales approach had mainly involved talking to end users at the customer site. But a change in regulation necessitated the customer to focus on cutting costs, which now meant that the supplier sales force now had to also provide a solution to the procurement, logistics and financial professionals in their customer's organization. This meant that the sales rep not only had to fulfil the needs of multiple individuals at the customer, they also needed additional value arguments to communicate the value of their offer. The sales executive was convinced that even with the right materials, his sales reps were not skilled enough to sell solutions.

2. Increased Influence of Procurement Professional

Another common topic of importance was the increasing influence of the procurement professional. Most sales executives in our research pointed out that procurement was undergoing a significant transformation at three levels:

a) Strategic level, where procurement practices increasingly were assimilated into a more professional supply chain strategy focusing on more structure vendor management strategies. One sales executive in our sample mentioned that understanding the changes in the procurement/supply chain strategy of their customers was critical for understanding how to allocate resources to that particular client. Not only would the sales person now have to understand the strategy of the customer's firm, they also have to learn to deal with more professional and senior procurement executives. A significant portion of our respondents mentioned that they were concerned that their salespeople would not be able to hold a conversation with a senior procurement professional and that this would call for upskilling their current sales organization.

b) Organizational level, where the procurement organization is split into two areas, one focusing on solutions that contribute to the core of the customer's business and another area that was non-core/non-critical to the customer's business. One sales manager of a global, family held multinational mentioned that in their organization, salespeople were asked to completely redo their customer portfolio analysis (based on revenues and share of wallet with a customer) and were requested specifically to focus more on how important their organization was



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in the value chain of their customer. This necessitated the sales force to evaluate the value of their offerings to their customer base and helped them better focus more on those customers with whom they could deepen their relationship based on the value they created for the customer.

c) Process level, where procurement organizations were harnessing the power of advanced technologies to better deal with their suppliers. Sales managers in our study frequently mentioned that if the customer did not necessarily perceive the differentiated offer that their sales force would put forth to the customers, procurement would then resort to commoditizing the offers and this would force the sales organizations to reconsider their cost of sales and forcing them to consider setting up web shops, doing more telesales, and invest in tools like Electronic Data Interchange (EDI).

3. Ever Increasing Sales Cycle Time

As sales organizations start focusing on selling complex solutions to demanding, professional procurement professionals, they find an unwelcome consequence of this trend. Complex solutions require selling more intangible features and benefits that are difficult to comprehend and communicate, both for the customer and the salesperson themselves. In the case of the salesperson, this would either result in increased effort in trying to sell the complex solution or the procurement professional resorting to involve more members of the decision making unit to ensure that no mistakes are made in making the right decision. In both of these situations the outcome is the same. The sales cycle time just got longer. According to our sales managers, increased sales cycle times resulted in any one (or all) of the following difficult situations: a) more stress for the salespeople when their efforts to sell new solutions are met with reluctance from the customer, in addition to the sales organization not changing the performance measuring parameters (KPIs) for the salespeople to account for increased sales times, b) if the salespeople perceive the selling to be complex, they might not position the new solution to the customer or might resort to price reductions to get a quick sale, c) sales forecasts become less predictable resulting in strained relations with other internal stakeholders like supply chain, operations, manufacturing, finance, etc.

4. Increasing Cost of Making the Sale

One of the biggest concerns most sales executives mentioned during their interviews was about the commoditization of their offers. A majority of the sales executives claimed that there was a growing trend amongst the customers to do additional research about their own needs and specifications before they reached out to salespeople. While this trend by itself was not seen as a threat, a majority of this research was done by procurement professionals not very familiar with the nuances of the solutions they were seeking and this resulted in Request for Proposals (RFPs) that were either too vague or too complicated for the problem at hand. This ended up complicating the sales process with sales people spending more time on complicated RFPs rather than focusing on value creating opportunities. One sales manager actually mentioned that if salespeople were only involved at the RFP stage, then close to 80% of value creating opportunities were exhausted, leaving very little room to negotiate except price. While the obvious option to counter this would be to move early up in the buying process, sales managers in our research expressed concerns that doing this did not always guarantee a sale, as some of their customers ended up using the information provided by the sales force to come up with a RFP and gave the order to a competitor. Another fallout of this approach would involve the opportunity costs involved in moving up the buying process, as this could be time put to better use with more forthcoming customers. One of the companies in our sample actually had an innovative way to deal with customers who requested more information before floating a RFP. This stage termed RFI (Request for Information) was seen as a consulting opportunity with the sales force of the supplier instructed to charge the customer for providing this information, with a charge that would be deducted from the final invoice in case the order was placed with the same supplier. Another innovative approach taken by a medium-sized organization to deal with RFPs and tenders was to take this duty away from the salespeople and actually hire two mathematicians who would calculate the probability of making the sale and work with a pre-sales team. This would then decrease the opportunity costs (not to mention the stress levels) for the sales force, while having a more clear idea about when to chase a deal and when to cut your losses.

5. Sales Force Enablement

As mentioned earlier, the world of the sales person has changed enormously. Complex solutions, demanding customers, cut-throat competition, advances in technology aiding procurement professionals, etc. has meant that the sales force now need more support from their managers and top management more than ever. Most sales managers interviewed in this research mentioned sales enablement as a key to the effective and efficient running of their sales force. However, most sales managers had a completely different view on how to make this happen. The biggest issue with most sales executives today seems to be the quest for the "silver bullet" that will solve all of their sales issues. This quest invariably ends up in sales organization investing in expensive tools like CRM, Social Selling, Lead Management tools, Customer Experience, E-Commerce – without understanding the basic sales strategy and sales process behind the same.

Photo: Shutterstock.

Some of the more enlightened sales managers highlighted the importance of having a clear sales force effectiveness framework to guide them through managing the sales force before investing in tools. For example, one company operating in the healthcare business decided to understand the changes to their customers' business and the corresponding impact it had on the business model of their own organization and ended up using a simple marketing-led, lead generation tool to help their salespeople manage their leads better. Another start-up organization in our sample found out that cold calling on customers was creating a lot of negative vibe both with prospects and salespeople and decided to roll out a Social Selling strategy aimed at better targeting their prospects. Another organization in our sample found that its sales force did not have sufficient time to meet up with all the stakeholders of their key accounts and so engaged in Account-Based Marketing as a way of using personalized messaging with key accounts, thereby freeing up time for the sales force to focus on the right priorities. Almost all sales executives interviewed mentioned that they were struggling with CRM and had various remedial practices put in place to ensure that CRM was seen as part of a strategic initiative within their organization to become more customer centric, rather than just viewing CRM as a tool.

Discussion and Conclusion

As sales managers look for ways to improve their top line growth and sales efficiency, they should understand the various challenges that their sales forces face today. Understanding these issues and coming up with strategies and tactics to help the sales force is going to be critical in understanding the effective sales organization. In particular sales executives need to realize that procurement is becoming more professional and is likely to test the capabilities and skills of the supplier's sales force. A likely consequence of this customer professionalization is going to be a more complex sales process involving multiple stakeholders from the customer's organization and an ever increasing sales cycle resulting in increased cost of sales. Enabling the sales force to deal with these issues is going to be the most daunting challenge for sales executives.

However, our interviews with the sales executives yielded some good ideas. Sales executives must realize that a careful understanding of the business and economic environment in which their sales force operates should be an absolute necessity for setting the right sales force strategy. Understanding the sales process involved in dealing with different customer segments with varied requirements should result in the appropriate Go-to-Market strategy including options of dealing with third parties, e-commerce and managing their own in house sales teams. Understanding the various sales processes should help sales managers choose the appropriate tools to help enable their salespeople. And last but not least, sales executives must realize that selling in the future is going to get more complex and coming up with the right metrics to measure the performance of the sales force will most likely result in under motivated, under achieving, under efficient sales forces that will have a negative impact on the sustainability of their firms.

Deva Rangarajan, Associate Professor of Marketing and Interim Director.

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Why the Analysis of the Buying Centre Isn't Enough

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Today, buying and selling in B2B needs improved methods. A classical approach is to analyse the so called "Buying Centre". This article shows an improved, more comprehensive approach to be better prepared ahead of a negotiation. This is seen from the sales engineer's viewpoint and should be a helpful tool for anyone involved in sales.

In the first paragraph, this article briefly describes the sales/buying process, showing what is happening in the supplying company. Part of the preparation of a sales person is to identify the player in the buying centre. The meaning of these players is described in Section 2. Section 3 of this article focuses on the lack of information if only the buying centre is analysed and gives examples. The 4th section shows the method of improved analysis of negotiation preparation.

1. The Typical Situation and Sales/Buying Process

Supplier S receives a request for proposal (RFQ) from a potential customer (PC). The standard process of handling the RFQ is to pass it to the sales engineer (SE) of S who will initiate the calculation process. This can be very easy with standardized products. In case of more complex or new products, the production unit or the development department might be involved as well.

