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Developing the Sales Process of a Professional Services Offering Company

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The case company in this study provides professional services in the area of IT service management. The business challenge manifested itself as scattered efforts and inconsistency in sales activities and also unbalanced level of sales at the case company. This study investigated how the case company's sales process could be improved in order to unify efforts and gain consistency on sales. Therefore, the intended outcome of the study was a re-engineered sales process.

The study was executed as a qualitative case study which included a Current State Analysis, a review of existing knowledge and formation of the solution. The Current State Analysis was conducted by interviewing the case company personnel. Also internal case company material was used to form a more valid and reliable analysis. As the case company is a professional services selling company, the concept and understanding of customer relationship management was reviewed together with sales knowledge. In addition to these, process definitions and general features were included in the revision in order to form the Conceptual Framework. Together with the Conceptual Framework and the case company needs the solution was created.

The outcome of this study is a re-engineered sales process which has been depicted as a process flow chart with separate activity explanations. The outcome also includes defined sales roles as roles cards and selected metrics. These outcomes created a framework for implementing more efficient and aligned sales activities. The proposed improvements will benefit the case company's sales efficiency and make managing the sales more transparent and aligned. In the long run, the consistency in the efforts of sales activities will hopefully result in increased sales. The outcome of the study is in line with the objective. The case company was pleased with the outcome.

Keywords	sales process, sales management, customer relationship management

Tekijä(t) Otsikko Sivumäärä Aika	Hanna Vannesluoma Myyntiprosessin kehittäminen asiantuntijapalveluja tarjoavassa yrityksessä 43 sivua + 2 liitettä 30.5.2016
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Kohdeyritys, jolle työ tehtiin, tarjoaa IT-palveluhallinnan asiantuntija- ja neuvonantopalveluja. Yrityksen liiketoimintahaasteena oli myynnin epätasaisuus, mikä ilmeni myyntiaktiviteettien hajanaisuutena sekä epäjohdonmukaisena myynnin hallintana. Työn tavoite oli tutkia ja kehittää kohdeyrityksen myyntiprosessia, jotta myynnistä saataisiin yhteneväisempää sekä hallitumpaa.

Työ toteutettiin laadullisena tapaustutkimuksena ja se sisälsi nykytila-analyysin, tutustumisen olemassa olevaan tietoon sekä ratkaisun. Nykytila-analyysi tehtiin haastattelujen sekä kohdeyrityksen sisäisäisen materiaalin avulla. Nykytila-analyysin perusteella löydettiin kohdeyrityksen vahvuudet ja heikkoudet myyntiin liittyen. Heikkouksien perusteella tutustuttiin tarpeelliseen kirjallisuuteen myynnistä, asiakashallinnasta, asiantuntijapalvelualasta sekä prosessien kehittämisestä. Olemassa olevaa tietoa hyödyntäen muodostettiin työlle uniikki viitekehys, jonka avulla ja kohdeyrityksen tarpeet huomioiden tuotettiin ratkaisu.

Ratkaisu muodostui muutamasta lopputuotoksesta. Lopputuotokset olivat paranneltu ja tarkennettu prosessikuvaus, prosessin vaihekohtaiset tehtäväkortit, myynnin roolikortit sisältäen myynnin vastuut, määritellyt myyntiprosessin mittarit sekä ehdotus seuraaviksi askeliksi. Tärkeimpänä seuraavana askeleena esitettiin kehitetyn myyntiprosessin jalkauttamista kohdeyritykseen.

Työn tulos vastasi tavoitetta. Lopputuotosten avulla myynnin tehtävät saadaan yhteneväisemmäksi ja hallitummiksi. Kohdeyritys oli tyytyväinen työhön ja totesi, että kehitetty prosessin jalkauttaminen alkaa todennäköisesti syksyllä 2016.

Avainsanat	myyntiprosessi, myynnin hallinta, asiakashallinta

Contents

List of Abbreviations

B2B	Business to Business. A short term to describe relationship type between vendor and customer which both are companies doing business.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer. The person head of the entire case company group.
COO	Chief Operating Officer.
CRM	Customer Relationship Management. A broad concept used for manage and analyze all kinds of interactions with customers through the entire customer lifecycle.
CRM tool	Customer Relationship Management Tool. A tool to support all activities related to managing customer relationships. In this study by CRM tool is reflected the case company's tool which is used for supporting sales.
IT Management	Information Technology Management. Practice used for installing and managing information technologies.
KAM	Key Account Management. Sales-oriented approach of customer relationship management.
SFA	Sales Force Automation. Integration of the front and back office to improve sales force by empowering the sales force with information and automation.
SIS	Sales Information System. System that collaborate, facilitates and processes the information in order to assist the sales process.

1 Introduction

This study was carried out for a company which provides professional consultancy services. The purpose of the study was to review and analyze the case company's already existing sales process and how it is managed in order to develop it. The need for the study was identified after the case company made a group level decision to implement a new business system including the CRM tool, which has been used for support the sales process. The study describes the study process, its methods, findings, solution and finally discusses the validity of the solution and reflects on the learning process.

1.1 Background of the Case Company

The case company group is a consultancy firm offering professional consultancy and advisory services specialized in IT Management. The case company corporation has offices in the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom. The total number of employees is approximately 150.

The Group organization is rather flat and consists more of roles within the group rather than functions. This flat organization is a known decision and created specifically to allow agility. The Group has a group management team which consists of the CEO and COO located in Sweden and each country's own Managing directors. The Managing directors are heads of their own countries. The office in Finland (hereafter referred to as the case company) is located in the Helsinki metropolitan area. There are nine consultants currently working in Finland, yet the target is to grow up to 12 employees by the end of 2016. All the employees have the responsibility in both producing customer assignments and internal operations and development.

The case company group has two principle objectives for the whole business. According to the corporate's CEO and internal material these two objectives are: "1. Generate and expand mutually profitable engagements with our clients" and "2. Build or strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with firm stakeholders (clients, our colleagues and our network)". These objectives clearly indicate the importance of the beneficial relationships and should be considered in all the operations of the company. The objectives together with the ambition to grow increases the importance of the development of the internal processes to align with the objectives.

1.2 Key Concepts

A few terms and concepts need clarification before proceeding further with the definition of the business challenge, objective, scope and outcome.

Customer relationship management, CRM, is a broad concept used for managing and analyzing all kinds of interactions with customers throughout the entire customer lifecycle. CRM includes three aspects: the culture/concept of customer based thinking, operations and activities to engage the customer centric strategies and tools to support managing these effectively and efficiently. (Hellman et al. 2005) CRM is the core of all the actions at business-to-business market, especially in the field of consultancy companies. CRM's target is to build and manage stronger relationships between the company and customer.

Customer lifecycle is an important aspect of CRM. According to Hellman et al. Customer lifecycle can be divided into four stages:

- customer acquirement
- customer onboarding
- customer engagement
- customer retaining

Companies tend to converge the lifecycle stages into processes. This means that e.g. a sales process often includes the first steps of the customer lifecycle, therefore actions regarding customer acquirement can be included in the sales process. There are variations between companies of which of the processes are aligned with which customer lifecycle stage. For example, some companies include customer acquirement and onboarding on marketing process, others on sales process and so on.

CRM process consist of all the customer facing sub-processes such as sales, marketing and contract management. The sales process is often the process to include the first step of the customer lifecycle management: customer acquirement. As mentioned before, also other steps might be included according to the company preferences, size and resources. The sales process objective is to turn prospects and sales opportunities into orders (Kaario et al. 2003).

1.3 Business Challenge

The case company's group level has made a decision to unify the group's way of working by implementing a new business system. The new system includes and affects all business support functions within the group such as finance, bookkeeping and CRM module. The current CRM module's objective has been to support sales process and management. The migration decision acted as a trigger for the realization that the sales process and management was not functioning well. To be successful in the CRM module migration the process needed to be reviewed to further reveal weaknesses and to address them.

The case company has limited resources which has required all employees' efforts in internal operations including sales and customer relationship management. However, there was no common way of channeling these efforts, which resulted as scattered and mostly memory based actions related to CRM, including sales. Simply put, the business challenge in this case study is scattered and ineffective CRM activities, related specifically to the sales process and management.

The challenge has affected the consistency of sale amounts and therefore also the amount of revenue. The business challenge has also resulted as an increased risk of a dramatic drop of revenue and loss of sales opportunities. The risk occurred as maintaining customer relationships was often forgotten, especially when the case company staff is fully utilized at customer cases.