If we talk about B2B sales of technical goods, services or software (the product), the product will be a system or part of a system, a so called sub-system. Technical products are called system if they have input(s), output(s) and status (Ropohl, 1978). Sub-systems are systems which are an integrated part of a system (Schneider-Störmann, 2015b; Stempfle, 2008).

In many cases the RFQ will be a requirements specification document. After the supplier's internal process, besides the price, the tender specification is also compiled and may not meet all desired specifications. There may be meetings or other types of contact between the selling and buying companies to discuss these issues. These are the *negotiations*.

After the tender specification documents and prices are ready, the sales engineer contacts the customer and provides the quotation including all additional relevant documents and information.

In many cases, sales engineers do not have the time or do not see the need to further prepare themselves for the sales negotiation with the potential buyer of PC. More advanced sales engineers do analyse the buying centre (and the product portfolio of the potential customer). However, this might not be enough to be well prepared. In order to understand the difference between the analysis of the buying centre and the comprehensive model which follows the system theory of sales engineering, one needs to understand the buying centre in the first place.

2. The Buying Centre

The buying centre consists of all individuals and groups who are part of the buying process of an organization. (Johnston and Bonoma, 1981, p. 143). An individual is a person who acts on an individual basis, i.e. sales representative or the buyer. An organization is a closed unit consisting of one or more individuals or groups or sub-organizations, e.g. a company or a department of a company. A group or community is a combination of several, non-organized individuals, which combines a common interest (the same agreement or the same objective). Example: Stakeholders in project management. (Schneider-Störmann, 2015a).

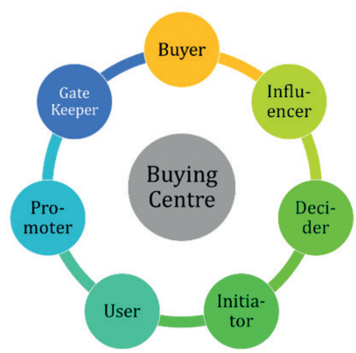

Figure 1. The Buying Centre and its individuals and groups (own sketch with reference to Kotler et al., 2011).

Here is an explanation of the different roles which are shown in Figure 1:

- The **promoter** is positive about a specific supplier because of efficiency, quality aspects, reliability, sustainability, good personal contacts and other reasons.

The other members of the Buying Centre are according to Kotler et al. (2011):

- The **initiator** starts the decision making process in requesting to purchase a technical product such as system, component, service, software or similar, i.e. the **technical goods**.
- The **decider** is the individual who is finally taking the decision or purchase. The individual must not perform the signature on the contract. They have, by means of their position or reputation (*Éminence grise*) in the company, the "last word".
- The **buyer** is in charge of proposing and / or selecting the suppliers which can offer the products. The buyer is responsible for the process of purchase within their company.
- The **influencer** takes responsibility in specifying the technical goods. They are evaluating the proposals of the potential suppliers and make proposals on which supplier best meets the utility function of their company.
- The **user** is using the technical good.
- The **gatekeeper** is steering the information during the purchasing process. They are taking control of incoming and outgoing communication and the communication within the buying centre.

The buying centre is also called the decision making unit DMU (Havaldar, repr. 2009, 2005). One target of the sales engineer of S is to influence the DMU. Within this buying centre, individuals may have several responsibilities at the same time. For example, the user can be also initiator or influencer.

One can sketch the situation between the supplier S, its sales engineer SE and the buying centre of the purchasing company PC using the same method as used to sketch structural concepts of technical products (block diagrams). This is explained in depth in (Schneider-Störmann, 2015b). An example is provided in Figure 2.

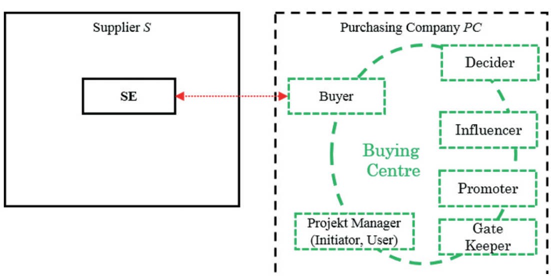

Figure 2. Buying centre and supplier. The circular connection (green dashed line) indicates the information flow within the buying centre steered by the gate keeper. The dotted red line shows the main communication relation between supplier S and PC as it should be (own sketch).

3. Lack of Information

At first glance, knowing all players in a buying centre might be enough for a sales engineer to start the (final) negotiation. However, one major question may be open:

Are there any other social aggregates taking influence on the negotiation?

It is very obvious that at least the supplier's **competitors** have an impact on the decision process of the buying centre. They are not part of the decision making unit but they will have a strong influence on the final decision.

To have a deeper understanding of the major question above and to understand why a wider picture of the influencing partners is needed, one has to explore in more detail the theory of conflict management. The relation between the conflict management and the negotiation and thus the positive outcome of the purchasing decision will be explained further below.

Let us consider a case where the competitors will also provide a quotation including their tender specification. This will be evaluated and compared to the other quotations by the influencer. Based on facts, the buying centre will receive a proposal from the influencer or their opinion about from which supplier to purchase the technical good. If the sales engineer of S wants to win the order, it is necessary for them to know the competitor's strength and weaknesses with respect to their technical goods and the individuals involved. In many cases, the technical performance of the competitor's products are taken into account if quality function deployment (QFD) process is applied. Then, the performance, strength and weaknesses show up in the House of Quality (HoQ) (Akao, 1992).

Consider the technical good to be used in the medical or health industry. Immediately further regulations do occur and need to be respected. In the US, the Food and Drug Association FDA comes into play. In the European Union, regulations for testing and quality assurance will apply. So the social aggregate of the society is influencing the decision process by **laws** and **standards** (given by the **legislator**). Even if company S is a sub-tier level supplier, it may important and helpful to have a certification meeting the medical or health industries standards.

Also for other markets it is helpful to understand where the technical good is used. In many cases, the technical goods sold from one company to another will be a sub-system used in a system. This product might also be sent to another company which will incorporate this one into another, bigger system and so on. So S might be a n-sub-tier level supplier. The **final product's market** is also to be evaluated. Such knowledge gives the sales engineer of S a better understanding and potentially makes the communication in the sales process easier.

Another social aggregate to be considered are the supplier's **subcontractors** contributing to the desired technical good. They also take influence on the buying centre as they can be competitors at the same time. Also, their reliability might be part of the discussions with PC and may influence the final decision.

Last but not least, there are social aggregates within the bidding company S taking influence due to limitations in capabilities (negative influence) or established relations between members of these departments and counter departments of PC. Often there are relations between developers of both companies.

But it is important to take all of the above into account? The answer is "yes" and is given in the theory of conflict management. A conflict occurs between at least two individuals who do not have different proposals (Schneider-Störmann, 2015b; Tries, 2008). In this conflict, both sides what to get to a solution, if they do not have an attractive alternative (Tries, 2008). Any individual is driven by personal targets. The origin of these targets, the motivation of the acting negotiating partner is important and must not be related to the product or the company's utility function (Tries, 2008). Even though the buying centre is the decision making unit, not all the relevant social aggregates are visible. But the conflict can be solved, which means the contract can be won if the motivation of the members of the buying centre is understood.

4. The Systematic Approach of Getting the Complete Picture

The standard process of receiving an RFQ and analysing the buying centre has been described. The players in the buying centre and their responsibilities have been listed in Section 2. In paragraph 3, some of the additional social aggregates are mentioned which should be known to the selling supplier and especially to the sales engineer:

- a) Competitor(s)
- b) Legislator
  - a. Law(s)
  - b. Standard(s)
- c) Society
- d) Final product's market
- e) Subcontractors

This is not a complete list and all the mentioned social aggregates do not need to be respected not in all cases of sales processes. In many purchasing processes, the picture is (much) simpler.

The method of negotiation preparation proposed in this article is related to the general systems theory. This was described by Bertalanffy (1955) and further developed for technical products by Ropohl (1978). The author applied and modified the system theory of technology and the general system theory to the system theory of sales engineering (Schneider-Störmann, 2015b). This provides a method to get a full and comprehensive picture of all influencing social aggregates in the process of buying decision. It fills the gaps of information needed to be a more successful sales engineer and supplier.

Based on the analysis of the buying centre shown in Figure 2, one can add the additional social aggregates of the specific situation. Figure 3 shows the completed picture. Again, the circular connection (green dashed line) shows the flow of information within the buying centre. The dotted red line shows the main communication relation between supplier S and PC. The dashed connections with arrows show the influence of the additional social aggregates of this specific situation. Pictures can be easier or even much more complex, depending on the specific sales situation.

It is helpful to extend the diagram if the relations and potential conflicts within the buying centre are known. An example is given in Figure 4. Relation 1 is obviously the initiating process. Relation 2 is a conflict between the initiator and the influencer. For example, the initiator as user might not be satisfied with the criteria of evaluation used by the influencer. Relation 3 shows different preferences for a certain supplier of the promoter and the influencer trying to convince the decider separately.

If the SE is informed about these conflicts, they may use the information to push the decision forward to a positive outcome of the negotiation.

Using this method, the SE can better understand where issues may come up and where to invest time and effort to be successful in their sales effort and finally to win the order.