1.4 Objective, Scope and Intended Outcome

In order to stabilize revenue and to minimize the risk of dropping sales activities, the case company recognized a need for a more systematic and common way of working. In other words, the case company needed a well-defined set of activities and systematic approach enabling consistency on the efforts. A sales process and the framework for managing it. Consequently, the objective of the case study was to develop the sales process suitable for case company’s needs. The objective was turned into a research question form in order to clarify it: What kind of sales process would fit the case company’s needs?

The case study’s scope includes a revision of the current customer relationship management activities regarding sales. In addition, the actions taken regarding customers especially after the described sales process is the focus of this study. By actions the study refers to the activities, data, roles and responsibilities related to customer relationship management and sales. Therefore, an intended outcome of the case study is a re-engineered sales process description and suggestions for next steps.

The case company will benefit from this study by having clear visibility and direction of the actions taken in sales. Additional benefits include a more systematic way of working, clear roles and responsibilities and metrics related to the sales process. These outcomes were also thought to be beneficial to even out the revenue in a long run.

2 Method and Material

This section begins with the description of the research approach used in this study and why the approach was selected. The second sub section describes the used research design. The third sub section goes deeper into the collection and analyzing methods of the data used in this study. Finally, the last subsection discusses the validity and reliability concerning the method and materials used in this case study.

2.1 Research Approach

This thesis was conducted as a qualitative case study research. A case study research is a research method where an individual such as a group, an organization, a process, etc. is investigated. A case study's target is to find a solution on a research question regarding the selected individual. Case study research seeks to find the best possible answer to the research question. In order to find the best possible answer, there is a need to find variety of evidence related to the case study. By evaluating and analyzing the found evidence the answer to the research question can be formed. (Gillham 2010)

In addition to any theoretical research a case study does not begin with theory and literature review, instead it begins with a contextual understanding. It is essential to understand the context of the current challenge regarding the individual. This enables finding the suitable existing literature for the specific research. Reviewing existing literature in this order makes finding an answer for the research question more likely. (Gillham 2010)

Case study research is a qualitative rather than quantitative method. It means that the research is descriptive and based on conclusions whereas in quantitative research statistics and mathematical content matters more. The qualitative method enables focusing on understanding the situation and meaning of the evidence. This means that with qualitative methods it is possible to see the situation and help to realize viable explanations for it. Although qualitative methods are primary in case study research, quantitative methods can and usually are used too. There is a need to collect all the case study evidence as data into the case study data collection. (Gillham 2010)

According to Gillham (2010), a case study is a main method which includes different sub methods. These sub methods are often used for data collection such as interviews, record analysis, observations and documents. These different collecting methods used for the same research question are known as multi-method approach. (Gillham 2010)

The case study research method was selected for this thesis as a research method because the objective was to investigate a set of actions (individual) of the case company. In order to do so multiple evidence needed to be gathered and analyzed. In addition, the qualitative method enabled analyzing and finding explanations for the collected data and evidence. The case study method also enabled finding the best solution for the study's research question in the light of conducting and evaluating evidence of the individuals.

2.2 Research Design

This section describes the research design which illustrates the actual flow of this study. Figure 1 shows the research design of this case study.

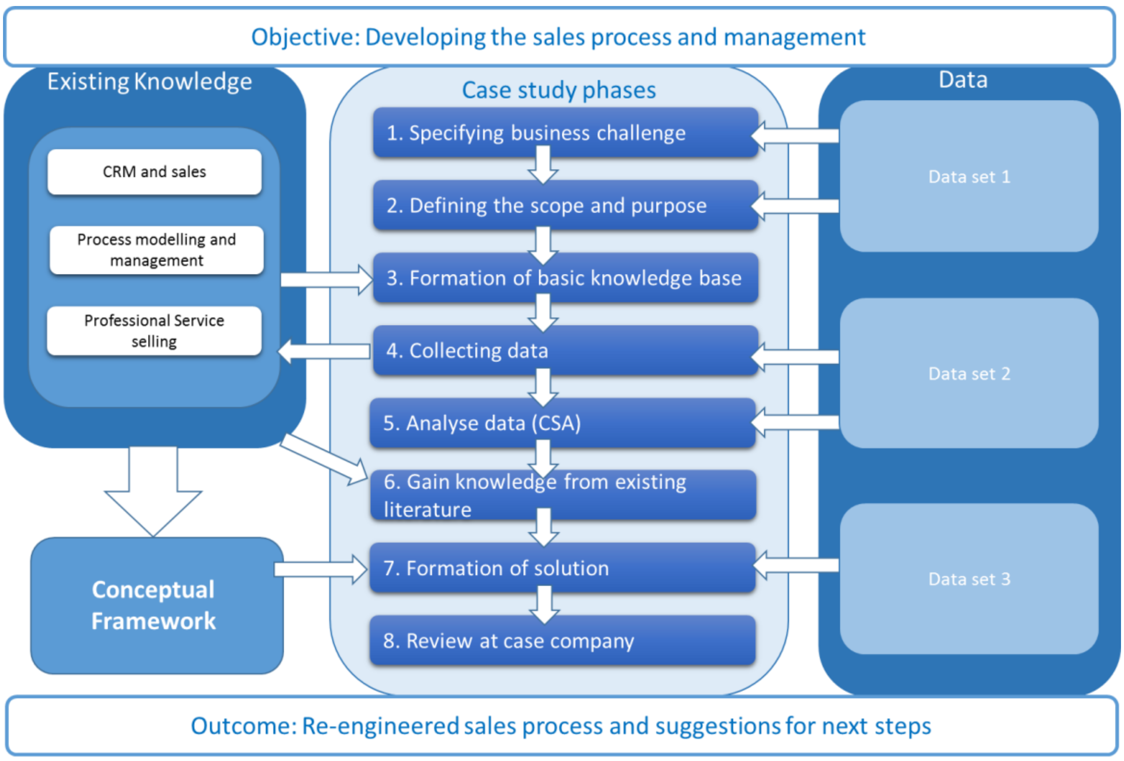

Figure 1. Research design for the case study.

As seen in Figure 1, the key elements include the target on the top, existing knowledge on the left, case study phases in the middle, used data on right and finally the outcome of the study at the bottom.

The case study's first step was to set the target: developing the sales process and management at the case company. After the target was clear, the business challenge, scope and purpose were specified. These were defined based on data set 1 at the case company, which included a discussion with the case company's head of sales and marketing and email exchange with Managing Director. After the object, scope and intended outcome became clear, it was feasible to begin to form a basic knowledge on concepts like customer relationship management, sales and their interrelations, since the subjects were relatively unknown for the researcher. With the gained basic knowledge, in the form of key concepts, the data collection structure was created: the selection of people to interview and the interview questions (see Appendix 1) were defined. In addition, other methods for gathering data were selected such as case company internal documents.

In order to know which subjects were in need of deeper understanding, an analysis of the current state was done. Data set 2 was used to conduct a Current State Analysis of the sales process and management at the case company in 2016. The Current State Analysis revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the current actions related to customer relationship management in sales, sales process and its management. Based on the found weaknesses, existing knowledge was reviewed. The revision of existing knowledge enabled the formation of the Conceptual Framework for the case study. This unique framework was utilized in the formation of the solution: re-engineering of the sales process and next step suggestions. The solution was reviewed and approved together with the case company's Senior Manager, head of sales and marketing. Finally, as an outcome of the study, the re-engineered sales process and management description and suggestions for next steps were created and described.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The material used in this case study consisted of various sources of data. Table 1 shows the data used in this case study, its sources and what the data was used for.

Table 1. Data Sources and Usage

Data:	Data source:	Used for:
Data set 1	Intro session with Senior Manager, Head of Sales and Marketing	Defining target, scope and outcome
	Emails with SM and Managing Director	
Data set 2	Case company internal material from Managing director and case company internal site	Current State Analysis of customer relationship management at case company
	Interviews with case company employees and managing director	
	Discussions with SM, Head of sales and marketing	
	Current CRM tool & documentation	
	Interview with the group CEO	
Data set 3	Interviews with the group CEO and some of the global management team individuals	Solution proposal

	Interviews with case company employees and managing director	
	Case company internal material from Managing director and case company internal site	

The first set of data included an interview of the case company head of sales and marketing. The Head of sales and marketing was selected as the respondent, because he had the most interest and knowledge towards issues related to sales and marketing, the CRM tool and also customer relationship management. The initial scope of the study was realized and defined in the intro session. In order to properly define and scope the study, emails were exchanged after the intro session with both the Head of sales and marketing and Managing director. This data was used to clarify the case study objective, scope and outcome further.