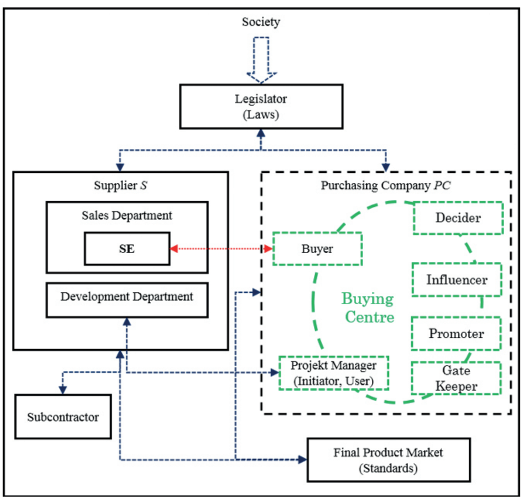

Figure 3. Comprehensive sketch of the situation in the buying process (own sketch).

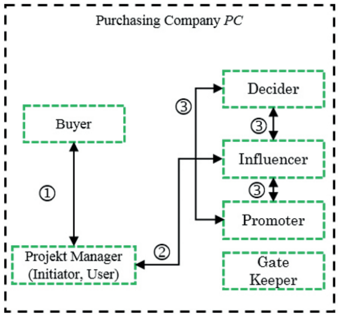

Figure 4. Relations within the buying centre showing conflicts (own sketch).

5. Summary

Ahead of a negotiation it is helpful to know the individuals in the decision making unit of the potential customer. It helps the salesperson to talk to the people making the decision or to support the flow of information in a way to be a successful salesperson. However, there are more social aggregates which do have impact on the buying centre and the final decision in the purchasing process. Having the full and comprehensive picture, sales engineers can develop a strategy for when and where they have to resolve conflicts and finally to get the desired order.

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INFOBOX: Sales Competitions and Training

Selling is about interaction skills and requires of the salesperson the willingness to step out of one's comfort zone. But when you survive in the jungle, you feel like a winner. This is what sales competitions are all about: simulating real-life business discussions and putting one's learning to the test. This section of the journal covers the forthcoming European Sales Competition 2018 for students in Paris as well as the national Best Seller Competition 2018 here in Finland.

European Sales Competition 2018 in Paris

Bernard Hasson
Président Directeur General at Euridis Business School

Euridis Business School is hosting the 2018 edition of the European Sales Competition that will be held in Paris on 30–31 May. This year the European Sales Competition will continue to build on the model of previous editions, to strengthen and broaden it.

Strengthen it by delivering a beautiful location in downtown Paris, near Champs-Elysées and by setting the goal to continue having real buyers play the roles of IT buyers on the Salesforce selling case. SALESFORCE, the leading cloud software company will continue to support the event as the main sponsor. In terms of visibility for the competition and for careers in professional sales, Euridis is developing a communication campaign to promote students majoring in sales in the 20 participating European universities.

Broaden the competition as in addition to the sales competition itself and the speed selling recruitment pitch, Euridis will add a serious online prospecting game based on the SKILLGYM software. In this way, recruiters will get a 360 view on candidates (investigation and negotiation on a complex sale, self selling and cold calling skills).

The universities participating in the European Sales Competition 2018 are:

- Justus Liebig University and Aalen University of Applied Sciences from Germany
- University of Portsmouth, Coventry University, University of Aberdeen, Abertay University & University of Dundee, and Edinburgh Napier University from the United Kingdom
- Wiener Neustadt University of Applied Sciences from Austria

- Vlerick Business School from Belgium
- Aalborg University from Denmark
- Kansas State University from USA
- Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Turku University of Applied Sciences and Tampere University of Applied Sciences from Finland
- Kristiania University College from Norway
- Avans University of Applied Sciences, Hogeschool Arnhem & Nijmegen/HAN University of Applied Sciences, and Windesheim University of Applied Sciences from the Netherlands

About Euridis Business School

Euridis Business School is a unique model within Europe when it comes to sales education at the Bachelor's and Master's degree level. It is based on apprenticeship only, with 100% of students spending one week at the business school and three weeks working a B2B sales job in a company. The companies pay for tuition with tax cut money. Students have full day courses on sales, marketing, digital business, communication skills and management. Euridis has about 600 students on three campuses (Paris, Lyon and Toulouse), all following a programme dedicated to B2B sales. This model allows students to practice the sales job in real life while learning sales and negotiation techniques at school. Another special characteristic is that Euridis, founded 26 years ago by sales professionals from the IT sector, is dedicated to IT sector, having developed partnerships with major IT service companies like IBM, Atos, SCC and Umanis, leading software companies such as Oracle, SAP, Salesforce and Varonis, as well as leading hardware manufacturers such as HPE, Dell-EMC and Lenovo. Euridis is developing its own sales lab that should be available for visit at the time of the competition on the Paris campus.

Training the Trainees

Johanna Heikkilä
Bachelor Student (Sales), TUAS

April is already here and with April comes the national Best Seller Competition. This year the event is organized at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences on 19 April. Our goal is to continue the success of our university in the competition and bring the brightest trophy back to Turku again. In any case, we want to show how well sales students can sell.

As a third-year Bachelor student, I have been acting as an assistant sales coach for the second-year students in their training lessons since January. I am familiar with sales training as I participated the same course last year and got the opportunity to represent our university in the competition. It has been my task during the previous weeks to tell the students about sales training based on my own experiences, to offer practical tips for the competition and to coach the students through role play situations. I hope my presence in the lessons has benefitted the students and they have found me easy to approach.

It has delighted me to notice how much each and every student has developed during these months and how much confidence they have gained during the practice rounds. There is room for all kinds of personalities in the world and the same holds true in sales training. In my opinion, this shows how various sales personalities can all succeed in selling. The most wonderful thing I have noticed is the fact that every student has been able to create and fine-tune a selling style for themselves that fits their own personality – without transforming themselves as persons. When a salesperson brings out their own true personality in the selling situation, they will make a good and lasting impression on the customer.
The general sales training lessons came to an end a couple of weeks ago when we organized a Sales Competence Day. During the day every student was able to show in role play simulations what they had learned about selling. All students represented the Vainu.io software that is the main sponsor in this year's Best Seller Competition. Excitement was in the air as only four students out of possible 40 were selected in the representative team.

This year the students surprised both assistant coaches and teachers by showing such an eagerness to be selected to represent our university in the Best Seller Competition. The level of performances in the Sales Competence Day was extremely high and selecting the best four students was a difficult task. At the time of writing this article, I am intensively coaching the representative team together with the other assistant coach, **Joni Jakonen**. Our goal is to ensure that our team learns to sell in a customer-oriented, value-based manner and also pays special attention to body language.

During the past few weeks, the memories of my own intensive training a year ago have often returned to my mind. The competition day will be mentally hard and exciting and therefore I want to help the students prepare for it. Even a student with good nerves might be surprised by how stressful it actually is to wait for one's own turn in a room with tens of other competitors from other universities.

My own learning journey at Turku University of Applied Sciences will end on the same week as when the Best Seller Competition takes place. On the eve of my graduation I have begun to think about the courses and projects during my studies. I definitely think that sales training has been the most important and beneficial course. I now know by heart how to lead a good sales discussion, from the initial handshake to a successful closure.

INFOBOX: Learning with Companies

Studying at TUAS is strongly working life oriented. Learning at TUAS is based on innovation pedagogy, which links together professional know-how and theoretical research. Learning revolves extensively around project and teamwork. This offers students unique opportunities to work in real need-based projects assigned either by companies or TUAS R&D operations.

Learning Sales and Project Skills with If

Sini Jokiniemi
Principal Lecturer, Sales Excellence Center at TUAS

If Insurance and Turku University of Applied Sciences have been successfully cooperating for several years. The cooperation has included project assignments for student groups, visiting lectures, excursions and sales training in various ways. This article summarizes the background of four professionals working at If and provides their views on selling. The article concludes by offering expectations and tips for students from If professionals.

Service Manager **Aleksi Haatainen** has been working for If for ten years. He has held various positions in the sales and marketing organization. Aleksi started his career at If while still studying economic science. Hourly work and summer work at If's customer service turned into a full-time employment after graduation. For the last five years, Aleksi has held superior positions in sales and customer service.

Aleksi approaches the concept of selling from a wide perspective:
"Every one of us always sells something on a daily basis, even when not working in the sales department. We sell whenever we interact with other people, share our thoughts and ideas with others. In a parallel fashion, actual selling is also about sharing thoughts, ideas and perspectives with a customer and including one's own expertise in the discussion."

Student project group Julia Koskinen, Heidi Oksanen, Jenni Porko and Lotta Ainasoja with Aleksi Haatainen from If. Photo: Sini Jokiniemi.

“Nowadays students are very conscious and take the initiative to find out about new things. In addition, digital and especially social media plays a big role in the everyday life of young adults. Based on these notions, I challenge students to share and innovate with us regarding how companies should interact with young adults as we are soon welcoming a new decade, 2020.”

Aleksi has recently given a project assignment for a group of four Bachelor students. The project started in January and focuses on understanding the selling and marketing of personal insurance to young adults. The student group will compare various insurance companies and conduct a survey to find out what young adults think of personal insurances and what the target group considers important when choosing an insurance for themselves.

Sales Consultant **Sofia Lehto** and Customer Service Manager **Niko Satto** have also given an interesting project assignment for a group of seven Bachelor students. The project aims to find out how newly started entrepreneurs with an immigrant background experience insurance companies. The goal is to develop selling and service processes for this customer segment. Sofia and Niko expect the students to work independently and to recognize potential risks in time, take contact and agree on potential updates to the process. At the moment, the student group has met these expectations well.

Sofia herself has recently graduated from TUAS with a Bachelor’s degree in Sales. She has a total of six years of experience in sales, customer service and commerce. On his behalf, Niko started his career as an insurance agent 23 years ago. He has gained experience as a customer agent, project manager, specialist, sales director and as a sales coach. Sofia and Niko share similar thoughts about the way sales is changing:

40 sales students visiting If. Junior HR Partner Susanna Väkiparta and Head of HR Operations Finland Marketta Helokunnas in the spotlight. Photo: Aino Lindroos.

“Nowadays, sales is characterized by networking both inside and outside the organization. An increasing share of customers’ purchasing decisions take place prior to their first contact to a service provider. This calls for a sales organization that can strongly utilize marketing and digitalization tools.”

“Customer orientation and the best possible customer experience are currently emphasized. A smooth customer experience that is independent of time and place is enabled by the development of digitalized services and the flexible service. This goal requires skills and motivation at both organizational and individual level to develop one’s professional competences and business in the right direction.”

Susanna Väkiparta works as a Junior HR Partner at If. She has a background in economics and has also worked at If’s customer service. Susanna considers sales to be part of customer service. Sales is about listening to the customer, mapping out customer’s needs and finding a tailored solution for the particular customer. During the ongoing academic year, sales Bachelor students have worked with two projects focusing on If’s employer image. Both of the projects have offered valuable insights and ideas.

Aleksi, Niko and Susanna offer the following tips for students embarking on a company project

- Show your genuine curiosity toward the company's operations and business environment.
- Project assignments offer a great chance to perform to company representatives and make a good impression in relation to future work opportunities.
- What kind of an impression of your competences and motivation do you want to offer? People with the right attitude and way of working always find a place to work.
- Project assignments are an efficient way to network and make contacts with companies.
- Utilize the opportunity to the fullest!
- Be proactive!

Investment Behaviour

Ville Aalto
Industrial Management and Engineering Student at TUAS

During the autumn term of 2017, our project course offered us an interesting task. The task was to study people's investment and saving behaviours. The idea was to compare people who were retired or close to retirement to young adults. We also compared their experiences as customers. 13 students were divided into three groups and each group had their own age category to study. Every group consisted of industrial management students and sales students. The first group studied young adults, aged 18–25 and 35–44. The second group studied people close to retirement, aged 53–62, and last group studied retired people aged 63–75.

The project was inspired by EPSI Rating Finland. In our research, we studied two main themes: investment behaviour and customer satisfaction. Under these two themes, we had five smaller categories; the meaning of money and wealth, investment – saving and testimonials, customer service, quality and digitalization and company testimonials.

We were given 14 weeks to plan this project, prepare materials, gather and analyse the answers, and present our study. We planned a schedule for each task and started to clarify the survey. The planning took us two weeks, after which it was time to start interviewing people. We used online and paper interview forms. During the next five weeks, every group needed to gather 100 answers. We had two extra students to help in the collection process and at the end, we ended up with 325 answers. Almost all of the answers were gathered from the Turku area. Most answers were collected by interviewing people randomly on the street. Some answers were collected by calling friends or relatives. 52% of the people that were interviewed were men and 48% women.

The next step in the process was analysing the answers. The study showed that friendliness was the most important thing in a customer service situation. The second most important thing was the product knowledge of the customer service staff. When asked about the importance of quality, especially older people said that the most important thing they would not compromise on was the quality of health products or food stuffs. Younger people would not compromise on the quality of electronics. All age groups also said they would not compromise on the quality of expensive products.

One of our questions was: "How has digitalization affected the quality of service (for example, banking services)?" About 80% of the interviewees said that service has become faster and easier but also that it has become more complicated. Additionally, it was interesting to find out that younger people were worried about how older people manage using online bank services, which may be difficult from time to time. The service being less and less personal was regarded as a major downside.

Photo: Shutterstock.

They also thought you need thousands of euros before you can start even thinking about investing.

In the end, people in different age groups had remarkably similar ideas about investing. Minimum risk and long-term investing, for example, in an apartment or property, and having a savings account were the most popular types of investing. The biggest differences between the age groups were in the opinions concerning investing for the future. Older people thought investing was a reasonable and safe way to secure one's financial future. Younger people mostly thought that investing was interesting but were not that concerned about the future.

On the investment behaviour side, the first thing we asked was, "what does money mean to you?" Most interviewees said that money meant easier and careless living, however some said it was a necessary evil. We also asked about investing opinions. Every age group considered investing a good thing (70% of all answers) and had mostly invested on savings accounts or apartments. The remaining 30% had no experience in investing, however half of them regarded investing as a good thing. The biggest issue were people's negative thoughts regarding stock markets. Most respondents thought stock investing was very difficult and expensive and should be left to professionals.

During this project I learned useful knowledge about conducting a survey and analysing the results. I thought it was going to be easy but especially analysing the results and gathering everything into one package was an arduous process. The answers gathered from the surveys confirmed my preconceptions about people's opinions about investing. In addition, the project changed my attitude towards conducting surveys as the process was not only harder but also more interesting than I had assumed.

INFOBOX: International Projects

Long-term research projects join together students, teachers, researchers and companies from various countries. All participants learn automatically about cultural differences and project management in multi-cultural projects. In addition, there is the common topic of interest – the real core and content of the project – that has inspired the participants to join together in the first place and that has convinced the funding organization to support common efforts.

VIBE Project: Business Education in International Sales and Export

Saara Julkunen
Associate Professor at the University of Eastern Finland

Jonna Koponen
Accreditation Manager and Lecturer at the University of Eastern Finland

Katri Kaunismaa
Project Manager at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

The VIBE project was established to build a student and staff exchange programme in business related education and to create new business opportunities with real business partners in international sales. The main objective of the project was to build a common international classroom with the project partners through this new exchange programme. The project began in October 2014 and was finalized in September 2017. Four universities were working in close cooperation during the project: Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS), the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), Meiji University and J.F. Oberlin University (JFOU). Two of these universities are in Europe: RUAS in the Netherlands and UEF in Finland. JFOU and Meiji are in Japan. During the project, the four study programmes from the partner universities came closer together and the participants learned from each other's teaching and methods, as well as collaborating partnerships with business life. The project was co-funded by the European Union's Education Cooperation Programme. The main results were presented at the VIBE conference in Rotterdam in May 2017.

During the project, teachers from RUAS and their partners mainly cooperated with B2C firms. At UEF, business education was based on collaboration with B2B firms. For these European universities, the added value of this project was introducing the concept of the international classroom to the Japanese partner universities. The international study programme at the Japanese universities used to be solely for international students, and not for their own domestic students. Since the introduction of VIBE (the first project-based study programme in Japan) in the spring term of 2015, the Japanese students at these universities have collaborated with the Dutch and Finnish students. This was the first step to realize a genuinely international classroom at the Japanese partner universities. The study project for mixed groups of international students and Japanese students continued in the spring term of 2016. It was clearly understood since the beginning of the project that a detailed plan was needed for a common understanding between the international partners. The deepest attention was put on the fact that the students really have to do a collaboration project in an international classroom.

Student Mobility

As requirements for joining the project, the students were expected to be able to study in their exchange destination. Therefore, the following arrangements were made: The Dutch students were required to have a proficiency level of A2 in Japanese before departure and they took an intermediate-level course in the Japanese language in Japan. The Finnish students took a basic Japanese language course in Japan. The UEF asked the Japanese universities to confirm that the Japanese students had a high enough level of English in order to get by and study in English during their exchange period in Europe. All four VIBE partners have an international student support office, which helped the students to arrange visas, accommodation and insurance.

European Students in Japan

The European students for the first exchange round in 2015 were selected based on their study progress and grades. For the second round in 2016, the same procedure was followed. The scholarships were given to the total amount of 16 students from Finland, 16 students from the Netherlands, and 32 students from Japan.

The European students followed a tailor-made programme in Japan that consisted of Japanese language and business courses, including a collaboration project with Japanese companies. The students worked together with local companies and authorities. The Finnish and Dutch embassies in Japan were also involved in the project. The students gave presentations of their project work and the outcome at the Dutch embassy in Tokyo to Dutch and Finnish diplomats and representatives of Japanese companies in July 2015 and 2016.