The second set of data included interviews, current tool and documentation, internal material and discussions with the Head of sales and marketing. This data set was used as evidence for the Current State Analysis. Interviews were conducted to all the staff in Finland and the CEO of the case company group to gain as real a picture of the current state as possible. To gain an even more realistic picture additional data such as related internal documents including sales process descriptions and instructions were used. The data also included the used CRM tool and the content found within.

The third set of data was used to propose a solution. Data set 3 included global management team interviews in order to find out the needs and vision of CRM at the case company group level. The interview respondents included the group CEO, Group Head of Sales and Group Head of Insights. The selection of respondents was made together with the Head of Sales and Marketing at the case company. The selection was based on the level of expertise and the level of insight to the topic to gain as accurate an understanding as possible.

2.4 Validity and Reliability Discussion

When conducting a case study, validity and reliability are one of the most important factors to consider. Jorma Kananen states that validity and reliability are much difficult to consider in a qualitative research than quantitative, since qualitative interacts mostly with humans as objectives. Quantitative research relies on systematic and rationality of data and randomness is often an exception. Qualitative research relies on humans' feelings and thinking where randomness is common. (Kananen 2011)

In qualitative research reliability and validity means the study's credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These factors can be considered by various ways such as:

- documenting, especially reasons and grounds behind decisions
- familiarizing with different data collecting methods in advance
- systematic and reasoned interpreting (Kananen 2011)

In this case study both reliability and validity were considered from the planning phase. All the actions, reasoning and data collection were documented. Also the data collection methods were studied beforehand and selected keeping in mind the reliability. Both reliability and validity were also kept in mind when making interpretations during Current State Analysis and forming the solution.

3 The Current State of the CRM and Sales Process at the Case Company

This chapter describes the current state of customer relationship management with the focus on the sales process at the case company in 2016. The actions related to customers, data, roles and responsibilities and the management of the process were investigated. This approach enabled a comprehensive investigation of the current state of the sales process and CRM at the case company.

After a comprehensive analysis it was feasible to point out the strengths and weaknesses of current sales process and its management. Revealing the weaknesses enabled the selection of viable focus areas for development. This enabled selecting the relevant existing literature that helped form the solution proposal for the problem.

In the first subsection the orientation and the mindset in both group and local level are described based on the interviews of the group CEO and Finland’s Managing Director. Section 3.2 dives into the details of the current actions on the overall CRM, and more precisely, the sales process at the case company. In the sub-sections of section 3.2 parts of the sales process are separately analyzed. Thereafter, the current process management and related issues are discussed. Finally, the last section 3.4 outlines the key findings of the current state as strengths and weaknesses of the sales process and also its component’s weaknesses in a form of a fish bone diagram.

3.1 Customer Relationship Management Orientation

According to the CEO of the case company group, the first step of the CRM is to understand that CRM is not a tool, but rather the case company culture. Secondly the two objectives of the case company group should be in mind continuously: delivering good value and continue building relationships both externally and internally (Case company internal material, 2014.) In order to reach these objectives there is usually a need for processes and tools, however the CEO thought it is essential to remember that processes and tools cannot function without a strategy and objectives. In another words, strategy and objectives can exist without processes and tools. Although the processes and tools are not the initial objective, the need for a sales process has been recognized and it has been described at the case company.

Based on the interviews with the staff in Finland, it became clear that Finland' personnel had a much more practical approach to customer relationship management. When asked about the CRM strategy most respondents stated that if there is one, they have not seen or heard about it. After thinking about it for a while the answers bent towards the actions with the CRM tool. Regardless of the tool centric mindset, all of the respondents did seem to understand the importance of customer relationship management.

Finland's Managing director and Head of sales and marketing knew the most, telling that there is a great amount of customer data which has been saved into an information system (CRM tool) based on the prospects of the potential. The most feasible customers were recognized as key accounts and managed accordingly, although the operations of key account management had not yet been fully implemented at the case company. Case company internal documents include templates and material regarding the key accounts, but these had not been fully utilized in Finland. These discussions pointed to the direction of customer segmentation rather than actual strategy of customer relationship management.

Comparing the interview results between the CEO and the Finnish personnel, a feeling arose that the strategy and the objective of the customer relationship and company's objectives had not been fully understood, realized, adopted or in worst case scenario had been ignored completely.

3.2 Sales Process of the Case Company

As introduced in the section 1.2 CRM process includes sub-processes. When considering the case company's processes to the CRM process, there is only one process defined and described at the case company: the sales process. There are activities made regarding the other sub-processes, but due to the size of the resources there has not been a need to define and describe them further.

Sales is the most important part of customer relationship management at the case company, since it is the only process defined and includes the first two to three stages of the customer lifecycle. The case company group has described its sales process according to Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Case company sales process (case company internal material, 2014.)

The process begins with exploring the company's own network and by identifying opportunities. When an opportunity is found, its needs and the buyer within must be identified. Then the offer proposal, suitable for the customer's needs, is presented preferably to the buyer at customer's end. The offer proposed is negotiable to make sure the most suitable deal for both parties is found. After the final offer, the deal gets a sign-off and the actual work begins. The case company has not described further actions on sales documents. In addition, the employee interview results indicated that there were no structured actions taken in reality either.

According to the employee interviews, the sales process mostly functions according to the described sales process. However, after the sign-off which means beginning of an assignment, there has been hardly any actions taken except conducting the assignment. Usually before the end of the initial assignment, an additional offer is made and proposed to the customer. Making the second offer has sometimes been forgotten. Also follow-ups after the assignments are not appointed to anyone and are done only if remembered.

The sales process described in Figure 2 focuses on new customers. For current customers the case company has implemented account management on the group level. An internal account management document describes that the purpose of account management is "to maintain sustainable mutually beneficial customer relationships". This was planned to be done by focusing on segmenting customers with the buying potential and separately plan actions to be taken with each of those customers. Based on the discussions with the Head of sales and marketing, it was realized that account management mainly applied to key accounts. Discussions with the Head of sales and marketing also revealed that account management has been currently defined and implemented at Sweden and UK. For Finland, account management will be defined and properly implemented later during 2016.

All in all, the employee interview results indicated that the described steps in the sales process are taken. However, the steps after are undefined, unstructured, done by only a few individuals and based on memory. In addition, the interview respondents acknowledged that the main pain point of the sales process is closing the deal. Most respondents thought that ineffective deal closing is strongly connected to the quality in the previous step, developing a compelling offer. There were only guesses why these two steps were the pain points, because there is no feedback from the customers nor analysis done after a lost assignment. In other words, the case company lacks structured after sales actions. This conclusion is supported by lack of documentation and guidelines after the final step of the current sales process.

3.2.1 Customer and Sales Opportunity Information

The case company has a tool to support the processes, but the tool usage has decreased over time. The CRM tool is the main source of customer related information. The case company’s internal sales document stated that “Contact information centrally is ever so valuable”. Contact information is the most used data that is collected and saved about the customers at the case company.

Each time a new lead or opportunity is recognized the lead contact information is saved into the CRM tool. Based on the discussions with the Head of sales and marketing, the data goes through a certain pattern. Firstly, the contact information and company are added, then the new sales opportunity can be added. Secondly, the crucial information on an opportunity are added. The most crucial information includes the customer name, opportunity level, probability estimate, estimated amount of the opportunity and brief description of the opportunity. Figure 3 describes each opportunity level and probabilities.

Stage	Details
Identified	Prospectual with IT Services, worth following and contacting
Lead	Recognizing need e.g. missing service desk or starting a sourcing project. To be contacted for relevant meeting with 2-3 case company people
Opportunity	Meeting agreed/held, understanding of customer need, something to propose. Close in this stage if not valid for offer
Proposal	Actual offer with prices made
Close	Win, loss, duplicate, reject

Propability	Details
10%	Opportunity negotiation initiated, need recognized and forwarding to proposal. If offer made, response has been negative/neutral response, no comment after proposal presentation, put on hold, but not closed yet
30%	Opportunity discussion held, need understood, requires iterations but is forwarding to proposal/offer presentation. If offer has been made, delayed handling or requirement for fine-tuning of proposal
50%	Customer situation recognized, common understanding of the need, time for presentation of proposal agreed. If offer has been made, forwarded to board decision but no view to result/schedule or uncertain
80%	Actual offer with process made, accepted by customer and moved to decision making with good probability.
100%	Closed win

Figure 3. Opportunity levels and probability definitions. (Case company internal material, 2013.)

According to the employee interview results and the content of the CRM tool, severe gaps in the way of adding, saving and updating customer data were found. Some respondents said they had never added any data. Others said that they had done something previously, but not engaged in any action recently. Mainly two people, the Head of sales and marketing and the Managing director, had taken the most actions regarding saving the customer data into the CRM tool.

3.2.2 CRM Tool

The CRM tool used at the case company consists of work spaces that can be created according to company needs. Current work spaces at the case company are: Employee network, intranet, marketing CRM, project management and sales management. The only work space currently in use is the case company CRM. The workspaces consist of different applications which can be added to the workspace according to the needs of the company. The only currently used parts within the CRM module are applications: contacts, company and sales.

Based on investigations made on the CRM tool, it was discovered that many opportunities and functionalities are available. Not only functionalities regarding customer management but also internal business supporting functions. Other functions than CRM, have not been utilized at the case company, which is why the entity is referred to as CRM tool at the case company.

Even though there is a CRM tool, the interview results strongly indicated that it is not in frequent use. As mentioned earlier, mainly two people are using the tool at the Helsinki office. All the respondents stated that currently the most frequent users are the Managing director and the Head of sales and marketing. Regardless of the low level of use, the respondents did realize the importance and the benefits of the proper tool usage. When asked about the reasons, common answers included hurry, lack of interest and forgetting in addition to the following:

- no one appointed responsible for the tool
- old data
- no motivation factors
- mainly used as a contact list
- missing some functionalities e.g. following an assignment after closed win.

The list of pain points above, are most probably a result of lack of usage and motivation to use. All the mentioned pain points make forgetting easy, especially when in a hurry to do other work.

3.3 Management of Sales Process and CRM

Due to the small size of the case company and to the target of having all employees working 100% for customers, there is not enough resources to appoint full time workers only on internal functions. This means that even though the case company has e.g. a Head of sales and marketing appointed, the person cannot only focus on sales and marketing, but has to also conduct services to customers too. The limited resource seems to be the problem behind the responsibility and ownership issues, regarding the Managing director.

CRM at the case company is mainly described by the sales process. The management of both is an essential part of efficient and effective execution of both. Based on the interviews it became apparent that there is no evidence of management of the CRM or sales process. One crucial part in order to evaluate how the processes are functioning is measurement, yet there was no evidence nor documentation of any evaluation criteria of CRM or sales process. However, as the company measures the financials there is sales amount metrics in the financial side of the case company. The case company does have a rewarding system for successful sales. Employees have a basic salary base and additional compensation if an employee has been working on a customer project and charges the customer.

Another part of management of the process is valid documentation and information sharing. There is some documentation related to the CRM and sales process. These documents include sales process, strategy one slider, tool documentation and account management and have been used as a basis for the study. Regarding the CRM there is a sales process, but no other documentation e.g. how to handle the last two customer lifecycle stages: customer engagement and retaining.

The availability of the documentation is usually on a satisfactory level, since most documents are found in the case company SharePoint. However, this is not the case all the time. For example, the tool documents were difficult to access. After many requests and multiple attempts to find instructions and guidelines for the tool, the documents were found. However, these documents are not found from the case company's internal site, but from an employee.

Information related to sales process execution is shared through sales training. Training is done by a case company employee appointed in Sweden. There is no training calendar available, so there is no training knowledge available without contacting the people in charge of the training.

The responsibilities related to sales and CRM did not seem to be clear across the case company. The results from the interviews varied when asked about roles and responsibilities regarding sales and customer relationship management. Some respondents said that the Head of sales and marketing is the main responsible of the whole customer relationship management. Others said it is the Managing director, as he is responsible for all the operations in Finland.

It became clear that even if there is someone appointed to be in charge, the person's area of responsibility was unclear. This is especially true regarding the ownership of the sales process and CRM. All respondents generally knew that everyone had the responsibility of looking out for opportunities and being involved in every step of the sales process, though not all admitted to doing so. Based on these statements it seems there was much confusion of who is responsible and for what and moreover whether these responsibilities are actually considered.

Regardless of the unclear ownership of the CRM and sales process, there is a mutual understanding that all the customer meetings are done in pairs. The pair going to the first meeting has the main responsibility for the whole assignment. Therefore, an unwritten and undefined responsibility for curtain customer relationships and customers lays on the employee(s) first in contact towards that customer. Account management's scope includes assigning a specific person responsible for each customer, however as account management has not yet been implemented in Finland, it is not clear who these people are currently. All in all, it seems that some responsibilities are assigned, but it is not done in a structured way nor is there any documentation of it.

3.4 Key Findings from the Current State of CRM

Based on all the data collected and analyzed above, the following action flow picture, Figure 4, was made. Figure 4 has the customer relationship activities within the sales process described. With the current activities it was able to discover the strengths and weakness of the current state in light of the case company's two objectives. It would have been difficult to gain any overall view of the current situation without an overall picture as seen in Figure 4.

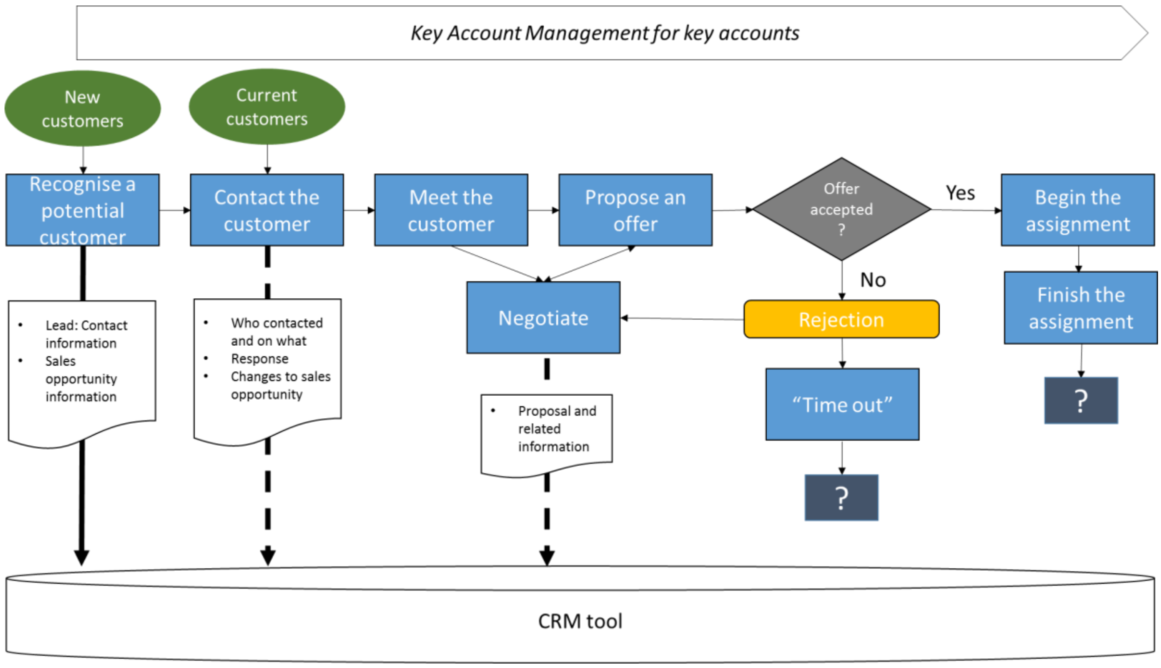

Figure 4. Current CRM Activities on the Sales Process.

Figure 4 describes the sales process from the customer relationship management view. This was done in order to reveal the actions related to CRM in order to reflect the process against the company's two main objectives: generating and building profitable engagements with our clients and to build and strengthen beneficial relationships with stakeholders.

In Figure 4, the customer related actions are in rectangular boxes, customers in eclipses, data in datasheet shapes and the CRM tool is on the bottom. The dotted line shows the data that is only sometimes saved into the tool and the solid line shows the data saved into the tool most likely each time. At the top, there is key account management which could be started from almost in the beginning, but it is marked in italic, since its concept will be implemented to Finland later.

The two question marks represent the lack of after sales or the last customer lifecycle stage, customer retaining. The question marks were the part of the current state which were stated as the most scattered and uneven points of action. These are the weaknesses of the overall sales process regarding the CRM. In addition, the management of the sales process was in a rather poor condition. The process lacks the owner and the entire process evaluation and metrics are missing. All in all, the overall situation has two aspects to consider. Firstly, the actual process and its weaknesses and secondly, the process management part and its weaknesses.

The strengths of the process lay within the first half of the process. All the elements support each other from the beginning to around the half way of the process. One of the biggest strengths is that the personnel is very process and tool oriented, which indicates that the understanding the need for processes is known. Table 2 below summaries the strengths and weaknesses of the current state of the CRM's sales process.

Table 2. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Sales Process.