Japanese Students in Finland

In Finland, the Japanese students followed the existing UEF study programme in International Business and Sales Management. UEF had firstly sent a course package to the students, which included information about the courses the students were able to choose in the VIBE programme. In Finland, the students participated in courses focusing on exports, internationalization, and cross-cultural communication. As members of student groups, the Japanese students built export and business plans and participated in business negotiation practices with Finnish companies from different fields of industry. The cross-cultural student groups had very close collaboration with the companies. The students were expected to be self-steering in group work. They met their business partners in the classrooms as well as at the companies' offices every week. All of these companies were interested in beginning to export to Japan. The companies participated in the assessment of the group reports. They were also free to exploit the group reports at the end of the courses. In this way, the students gained knowledge, skills, and experience in business in the Japanese market area. The international classrooms involved students from 19 different countries during the programme. The Japanese students had an opportunity to study the Finnish language in a course called "Survival Finnish".

Japanese Students in the Netherlands

Japanese exchange students enjoying their stay in Finland. Photo: VIBE archives.

In the Netherlands, the Japanese students followed the existing study project in the third-year programme, "Exporting to Asia". The students took the role of consultants in the project groups that conducted a research in the Japanese market. In this way, the Japanese students gained insight into the export business and experience of working as consultants. Furthermore, the Japanese students followed the Study Career Coaching (SCC) programme that was developed especially for these Japanese students and a few other international exchange students who joined this export project.

Faculty Mobility

During the VIBE programme, the partners got the opportunity to understand the cultural differences between Europe and Asia and the different educational methods. This new knowledge will help the partners develop their international classrooms in the future. As a conclusion, 12 European faculty members visited both partner universities in Japan and 13 Japanese faculty members visited partner universities in the Netherlands and in Finland. During each visit, the faculty members had several meetings to discuss the project plan and execution. They also gave guest lectures to local students and got to follow classes to familiarize themselves with the teaching methods in each country. The feedback from these visits was positive, and all the project members found it useful to get to know each other better.

Finnish members shared the Sales Theatre method with Japanese partners. They also participated in a cross-cultural class that focused on cultural diversity in customer–seller relationships. During the course in International Sales Work, Japanese professors gave feedback on the students' export plan presentations. During their visits to Europe, the Japanese professors gave lectures on the Japanese society and entrepreneurship in Japan. The students reported that it was interesting to focus on the Asian business environment as part of their international business studies.

Project Evaluation

Feedback was gathered from all students and faculty members participating in the project. The European participants stayed in close contact with each other via Skype every month. Email exchange was used to keep track of the agenda and what was decided between the partners. Both European and Japanese partners engaged in close collaboration with each other by email during the programme.

Evaluation of the students' academic results shows that most of the students achieved good academic results during their exchange period. Participants were also asked to evaluate the quality of the new teaching and learning methods. Since 2015, the Japanese educational method *zemi* has been implemented at RUAS, which has been fruitful in the thesis writing process of the RUAS students. The ongoing assessment emphasizing students' activity during the lectures in Japan was also implemented in the UEF methods in 2016. The Japanese professors also participated in the verbal evaluation of UEF students' presentations. They were deeply focused on sharing cultural understanding of Asia with the international students and faculty members. UEF therefore acquired a lot of understanding of the Asian business environment that will be used in the following export courses. Academic experts from different cultures will be invited to participate in lectures as well. Their feedback to the students will be part of new methods in these courses. The UEF course structures and course packages were shared with Japanese faculties during the visits to Japan. UEF and RUAS students shared their learning methods in PowerPoint presentations during their 2016 exchange periods in Japan.

European students agreed that an international programme is always a challenge. Cultural barriers were found and more support was expected for Japanese students during each mobility flow. However, the students learned a lot about cultural diversity and business in the Japanese market area, even though the Japanese language was described as difficult to study. European students had a different idea about grading than their Japanese teachers. This was also under discussion during the whole project. However, the project was evaluated as instructive by the students.

Japanese students needed a lot of advice in living and studying in Finland and in the Netherlands. However, they learned quickly and were able to manage the courses they were taking. In the second year, the housing and courses were guided to Japanese students based on the experiences of the first year students. During their exchange, the Japanese students contributed to expanding the cultural perspective of other students.

Finally, the coordination mechanisms and cooperation with different supporting departments within the universities were evaluated. At UEF, the VIBE students' exchange and faculty staff mobility were a part of the exchange programmes. Different departments supported each other well in achieving the internationalization goals for both students and staff. In the International Business programme of the UEF Business School, the exchange students from the Innovation Management programme and Finance and Accounting programme were allowed to participate in the classes with VIBE students. At RUAS, support for mobile staff and students was given by the course programme of Trade Management for Asia and the Centre of International Affairs.

Dissemination

The information about the project and how to take part was made available for students and teachers on the internal websites and Facebook pages of the European universities. One article was published in the RUAS magazine and another on the RUAS intranet, and there was a radio interview with a UEF teacher on a Finnish radio channel to raise general awareness of the project. The project website was launched in October 2015. The website was presented to all business and academic partners in the context of discussing international collaboration. A feature about UEF partnership in the VIBE programme was published in the local newspaper in November 2015. The guest lectures given by the Japanese faculty members at RUAS and UEF were open for any students and faculties of the university. They were visited by students and lecturers from different departments of the university.

Academic Results

The following three academic articles were published related to the project:

Koponen, J., & Julkunen, S. (2015), Theoretical principles of simulation-based sales communication training. *Simulation & Gaming*, 46(2), 137–147.

Koponen, J., & Julkunen, S. (2017). Consumers' experiences of appropriate sales interaction – A speech code theory perspective. *Journal of Communication Studies in Science*.

Koponen, J., & Julkunen, S. (2017). Exploring cultural diversity with business students. *Communication Teacher*.

Sustainability Plan

The collaboration of partners after the end of the funding period was ensured by drafting exchange agreements between the European and the Japanese universities. In the future, the partners will collaborate regarding staff mobility and student exchange as well as in research related to entrepreneurship and international business. The international collaboration and international classroom method are embedded in the curriculum as of 2018. UEF will also start using similar short and ongoing assessment methods as used by the Japanese professors during lectures. The Japanese educational method *zemi* was introduced in the curriculum at RUAS. The exchange of educational methods will continue in future through joint research projects in the field of business education.

Impact

The main impact of the project has been the sharing of educational methods between European and Japanese collaborators. We have learned a lot from each other. We accessed a lot of useful methods and acquired an understanding of how to use them. The students from partner universities had the opportunity to join international classrooms and to work with classmates from different cultures. They also got an opportunity to be integrated into the new foreign society during their exchange months. Professors and staff got an opportunity to share their teaching methods and build a reflection based on their experiences with their international collaborators.

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APPLIED SCIENCES

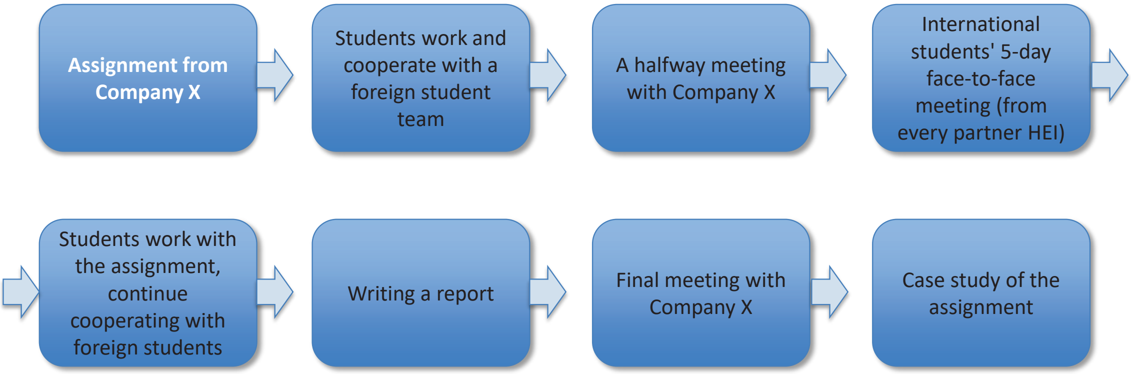
INTENSE Pilot Run: Positive Experiences in Internationalization

Helena Rantanen
Senior Lecturer at TUAS

The core of the INTENSE project is innovation, entrepreneurship and internationalization. The Erasmus+ funded project INTENSE – "International Entrepreneurship Skills Europe" combines the united inputs of five European countries and universities: Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft (HTW), Germany; Hogeschool Utrecht (HU), The Netherlands; University Colleges Leuven Limburg (UCLL), Belgium; Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS), Finland; and J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Economics (EFOS), Croatia. The project started in autumn 2016 and will end by autumn 2019. The basic idea of this project is to help SMEs in their internationalization together with students. The SME gives a local student team an assignment related to their internationalization and student teams from different countries work on the assignment together. Student groups will conduct a market analysis that not only helps the company make the decision of entering a new market but also assists in deciding on the entry mode. For instance, if the customer potential seems large enough the entry mode can vary from hiring a sales representative to establishing a sales office in the area. One part of the project is also the teaching material that has been produced together with partner universities and that material is also used when students work with the project.