Strengths	Weaknesses

• Initially when conducting sales process actions, tool and data are supporting each other
• Sales process is recognized and the steps are done accordingly
• Recognized need for account management and initial steps towards it
• Very process and tool oriented staff
	• Gaps in truly understanding CRMs importance (too practical approach)
	• Scattered actions, especially after the described sales process (the question marks in figure 5)
	• Lack of motivation of the tool usage
	• Lack of sales process management
	    • Divided responsibility
	    • Vague ownership
	    • Lack of monitoring
	    • Lack of measurement
	    • Inefficient information sharing

Weaknesses can be further investigated with a root cause diagram also known as a fish bone diagram, seen below in Figure 5.

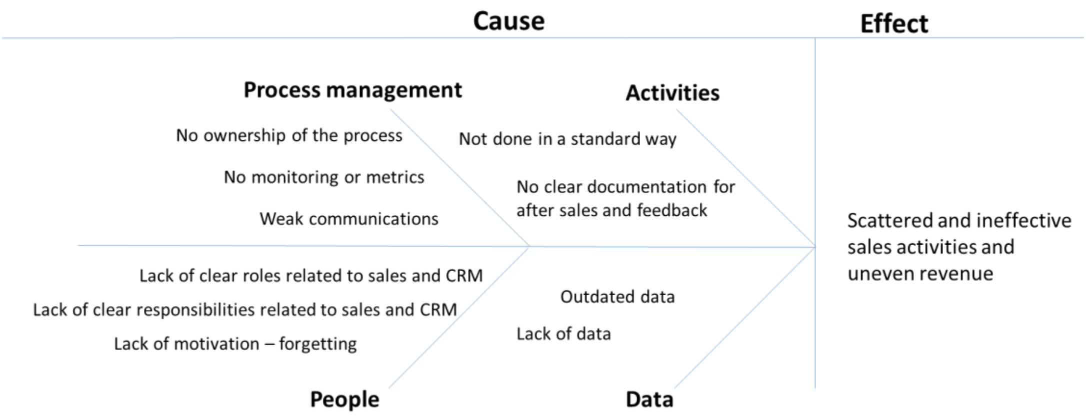

Figure 5. Root cause diagram of the Sales Process' Weaknesses.

The fishbone diagram provides an overall view of the different element's weaknesses that all together cause scattered and ineffective sales activities. The weaknesses on the fishbone, i.e. process management, activities, people and data were considered to be the most critical factors causing ineffectiveness of the sales at the case company. By defining activities, roles and responsibilities the process execution can become more effective. Thereafter other weaknesses can be more easily solved. When there is clear understanding of who does and what other aspects such as improving the performance of the process can be tackled.

Process management done correctly enables monitoring, evaluating and motivating aspects which can result in decreasing the effect of other weaknesses later too. As for the poor performance regarding the current sales process third step, developing a compelling offer, it is out of the scope of this study. It was excluded from the scope, because it is believed to be improved as a result from accurate management of the sales process.

Based on the weaknesses revealed by the Current State Analysis, the next section discusses existing knowledge on sales, CRM, professional service offering field and basic process characteristics.

4 Existing Knowledge Review of Sales and CRM within Professional Services Offering Companies

This section of the case study describes existing knowledge on sales process, in particular from the CRM point of view and on process activities, roles, responsibilities, CRM tool and data. These topics were selected, since they were considered the most important aspects to be developed according to the Current State Analysis made (see section 3.4).

The overview of the relationship between customer relationship management and sales process within a professional services offering company concept is viewed in section 4.1. The overview will further discuss the key concepts of CRM and sales which were introduced in section 1.2. It is needed, since the company's core is its relationships internally and externally.

In sub-section 4.2, the sales process and its elements are discussed further. The section also discusses the three core parts of the process: people, data and tool. In addition, also the management of the process is reviewed. These topics were selected, since they had weaknesses according to the Current State Analysis.

Section 4.3 reviews process modelling. It was considered to be important, since the process needed partial re-engineering. All the above mentioned knowledge will be then used to form the Conceptual Framework for re-engineering the CRM sales process for the case company. The Conceptual Framework will be described in section 4.4.

4.1 CRM and Sales in Professional Services Offering Company

The heading includes three big concepts: CRM, sales and professional services. These all are strongly connected, which is why all of them and their relationships need to be explained. In addition to the key concepts discussed in section 1.2, this section will focus on the aspect of professional services offering companies CRM and sales.

Customer relationship management includes but is not restricted to marketing, sales, and customer service processes. Figure 6 below shows an example of the customer relationship management process.

Figure 6. An example of a customer relationship management process.

The CRM process depicted in Figure 6 presents the mostly recognized subsections in the process. These include marketing, sales, support, contract management, customer service and feedback management. With a CRM process and the sub-processes within, companies are enable to recognize, segment and offer customers the right products and services, as well as understand customer behavior to act accordingly.

Jorma Sipilä (1998) states that professional services core format is advice. Advice is given in order to resolve the customer's complicated problems and to create something new within the customer's surroundings. In the same vain, Vahvaselkä (2004) notes that professional services offering company sells know-how. In addition, Vahvaselkä states that professional service is a service in the form of knowledge that creates value for the customer. (Vahvaselkä 2004)

Understanding of the customer relationship is a core success factor of a professional services offering company. The whole business is based on customer relationships. In best case scenario, the customer relationship lasts for a lifetime and is mutually beneficial. In worst case scenario, it is only a onetime experience, leaving a negative memory for a lifetime. (Sipilä 1998)

The importance of the customer relationship is also considered in Vahvaselkä's argument on the facts that influence the decision of the buyers of professional services. Initially the decision to buy these services is based on the company's regonizability, image, quality and price of the service. The final decision includes also the aspects of providing company's previous experience, references, sellers (or professionals) persona and relationship preferences. (Vahvaselkä 2004)

Various literature has defined CRM more or less similarly as integration of technologies and business processes to satisfy customer needs in all interaction with the customer. (Donaldson 2007.) In contrast, Ala-mutka et al. define CRM as a business strategy for selection and management of customers. CRM requires focused marketing, effective sales and optimized business processes to support and compliment the customer centric business model and culture. CRM includes the knowledge about the customer and the acquisition, analysis and use of that knowledge. One of the biggest parts of CRM is sales activities, since during sales most customer facing activities or touch points occur. (Donaldson 2007, Ala-mutka et al. 2004)

According to Ala-mutka et al., a customer centric business model includes six divisions: customer strategy, operating models, business processes, information technologies and management, strategy monitoring and control and customer and market knowledge. Customer strategy is used for segmentation, which are used in customer management planning. Strategy is converted into operating models which are procedures for specific customer segments. Operating models include the way of interacting with customers. Business processes enable the physical flow of service offering and cash flows of the business. (Ala-mutka et al. 2004)

All the above mentioned activities and strategies are managed with customer information. Information technology provides help in the storing and sharing of the information. Strategy monitoring and control views how the strategy is fulfilled. By the customer and market knowledge is meant that the whole CRM is related on those two aspects. (Ala-mutka et al. 2004)

The six divisions exclude improvement aspect which is the reason why Ala-mutka et al. has introduced a “waterfall” of customer centric development of business which begins with the knowledge of market and customer and ends with management of change. The systematic steps are:

(1) Market and customer knowledge

(2) Customer strategy

(3) Operating models

(4) Business processes

(5) Information management

(6) Monitor and control

(7) Change management. (Ala-mutka et al. 2004)

CRM includes all the aspects related to customers and sales and the sales process is a rather big part of it. Sales can and are viewed separately from CRM thus it should be considered at all times especially in professional offering services where the customer relationship is a fundamental part of the company.

4.2 Sales Process

Kaisa Hernberg (2013) defines sales as being interaction between the buyer and seller. In addition, according to her, selling refers to a process, where one party actively interferes with another in order to reach a specific objective. The actual sales process is a sequence of operations whose purpose is to reach a business transaction. The sales process can be divided into separate steps. Figure 7 describes the steps of two different sales processes.

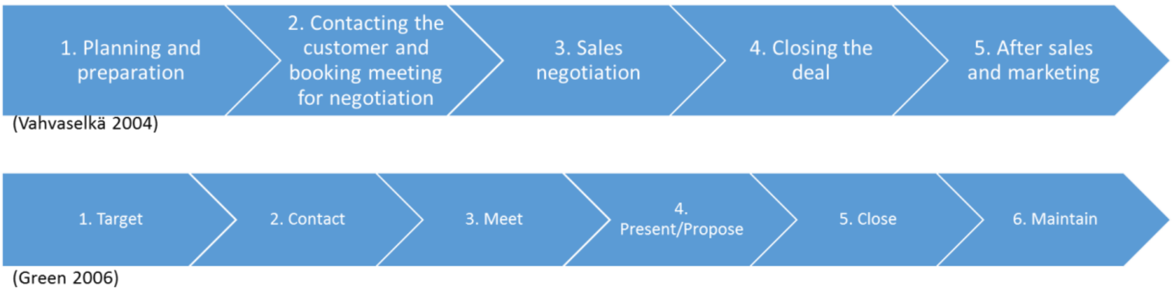

Figure 7. Sales process steps (Vahvaselkä 2004 and Green 2006)

Both Vahvaselkä and Green include closure in the second last step. This step might end with either customer accepting the offer or declining it. If customer declines the offer, Vahvaselkä strongly recommends to clarify the real reason behind the rejection. If the reason behind the rejection is based on a misunderstanding, the benefits of the services should be revised. In addition, for the summary of benefits Vahvaselkä suggests to aim at something positive.

According to the both examples in Figure 7, the last step of the sales process include some after sales or marketing actions. These actions should be additional sales, evaluating current needs and offering services accordingly, making the customer feel cared for, confirm the customer satisfaction and/or gain feedback, providing information on new offerings and regular nurturing of the customer contacts. (Vahvaselkä 2004)

In addition, Bill Donaldson has divided follow-up actions into three parts in his book Sales Management *Principles, Process and Practice*. These sections include activities in customer service, customer satisfaction and customer referral. Customer service includes proper billing, training of customer and needed installations. The satisfaction of the customer is assured with proper handling of complaints and periodical checking in of the customer and reassuring that the offered services were as expected. Referral is the opportunity to make additional sales and it is done by asking for new sales leads from the customer. (Donaldson 2007)

Gaining a long and beneficial customer relationship requires active contacting and nurturing of the customer. This should be done by both sales individuals and the whole selling company towards the customer and the whole customer's contact interface. Maintaining the relationship between these entities requires comprehensive understanding of marketing and sharing of necessary information between all stakeholders. (Vahvaselkä 2004)

The concept of account management and key account management (KAM) enables companies to improve the relationship quality between the supplier and customer. KAM is a sales-oriented approach of customer relationship management and is based on customer relationship instead of transactional selling. The basic concept of KAM is to decide its key customers and those accounts potential, make a plan for the relationship building with the right resources and manage the relationship with the customer continuously over time. (Donaldson 2007)

4.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The sales persons in a professional services offering company are more or less the professionals, regardless of their own preferences. Professionals sell their knowledge and know-how either by being responsible for specific customer relationships or by being included in the sales negotiations as additional resource for sales personnel or as their support and help. (Vahvaselkä 2004)

According to Vahvaselkä there are four key aspects for successful professional selling:

- real customer centricity

- technical knowledge
- sales know-how and abilities
- social skills.

A real customer centric way of thinking is a basic requirement of all organization's operations and processes. The customer is the core of sales too, by having actual interest towards customer's needs, hopes and insights and further develop accordingly. All that can be achieved with a customer relationship is based on the amount of trust the customer has on the providing party. Gaining customer's trust requires technical knowledge. However, knowledge is not enough. The professional has to have a result oriented and motivated attitude. In addition, there is a strong need for social skills, since finding a solution for the customer's problem requires the ability to listen and ask the right questions. (Vahvaselkä 2004)

According to Kaario et al. (2003) defining the roles and their responsibilities are required when defining the sales process. The people forming the sales team has the responsibility to follow the defined company way by knowing who is responsible and for what. Kaario et al, continue that all the processes do not need to be organized with formal structures, however, the process responsibilities and clearly defined process roles are needed. (Kaario et al. 2003)

When the responsibilities have been allocated the role and individual activities are needed to assessed. This is done in order to check that responsibilities defined for each activity are sufficient and that each role has suitable responsibilities. (Kaario et al 2004)

4.2.2 Tool and Information to Support the Process

Traditionally tools and systems have been considered to be a media for storing and sharing information. However, tools should be rather considered as common workspaces which catalyzes organizational learning. Organizational learning is possible when individual's knowledge on the customers are transferred into the common workspace. (Kaario et al 2003)

In the same vain, Kumar et al. in their book Customer relationship management, *Concept, Strategy, Tools* point out the importance of the sales personnel's information for companies. They argue that the company “must have the tools to both access up-to-date field information and provide this information to various domains of the business”. (Kumar et al. 2012)

Hellman et al. list four crucial requirements for usable information: correctness and timeliness, clear information determination, customer information integration abilities and transparency and dynamic usage. These elements are important since they enable the information being valid and usable for systems. The correctness of the information also encourages the tool usage. (Hellman et al. 2005)

Tools that are required for the sales process within a company can be defined only after the sales process phases and the most important milestones and outcomes have been defined. Tools are used to carry out the sales process, however when designing tools for the process support, the value to the sales person should be remembered at all times. In addition to only report creating, tool usage should include other benefits too. If the benefits of the tool usage are not clear for the sales personnel, usage level of the tool might remain low. In order to further improve the usage of the tool, the utilization process should be defined. By the process activities related to the tool usage are linked and tool comes part of daily work. (Kaario et al 2003)

As explained in section 4.1, sales is a major part of CRM, which is why CRM systems also include tools for managing sales activities. Sales related tool modules, part of the CRM tools, are known as SIS and SFA. SIS is referred to when talking about technologies that collaborate, facilitate and process the information in order to assist the sales process. SFA on the other hand is integration of the front and back office to improve the sales force by empowering the sales force with information. SFA provides information related to customers like orders, deliveries, invoices and all business between the supplier and customer whereas SIS offers mainly sales reporting and analysis. (Donaldson 2007)

4.2.3 Sales Management and Metrics

When talking about management the most common features mentioned are monitoring and measurement. However, Charles H. Green in his book True based selling *Using Customer Focus and Collaboration to Build Long-term Relationships* has a different point of view on management:

> We all have heard the phrase if you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Most managers accept it uncritically, and many believe it passionately. But it's not true. There are lots of ways to manage – values, personal example, praise, fear, threats, inspiration, team creation, message alignment – which doesn't require measurement to be effective. (Green 2006)

Green suggests that measurement is not the only way to manage, yet it is a very common way of doing so. In the same vain, Kaario et al. state that the sales function performance can be evaluated in two ways, by assessing the sales person's competence and actions and by measuring the business results of sales activities. (Kaario et al. 2003)

Donaldson has introduced three aspects for sales management including a clear definition of selling, the activities in form of tasks that the sales personnel must conduct and sales management responsibilities. Donaldson introduces a six-stage planned approach for evaluation of sales performance and evaluation of salespeople. These steps include:

(1) Clarifying sales objectives

(2) Specifying sales tasks to achieve sales objectives

(3) Writing, or rewriting, a job description with key and secondary tasks

(4) Establishing suitable evaluation measures

(5) Involving salespeople

(6) Taking action. (Donaldson 2007)

Steps 1 to 4 are self-explanatory, those steps need to be defined and described before moving on. Step 4 needs more investigation, as there are many measurements available in the literature. Schnerrer introduces a basic metrics for sales force in the paper *Effect Solution Transition on Steering the Sales Force: For New Marketing and Sales Metrics*. The following metrics introduced are basic sales related metrics. These basic metrics are measuring the financial results of sales. (Schnerrer 2014)

- Sales Quota Achieved
- Number of New Customers

- Number of Sales Closings
- Average Gross Profit Per Customer
- Sales Expence to Total Sales
- CSP – Cost Per Sales (Schnerrer 2014)

In addition to these basic metrics, Kaario et al. have introduced a table with different category sales metrics. The metrics helps to measure the planned activities and process efficiency level. These metrics are not restricted only to financial results, thus there is also those metrics included. The other categories are non-financial results' metrics, sales efficiency metrics and sales activity measures. Table 3 shows the sales metrics that Kaario et al. have collected into their book *Selling Value*, with the categories shown on the left. (Kaario et al. 2003)

Table 3. Summary of metrics for measuring the value to the provider. (Kaario et al. 2003)

	Measure	Unit	Per sales unit	Per sales person or team	Per customer segment or group	Per customer
Results – financial	Sales volume	€	x	x	x	x
	Discounts	%	x	x	x	x
	Profitability – sales margin – gross margin – operating profit – profit contribution – EBITDA – net profit	€, %	x	(x)	x	(x)
	Capital turnover – receivables (net) – inventories	Days, €	x		x	x
	Cash flow	€	x	(x)	x	x
	EVA	€, %	x		(x)	(x)
	Customer equity					
Results – non-financial	Market/customer share	%	x	(x)	x	x
	Customer retention/loyalty	%	x		x	
	Customer satisfaction	Index	x	(x)	x	x
Efficiency	Cost of sales	%, €	x		x	(x)
	Length of sales cycle	Days, months	x	(x)	x	(x)
	Hit-rate	%	x	x	x	x
Activity	Customer visits	Number	x	x	x	x
	Proposals made	Number	x	x	x	x

Although Kaario et al.’s summary of metrics introduces quite a few metrics, they also suggest keeping selecting the measures simple. Too many metrics might make managing the sales too difficult. Metrics selected should be the kind that sales people can affect to increase motivation. In addition, Kaario et al. suggest that metrics should focus on the outcomes of the process. This way the focus will be on the right place and more beneficial than when focusing for example on the activities of the process. (Kaario et al 2003)

4.3 Process Basics

A process is defined in many different sources of literature. John Holt mentions a few different sources and definitions in his book A Pragmatic Guide to Business Process Modelling, e.g. the Oxford English dictionary’s definition:

> A series of actions, changes, or functions bringing about a result.