The pilot run of the INTENSE project was carried out in autumn 2017 in every five participating universities. Each partner had two assignments from their local companies and a student group working with the assignments for these companies and helping the partner students with their assignment. So, for instance, the group of Finnish students (nine students) worked with the assignments from two Finnish companies but they also helped a Croatian company to gather market information about Finland. One Finnish student group (four students) received help from students in Croatia and another student group (five students) got help from the students in the Netherlands. The pilot run of INTENSE followed a certain process.

One of the Finnish companies assigning students with a project was Haloila Oy. Haloila is a leading manufacturer of fully automatic and semi-automatic stretch wrapping machines for pallet loads. The company has a history of over 40 years and their Octopus machines have been delivered to more than 60 countries. Haloila is located in Masku, about 15 kilometres from the city of Turku. The objective of the Haloila assignment was



Process of the pilot run.

to conduct a market research of the Balkan countries and Romania. The students' report included general information about the target countries, companies operating in these countries, market structure, competitors and conclusions regarding the potential of the markets in these countries for Haloila Oy. The contact person in Haloila was Global Sales Manager **Jyri Lehtiö** (see photo).

Jyri Lehtiö, Global Sales Manager at Haloila. Photo: Helena Rantanen.

I interviewed Jyri Lehtiö after the pilot run and asked his opinions about the INTENSE project. In the inquiry before the pilot run, he had mentioned that his concrete expectation was to get a holistic overview of the market potential in segments and areas. As potential risks or obstacles, he mentioned the lack of communication between the company representative and students during the work, which may lead to unclarity of the target while conducting the study and to the difficulty of receiving up-to-date, relevant and valuable information. When asking about his role in the project, he said he was to be the contact person in the company and also responsible for steering and supporting the study.

In the interview after the pilot run, Lehtiö said that his concrete expectations were fulfilled and that there were no specific obstacles. The expectations for the company's input were also well balanced; it might be a problem if the universities expected the companies to allocate more time and resources. As a suggestion for improvements he mentioned that depending on the assignment, continuity of activities can bring added value, meaning that after the completion of an assignment, the same company could give a second assignment to continue the process.

As advice for the companies that will participate in the full run in autumn 2018, Lehtiö said that the company assignment should be clear, well limited, well communicated, not too large and serve the right purpose. As advice for a company that starts their internationalization process, he emphasized a clear plan and strategy based on thorough analysis. Overall, the market analysis conducted within the INTENSE project included some basic information about the prospects, even at customer level, which speeds up the sales person's work while preparing the first call.

The Haloila case was assigned for four students of Professional Sales. One of them was **Nita Ruotsala,** who now continues the project by writing her final thesis on the INTENSE project. I also interviewed Ruotsala and asked her opinions related to the Haloila case. Before the pilot run, she had mentioned that her concrete expectations are that the outcome of the pilot will be positive and that she will learn a lot and create new contacts. As risks or obstacles, she listed cultural differences, timing and the lack of knowledge related to the companies and their fields of business. As the main responsibilities and roles, she explained that she tries to help the companies to get information about foreign markets and provide them with ideas and help for entering the new market area.

In the interview after the pilot run, Nita Ruotsala said that her expectations were mostly fulfilled. However, she thought that they could have started with the actual project a bit earlier and go through the theory parts somewhat faster. In terms of the roles, she mentioned that within her team everything run smoothly, everyone did their part and the company (Haloila) working with them was cooperative and supportive. As a suggestion for improvement, she explained that all the student groups in different countries should start around the same time in order to ease the communication. According to Ruotsala, the project was really interesting yet time-consuming. The project group was rather small with extremely nice peer students. The most important thing that Ruotsala learned was how to conduct a market study; doing market research takes time and resources. Ruotsala said she had never done such an exhaustive study and report on a totally strange country

Nita Ruotsala and the Croatian team meeting in Utrecht.

and field, so there were many new things to be learned. As advice for the students participating in the full run, she underlined the schedule: it is important to decide the deadlines for every week and the division of labour has to be clear.

Nita Ruotsala also participated to the 5-day face-to-face meeting with partner students in Utrecht in the Netherlands. The best thing about the week, according to Ruotsala, was the progress the project was making and acquiring a clearer picture of it. Because the Croatian team was very well prepared and interested in the Haloila project, they were of great help. It was also nice to meet the student teams from the partner countries. The different timetables in partner countries influenced the work to some degree but as a whole, the week was well organized and served its purpose.

In autumn 2018, a full run will be carried out by all the participating universities with about 25 students and five company assignments.

During the full run, also the competences of the students and teachers will be measured with the FINCODA Innovation Barometer Assessment Tool. Some students will also have a chance to participate in a 5-day face-to-face meeting in Berlin, where they will work together with the company assignments and get important information related to the project.

For more information on the project: http://intense.efos.hr

INTENSE

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

DiTEM: Supporting Digitalization and Sales for Smaller Companies

Rauni Jaskari
Senior Lecturer at TUAS

Micro enterprises (with fewer than 10 employees) often need support when starting their digitalization due to their limited resources. One main pillar of the European Union's Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan is entrepreneurial education and training. Turku University of Applied Sciences is participating in a European-wide project where a free online training for the digitalization of micro enterprises will be created.

The specific aim of the DiTEM ("Digital Transformation of the European Micro Enterprises") project is to develop an innovative learning path for entrepreneurs and managers to become able to drive the digital transformation of their companies. The selected themes for the learning programme are e-Leadership, Social Media, Big Data and Analytics, as well as Cloud and Mobile Solutions. The training will increase the awareness of small companies of these subjects by explaining what possibilities these technologies will bring and how they can be exploited to increase business growth, sales and efficiency of the operations. Big Data and Analytics will offer huge opportunities for smaller companies to increase their sales

Partners participated in a joint staff training and tested the DiTEM online platform in Ruse, Bulgaria, in March 2018.

through better decisions and predictions. Undoubtedly also small companies may benefit from using social media in their targeted marketing and by so doing increase their sales.

The learning programme on the online platform will be ready for piloting later in 2018. Interested entrepreneurs and representatives of small companies will be invited to the pilot in all participating countries, i.e. Finland, the UK, Denmark, Italy, Greece and Bulgaria. Pilot sessions will be organized in these countries by project partner organizations. Based on feedback, the training will be improved before the final launch and launching events in the spring of 2019.

DiTEM
Digital Transformation of European Micro Enterprises

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

How Cold is Cold Calling?

Julia Koskinen
Bachelor Student (Sales) at TUAS

My study plan as a Bachelor student in Sales included a telemarketing course. I was assigned an important task to call various companies and to invite them to participate in a free of charge event organized by the SMErec project ("New Generation Recruitment Skills for SMEs and Workforce"). As I had no previous experience in cold calling, I thought, great, my task was much easier than the tasks given to my classmates. It would be a piece of cake; I did not have to concretely sell anything to anyone. Or so one might think. The reality hit my face already during the first round of calling.

The aim of the SMErec project is to enhance the recruiting skills of small and medium sized companies. I started by contacting very small companies where the person answering the phone was the CEO who was practically running the whole business all by themselves. If I was lucky enough to reach the CEO in the

Photo: Aino Lindroos.

first place, they did not have any extra time to participate in any event or they just did not feel that recruitment was related to them because of the small scale of their business. I made a call after call, and when I was lucky, somebody answered. Could cold calling get any colder than that? Probably not.

Telemarketing and especially telemarketing by cold calling demands a lot of patience and persistency. One might easily feel like a loser because of making no sales and no bookings. However, when we think about the possibility of being successful in cold calling, the chances are quite slim. A salesperson should always know something about the potential customer – the more the better.

The same principles and arguments hold true in telemarketing and in face-to-face selling situations. The choice of words and sentence structures are underlined in telemarketing as body language cannot be seen. One has to plan the structure of the call very thoughtfully in advance so as to aid the customer to understand the value they can gain from buying from you. The caller needs to adapt the structure to the customer's style, particularly in situations when the lead is known to be warmer. With a very cold lead one needs to be prepared to offer solid argumentation because the suggestion might be something the customer has never even thought about or does not consider topical.

As the course progressed, I noticed how challenging and inefficient cold calling could be. It was demanding to invite people even to a free event – how would it be for an event with an entrance fee? Cold calling is really cold and therefore the sheer volume of it will decrease in the near future. Nowadays companies may purchase software that help them to do prospecting intelligently. With the help of such software, cold calling is no longer as cold with the salesperson holding more up-to-date background information of the potential customer. As a salesperson of the future myself, I am more than happy with the technological innovations supporting us.

My tips for a successful cold calling project

1. Timing of the calls – think carefully when to call the companies. Specific time slots, such as lunch breaks and Friday afternoons are times when you will probably reach no one.
2. Practise the structure of the call beforehand. If you do not know the answer for something a potential customer asks you – tell them you will find out the answer and call them back later.
3. Be prepared for the fact that not all people who answer the phone are nice. Do not take it personally.
4. Remember that practice makes perfect. Whether it is about sales or conducting a survey over the phone, the more you call, the smoother the calls will become.
5. Do not give up even if you do not reach anyone. Just take the next call. The more you call, the more answers you will get.

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SME rec
New generation recruitment skills for SMEs and workforce

Karelia Ammattikorkeakoulu
TURKU AMK TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
JOSEK Joensuun Seudun Kehittämisyhtiö Oy
Elinkeino-, liikenne- ja ympäristökeskus
Vipuvoimaa EU:lta 2014–2020
Euroopan unioni Euroopan sosiaalirahasto

INFOBOX: Selling Ideas and Education

Selling is often about promoting ideas and provoking people to look at the world from new perspectives. The following articles discuss marketing automation, networking with peers and transforming your diploma, and thus offer textbook examples of the AIDA formula: how to get one's Attention, turn it into Interest and Desire and finally into Action.

Marketing Automation Boosts TalentAdore's Sales

Miira Leinonen
Head of Marketing at TalentAdore

Marketing is one of the fields that have been dramatically affected by the emergence of the Information Age and the development of ICT technology. During the last decades, marketing has gone through profound changes related to customer buying behaviour, communication methods (e.g. social media) and new technologies, such as sales and marketing automation.

Customers now have a better access to information and more buying power. Thus, companies must adopt new tactics to answer their customers' needs and succeed in the competition. This logic has been understood first by B2C companies but B2B companies are also stepping in and leaving traditional methods and channels behind.

Following Customers' Actions in Real Time
Marketing Automation (MA) is based on the idea of following customers' actions. Therefore, it is all about customer behaviour and data. When a customer makes a move, a certain marketing action follows. For example, if a website visitor subscribes to receiving a newsletter (and gives their contact information in return), the newsletter will be automatically sent to them via email. If the customer then clicks on one of the links in the newsletter, the automation software tracks the lead's navigation path and gathers information of what the lead is interested in. This data can be used to send better targeted information and respond to the specific needs of these leads.

Marketing Automation is tightly connected with content marketing but it cannot be separated from sales, either. On top of helping companies to create brand awareness, marketing automation can be a useful tool in generating leads and shortening sales cycles with quicker response time.

Content Marketing Goes Hand in Hand with Marketing Automation

TalentAdore is one of the companies who believe in the power of Marketing Automation and making sales and marketing together in a modern way. The company acquired the HubSpot Marketing Automation software in spring 2016. The main purpose when acquiring the system was to automate digital marketing and boost sales.

At the time of taking the system into use, the company was still very young (founded in 2014) and just developing its sales and marketing processes. Thus, it took time from the company to start using the MA system properly and gaining benefits. One of the biggest impediments TalentAdore had with the implementation was a lack of content. The company had just launched its website and was starting to write a blog and create other digital materials.

Having a sufficient amount of interesting and relevant content is essential for implementing a marketing automation system successfully.

Within the implementation process, the company learned that there is not much use of Marketing Automation if there is no relevant and interesting content to be shared. Hence, Marketing Automation is not a magic trick that works on its own. Instead, it requires that companies know their target group and are able to focus on generating targeted content and creating functional processes for instance for lead generation. Furthermore, the cooperation between marketing and sales needs to be seamless.

Increasing Brand Awareness and Generating Leads

By learning from customers' needs and creating compelling content (e.g. blog posts, newsletters and downloadable guides), TalentAdore started to see the true value of Marketing Automation. Ten months after adopting the system, the company had succeeded in growing the number of its social media followers and website visitors significantly. For example, the company was able to increase the number of its Twitter followers from less than 100 to more than 10 000. The company also generated a respectable number of marketing and sales qualified leads.

All in all, Marketing Automation has aided the company to steer its marketing and sales activities in the right direction and create functional processes. Along with the lead generation, the company has improved its brand awareness in Finland.

Marketing Automation is a powerful tool, but people and processes make the difference.

Still, it has to be said that the successfulness of the implementation process of MA is more dependent on the organizational capabilities and overall performance of the sales and marketing activities than individual product features in the system itself. Thus, Marketing Automation is a powerful tool, but people and processes make the difference in how successfully it is used.

This article is based on the thesis by Miira Leinonen: "Facilitators and impediments in the adoption and implementation of the HubSpot Marketing Automation system".

TalentAdore

TalentAdore Ltd is a Finnish B2B company focusing on HR technology. The company was founded in 2014, and it is located in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The company's mission is to bring the human touch back to recruitment.

Their solution, a Virtual Recruitment Assistant (VRA) integrates Applicant Tracking System (recruitment software), Artificial Intelligence based communication technologies and advanced automation. The VRA empowers you to give 100% personalized status updates and feedback messages to each job candidate -- individually and with no extra time.

You can handle the entire recruitment process from job postings to hiring decisions and building dynamic talent communities. The solution helps companies to enhance their Employer Brand by focusing on Candidate Experience. It also streamlines the recruitment process and automates manual and repetitious tasks.

Read more at www.talentadore.com

Let's Meet Igor Parri from Sales and Marketing Professionals (MMA)

Igor Parri
Specialist at Sales and Marketing Professionals

I have been in working life since I was 15 years old. My responsibilities have concentrated on customer service, entrepreneurship, communication and marketing. All of these endeavours have one common nominator – sales. Everything I have been aiming at professionally has always somehow culminated in sales. What makes this interesting is that I never actually thought it about until I started working at MMA. Other salesmen can probably agree that the absolutely best feeling is closing a sale – and that makes all the background efforts definitely worth it and drives you to try harder every day.

Like many others, I ended up in sales by coincidence. As a social person and performing rap artist it was easy for me to think of myself as a marketeer. As a subject of specialization, marketing also tends to be among the most popular ones among students.

Sales used to be a profession where salespersons found themselves via various routes and with or without different levels of degree. Things are now changing. Nowadays, especially universities of applied sciences (UAS) have taken a stronger role in educating sales on Bachelor's and even Master's level. Employers are giving more and more value to the applicant's higher degree.

This puts sales evolution in a new phase. The salesmanship becomes more professional. Traditional stereotyping and negative attitudes towards sales as a profession will decrease. This will attract increasing numbers of students to choose sales when applying to a UAS. All of this is excellent news for the future of Finnish sales. It is commonly known that Finland will prosper especially with sales.

However, educating oneself at university is not enough. The competition for quality jobs is tough. In addition to your degree, your personal brand, network and previous work experience will crucially influence your possibility to get employed. This is where we in MMA want to help our members. We arrange approximately 75 webinars, many seminars and sales themed company events throughout the year.

An increasingly popular subject of our webinars among our members has been LinkedIn and closely related social selling. According to surveys, students are a surprisingly inactive group to join LinkedIn, let alone be active in producing content. This is one of the many things we wish to promote across universities to students. By attending and being active in various events you are able to gain a lot and stand out. One of the new possibilities provided for students is our mentoring programme. This is one of the reasons I encourage students to become our student members and utilize possibilities.

We are proud partners of universities of applied sciences and we want to be supporting the amazing job the universities of applied sciences are doing. We have Finland's largest network of sales and marketing professionals and there is a huge potential in our collaboration. I'm glad that MMA and universities of applied sciences share the vision of future sales and continue to strive for greatness.

Sales and Marketing Professionals' (MMA) specialist in student activity, marketing and operations, Igor Parri, has high hopes for universities of applied sciences teaching sales. The network consisting of these universities of applied sciences has been steadily growing, with interests towards including sales into degree programmes increasing.

MMA Myynnin & Markkinoinnin Ammattilaiset

Selling Education – An Example of a Successful Cooperation in Marketing

Case Engineering Conversion Programme

Mari Hartemo, *Brand Manager;* ***Sara Pietilä,*** *Marketing Planner;*
Tarja Åberg, *Project Manager at TUAS*

The region of Southwest Finland is under positive restructuring. The growth of the economy demands more skilled workforce especially on the export-driven technological sector. There is a high demand especially for engineers working in maritime cluster, construction industry, information technology and other fields of industrial sector. The demand is already there and a fast response is needed.

Turku University of Applied Sciences responded to the important challenge and established a conversion programme (in Finnish, "Insinööristä insinööriksi (AMK) -muuntokoulutus") targeted at jobseekers with a vocational college diploma in engineering as well as those with a UAS degree in engineering, with the intention to convert their engineering expertise to fit the specific areas that are highly demanded in today's labour market.

How did we manage to sell the education to the potential candidates in a very short period of time? TUAS' Brand Manager **Mari Hartemo** and Marketing Planner **Sara Pietilä** unfold the process from the perspective of marketing and Project Manager **Tarja Åberg** from the educational point of view.

Mari: I first got the information from Tarja about the education and the need to help the team with marketing in the beginning of October. In the following emails, I gave the basic information about our general marketing procedures while Tarja clarified the purpose and target group of the education. In the next phase, Tarja's team concentrated on the "product" description and Sara, who at that point had been designated as a marketing designer for the project, studied the market situation and suitable marketing channels and translated the product description into benefits that met the needs of the target group.