Holt himself defines process for the purpose of his book as being something that includes a number of activities which all are in a responsibility of a stakeholder role. Each activity produces and/or consumes an artefact. An artefact is also known as output, meaning that it is something that comes out of a process or an activity. (Holt 2009)

In addition, ITIL (The Cabinet Office, 2011) describes process as being a structured activity set which are designed to reach a curtain objective by taking one or multiple inputs and turning them into outputs. According to ITIL Transition, there are four main characteristics of process: measurability, specific results, customers and responsiveness to specific triggers. (The Cabinet Office, 2011)

In addition to process definition there is a picture showing the process model in Figure 8. According to the process model, there is always something to trigger the process. Process inputs go into the process and after the process the outputs come out. The process includes activities, procedures, work instructions, metrics, process roles and improvements. (The Cabinet Office, 2011)

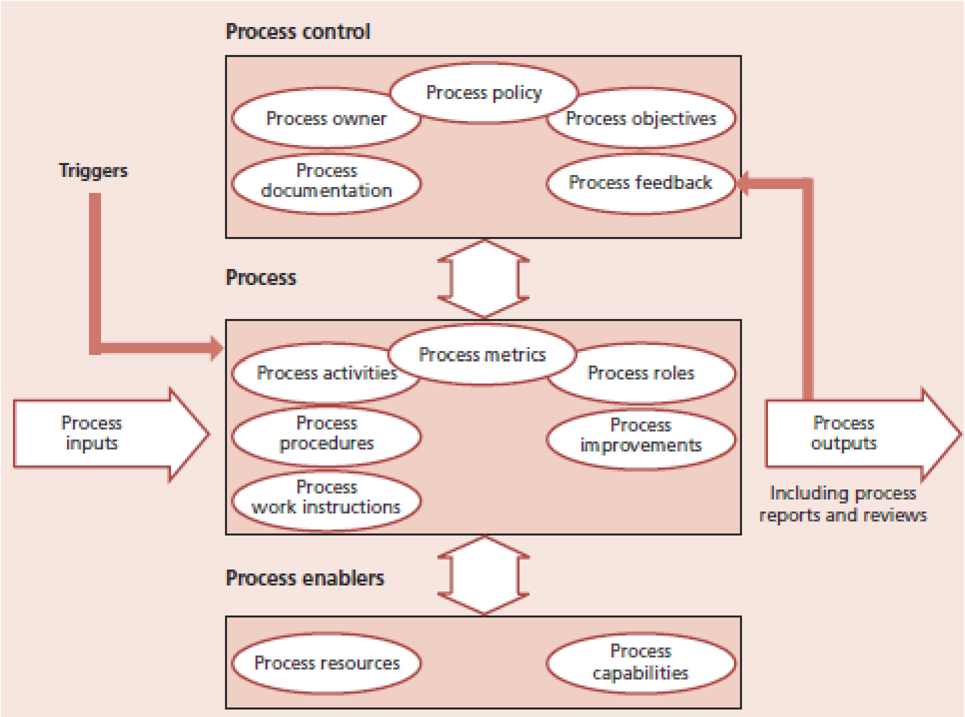

Figure 8. Process model (The Cabinet Office, 2011)

In addition to the actual process, ITIL has described also process control and process enablers. Process controls monitor and evaluate the process. Controls include documentation, owner, policy, objectives and feedback. Process enablers on the other hand are the factors that need to be there in order for the process to function. (The Cabinet Office, 2011)

A process takes some sort of form when written down. These forms can be for example standards, guidelines or instructions and so on. Forms can be written in multiple different levels, depending on the use case. However, the purpose and use case of a process should be considered beforehand so that the process will not face some typical problems. Typical process problem features are that a process is too long or short, unrealistic or that is written in inadequate language to its users. The problems can cause lack of usage of the process. (Holt 2009)

Even though the process would not have any problems at all and it would be in use and described well, it always needs some tailoring. Usually tailoring is driven through by some changes in the needs of either organization, activities, requirements etc. (Holt 2009)

Holt defines a process realization view as a process meta-model, which can be used as check list when specifying and analyzing processes. The process realization view describes the conceptual view into the process. (Holt 2009)

4.4 Conceptual Framework for the Development of Sales Process and Management

Based on the investigations made on existing knowledge, Figure 9 below was drawn. Figure 9 illustrates the concepts and existing knowledge that were found useful for the solution creation of this case study.

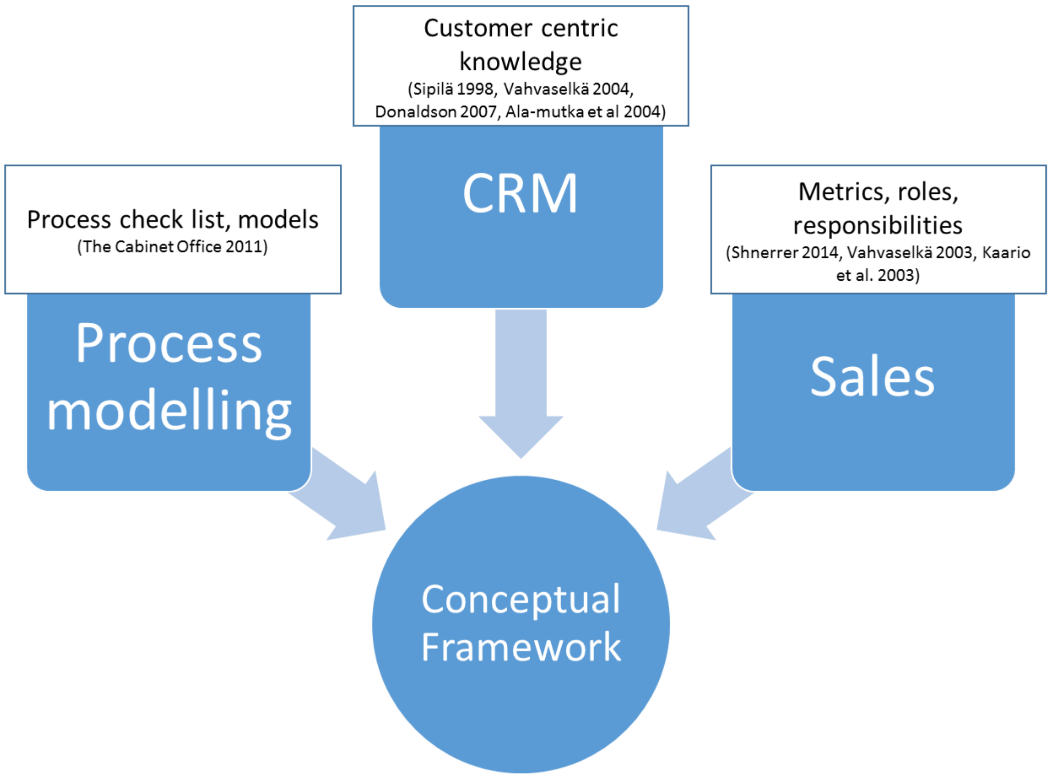

Figure 9. Existing knowledge helps to form Conceptual Framework for the study

In order to form a solution for the case study three different aspects were needed to consider: customer relationship management, sales and process modelling. Understanding of the CRM in the context of professional services offering companies helped to form the idea of importance of relationship management. Sales and sales process knowledge helped to gain an understanding of the sales part and to understand roles, metrics and responsibilities that are needed to consider when developing a sales process.

The most useful learning considering the field the case company operates on, i.e. offering professional services, was that all the consultants are sales people, regardless of their own opinion. This means that all the employees form the sales organization or sales force of the company. By learning this, the fact that the sales people responsibilities belong to all employees became indisputable.