Tarja: When we got the go permission for the engineering studies from the Finnish Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centre), the funder, it was October 2017. The deadline for the start of the training was December 2017. We had a few months to make it happen. What is the primary interest group for the training? How to find them? How to run the whole process to be ready in time? Big questions to solve in a very short period of time.

It was obvious from the very beginning that the training concept we were launching was unique, the first time ever to run such a project.

In this sense, the pilot was extremely important for TUAS. We want to succeed, we need to succeed!

When you have a limited time scale, you need to concentrate and focus on the essentials. You need to plan and prioritize where to use your own expertise and where to use other specialists. Marketing was the first topic to solve. I took a call to Mari Hartemo, TUAS Brand Manager, and presented the challenge. We had a good discussion around the marketing topic; I immediately got the required resource from Mari's team and we started the cooperation.

Mari: McCarthy's classical 4P model states that the whole marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion) influences the success of marketing. In this case, we had a product that perfectly fits the needs of the target groups and the market demand. Price was not an issue as the education was free and the alternative cost of time was minimal due to the fastened study process. In terms of place, the working life oriented learning approach of TUAS enables students to engage themselves already during the studies with the companies demanding workforce. All these elements paved the way for successful promotion. Sara's task was to fit the marketing budget to suitable promotion channels and other marketing activities.

Sara: I quickly made a marketing plan that acted as a backbone during the following weeks. It was easy to agree with Tarja on the activities and I got a feeling that Tarja really trusted my expertise. She also commented on all the stages quickly, did not get stuck in the minor details, gave us a fair budget and fully backed me up during the whole marketing process. Furthermore, she took a very active role in promoting the education herself. We were able to start the targeted multi-channel marketing campaign in less than two weeks from Tarja's initial contact – and finished it within a month.

The students of the Engineering Conversion Programme with Tarja Åberg. Photo: Martti Komulainen.

Tarja: The cooperation with Mari and Sara was very professional. They committed themselves to the main point and the tight schedule and internalized the importance of the training for TUAS. In practice, there were no office working time schedules as the goal was to manage the marketing in order to reach the good applicants.

I was a demanding "customer" for Sara. I trusted her expertise and therefore asked for more than just to do the marketing. Sara took the role in managing the totality in communication and marketing, including external marketing that was running in parallel within different proper contacts like the Union of Professional Engineers in Finland and the public employment and business services (TE Services). They supported our marketing by making campaigns to target groups. It is of utmost importance to use the contacts and all the proper networks, different marketing channels that can support to find the potential applicants.

By the deadline, we got 84 applicants for the 40 places to fill. The students started their studies in December and now this impressively motivated and skilled group of students is in full swing. We all agree that marketing played a major role in achieving such a good result in such a short time, but it really takes two to tango. Mutual trust and appreciative cooperation create the base for a successful education product launch. Marketing is not just the first step to reach the applicants, but it is the very first step of the studies.

And it matters through the whole duration of the studies how you are contacted. Common engagement, trust, flexibility and open communication were the elements of the success in our case = professionalism.

INFOBOX: Learning Selling around the Globe

If you have wondered what kind of opportunities sales studies may offer you or if you are still not sure whether you should study sales or not, the following articles will offer you nice perspectives. Sales studies may change your life, but this may require you to leave your home country for a while and embark on an international adventure!

My Life-changing Decision – How Everything Changed within a Couple of Months

Erik Kriebel
Engineering Student at HAN University of Applied Sciences

There I was, sitting in an airplane, on my way to Finland, only to take another one to Turku the moment I arrived at Helsinki. I would never have thought that this was one of the best decisions of my life.

Let me elaborate. My name is Erik Kriebel. I study Structural Engineering in the Netherlands and I just got an offer to go study Sales and Business in Finland. I'm young, bored and especially curious about what the world can offer me, so of course I accepted the offer. Little did I know that studying sales abroad would literally change my life's course.

My study period at Turku University of Applied Sciences (TUAS) represented regular student life, which consisted of classes, studying and parties. But then something happened, something totally different from what I was used to doing all my life. There was one module that I was looking forward to all week, a module that made me feel excited about going to school. If you told me that one year ago, I would not have believed you. The Sales Semester module was so completely new, innovative and exciting that I literally asked the teacher for extra assignments and extra projects. I know that sounds geeky and maybe even a bit weird, but I was so positively overwhelmed by the quality of the course and the way the teacher handled his classes that

I just could not resist but to help him achieve something more. There is something interesting about doing something in a completely new environment.

I trained together with my peers to become the best salespeople we could be in such a short time frame and I still remember the change this module made in all of us. At the beginning of the semester, everyone was scared or at least nervous to stand in front of the class for a presentation. But doubt, fear or tension were nowhere to be found after a few days of learning from this sales module in Finland.

The best thing about it all was that I still see and feel the changes this course made in my thoughts and actions. This course and its teacher, **Timo Holopainen**, literally changed my actions, skills and attitude, or simply said, they gave me the true competence of creating a life I desire to live.

One of the assignments made us think about what we devote our time to. We had to make simple week plans, to do lists and reflect back on the weeks that went by. Then we wrote down the date and gave ourselves the assignment to look at the paper three months later. Three months have now passed and I made more money than I ever did and have a feeling of having control over my life, and it all started here.

Big achievements start with small steps, and for me it started with this module. You don't believe me? Just make the exciting decision to try it out and see for yourself. Eventually, we won't regret the things we did do, but the things we didn't do.

Kiitos!

Starting Your Internship in the US

Franziska Weitz and Willi Votava
Students at the University of Applied Sciences Aschaffenburg
Internship in Project Management at SSI Schaefer, Indianapolis (USA)

An internship in the United States is the perfect opportunity to do both, gain work experience and get to know the "American way of life". But how do you organize your internship abroad? What should you be aware of?

Describing the US in one sentence is very difficult. Only a few countries contain as many opposites as the United States. There is Los Angeles with glamorous Hollywood, VIPs and super rich people, countryside like Texas or Ohio where the people are more conservative and down to earth, and busy cities such as New York, the city that never sleeps, a city that runs one of the most important financial markets in the world. But even in that one city the opposites are present everywhere. Rich and influential people live right next to poor, homeless people on the streets in front of their houses. It's hard to combine all aspects of the so called American way of life. The only way to get a feeling for it is to step onto a plane and experience it on your own.

The Visa

Getting a visa can be very complicated if you want to do it on your own. Since internships are handled as an educational and cultural exchange, you have to apply for the "exchange visitor visa" (J-1 visa). Usually the company you are doing your internship with engages an exchange organization to handle the visa process. They give instructions for every step in the process and provide you with all necessary information.

Financial Aspects

Whether you are getting paid for your internship or not depends on the company, but there are also other possibilities to get financial support like scholarships. When planning your finances, you have to consider things like visa fees, costs for travelling, accommodation, living, recreational activities and health insurance. In some cases, companies pay for most of these costs, but since you are also there to experience the country, you have to think about additional costs, for example, for travelling in your spare time. The most important thing when it comes to money is to have a credit card. Nearly every shop accepts credit cards and sometimes you can only pay by card, for example at gas stations or parking meters. Banks are offering special cards for students, so you can get extra benefits like withdraw money without fees or additional discounts when renting a car.

Student ID Card and Driver's License

As in many other countries outside the European Union, documents like your student ID card are not accepted. To get discounts and financial benefits you should apply for an international Student ID Card, which sometimes can already be included in your credit card. In the US, your European driver's license is only valid in combination with an international driver's license. You can apply for one at your local administration office at home.

Communicating and Business Behavior

In the US, people always ask you how you feel when they say hello, which sometimes can be very strange for Europeans. But don't worry, it´s a pure phrase that simply belongs to the welcome. When you're asked "Hi, how are you?" it is not necessary to talk about your emotional state. A short "Fine, how are you?" is enough. Americans use phrases in many situations, so it can be hard to differentiate if they really care about something or it is just politeness and courtesy.

Americans like going to restaurants. If you go out with your new colleagues, do not rush into the restaurant and find a place, instead wait for the waiters to assign guests to the tables. When leaving tips in the US, a higher rate is appropriate than in Europe, because most waiters only earn their living from tips. As a rule, you should add around 15 to 20 percent. If you are in a restaurant for a meeting, do not be surprised when you seem to not really get down to business: anecdotes and small talk come first. Numbers and facts are not as important as in Europe – Americans like to talk about sports, while tricky topics such as religion and politics should be avoided.

During our stay, we visited many different parts of the US. While talking to locals, we learned a lot about American traditions and their way of life. As for every foreign country you have to prepare yourself before having a business trip or vacation. Getting to know the cultural differences and appropriate behavior is essential to do business successfully.

Franziska Weitz (2nd from left) and Willi Votava (on the right).

Sales Excellence Week 26–28 November 2018

For more information SalesEC@turkuamk.fi

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Towards next issue

The next issue of Journal of Excellence in Sales will be published in November 2018.

Wishing all our readers a great summer!