The most usable learnings while investigating existing knowledge on processes and sales processes were the importance and need of process management. Processes cannot run effectively without management, but the way of doing so is not restricted only into metrics but a combination of metrics, performance level, people management and so forth. In addition, as learned from ITIL Transition (The Cabinet Office 2011), it was understood that metrics are actually part of the process, not the control. However, metrics support the control and monitoring.

By combining the results from the CSA in section 3 and the Conceptual Framework created in this section, the next section describes the proposal for the re-engineered sales process.

5 Developing the Sales Process of the Case Company

Based on the Current State Analysis and existing knowledge together with the needs and visions of the case company the proposal for the re-engineered sales process is conducted and explained in section 5.1. In addition, for the sales process re-engineering the roles of sales manager and sales person are described on role cards and can be seen in the section 5.2.

The re-engineered process was done in order to clarify the flow of actions, people, tool and information of the sales process. The role cards were created to clarify who is responsible and for what. In addition to the defined process flow chart, activities, roles and responsibilities also the process control and management side was considered in the form of metrics. A set of sales metrics for the sales process were selected and proposed. Metrics were introduced to help the case company manage the process. The metrics are described in section 5.3.

5.1 Re-engineered Sales Process for the Case Company

In order to model the re-engineered process, the basic information of the process was defined and described first. This was done based on the process characters in ITIL process model (The Cabinet Office, 2011). The process name is sales process for case company (Finland office), the owner is sales manager and its trigger is a need for increasing sales. Process customer is the case company since the objective of the process is to gain more sales for the company. Process inputs are leads, sales opportunities and outputs are mutually beneficial customer relationships and increased sales. In addition, the process is measurable and has its own metrics which are discussed more in section 5.3.

Figure 10 shows the proposed re-engineered sales process as a flow chart, from the point of view of customer facing activities. The first step of the process is to recognize a potential customer and/or sales opportunity. The process ends with gaining feedback form the customer. Although the last step of the process is gaining feedback, there is a continuity loop also on the process. After the actual process, there must be a follow-up since the customer relationships must be maintained. The loop goes from feedback back to contacting the customer. This was visualized into the process flow chart as seen in Figure 10.

The experience gained and the Conceptual Framework helped to identify an additional step for the case company's original sales process: follow-up. This can be seen in Figure 10 on the top right hand corner. Follow-up includes a new activity: get feedback. Getting feedback helps sales management analyze customer satisfaction on the services offered and conducted and also the effectiveness and efficiency of the sales process. These help to develop both service quality and the sales process itself.

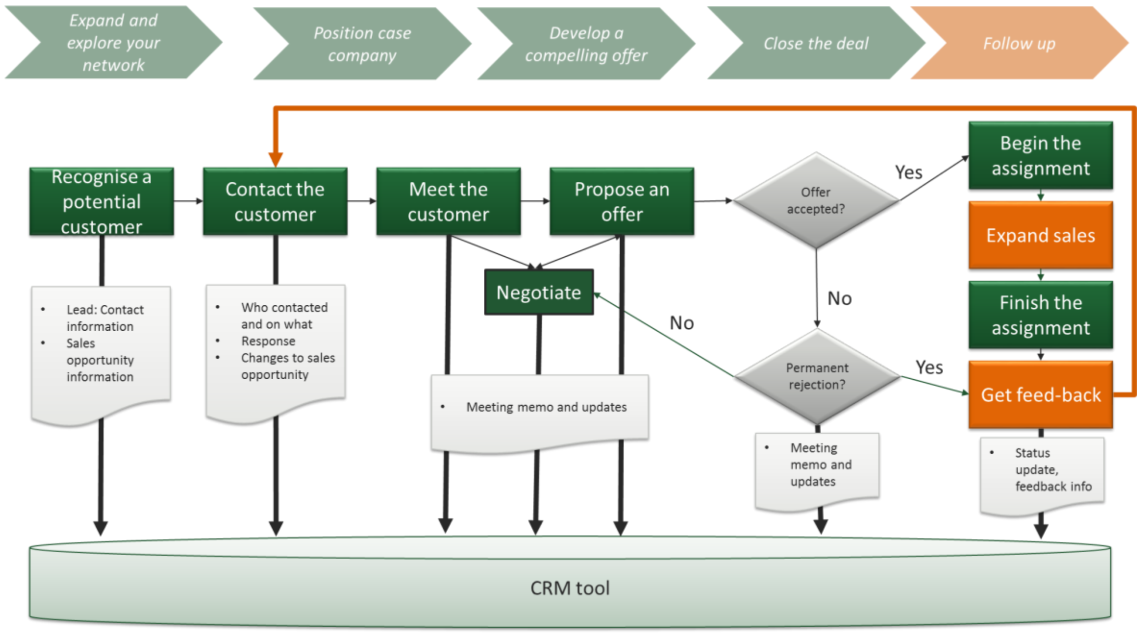

Figure 10. Re-engineered sales process -flow chart

One of the most important factors of the re-engineered sales process is that after finishing an assignment and gaining feedback from customer, there is a need for follow-up in order to keep in touch with the customer. The main purpose of the case company is to land and expand sales during the assignment. However, if it is not possible, follow-up will keep the relationship between the customer and case company on going.

The re-engineered process description takes into consideration also the information and its flow into the CRM tool. Process activities were described in a separate process activity document for the case company. The process activity descriptions can be seen in Appendix 2 at the end of the study. Within the activity document, the information details and saving points for the CRM tool were described. Also tasks per role are explained and input and output of each activity are stated.

5.2 Role Cards and Defined Responsibilities

In addition to the activity document and re-engineered sales process description, two sales role cards within the case company were made. The role card for the Sales Manager role can be seen in Figure 11. The Sales Manager role should be assigned to only one person within the case company, in order to focus information and decision making into one place. This way the risk of scattered action can be reduced. It is suggested that the Sales Manager role would be allocated to the Head of sales and marketing manager of the case company.

Role description: ***Sales Manager***

Role core content	
Sales Manager is accountable for sales management process. Sales manager sees that sales are managed on controlled manner and according to case company needs.	
Main responsibilities and tasks	
Responsibilities • Ensures and monitors that all employees follows the sales process and policy • Ensures needed sales information is recorded into Podio • Leads and coordinates weekly sales meetings • Updates related communication • Maintains the change schedules in change calendar • Coordinates the customer responsibilities (who, what, where) • Maintains the sales policy and other documented practices	**Main tasks and outputs** • Manage all sales records, follows up the updates and updates the records him/herself • Prioritizes the sales in collaboration with other personnel depending on the customers • Prepares the agenda for sales meetings • Allocates sales activities and customer responsibilities to sales people • Analyses sales records and reports them (continual improvement) • Clarifies the reasons to failed or canceled sales and coordinates the activities to fix them • Reminds sales personnel to update information to the tool
Key co-operation parties	**Key processes**
• Sales personnel – all the FIN staff • Other Sales Managers (SWE, group, UK, DK) • Managing director	• Sales process • Marketing

Figure 11. Role card – Sales manager

The important addition to the Sales Manager's role was adding the role of coordinating customer responsibilities within the sales people at the case company. This was added, in order to make sure there is someone in charge of certain customers until account management will be fully implemented later in 2016. Also when the sales manager allocates the responsibilities to others, it helps the sales personnel to understand their responsibilities better. The Sales manager, Managing director and sales personnel can plan and discuss which kind of actions are done and planned for each customer and the person in charge of the customer will make sure adequate activities are done.

The Sales manager's responsibility is also to make sure that the activities are conducted and the information is saved into the CRM tool of the case company. Another responsibility is to make sure that all employees know how to perform the activities and how to save records into the CRM tool.

Role description: ***Sales Person***

Role core content	
Sales Person is responsible for the activities in the sales process. Sales person is in charge of those customers that sales manager and sales person has agreed on.	
Main responsibilities and tasks	

Responsibilities
• Sales process activities as described in the process description, including:
  • Always steering for sales opportunities and leads
  • Contacting possible customers
  • Meeting customers, negotiation and developing offers
  • Producing assignments
  • Follow-up and gaining feedback
• Updating sales information into CRM tool, on those customers who responsible of
	Main tasks and outputs
	• Updating the sales records on those customers in charge of
	• Prepares the agenda for sales meetings
	• Negotiation with Sales manager and managing director about sales and the customer responsibilities, leads and opportunities etc.
	• Making sure that customers are kept up-to-date and contacting at least every 2 months

Key co-operation parties	**Key processes**
• Customer(s) • Sales Manager • Managing director	• Sales process

Figure 12. Role card – Sales person

Figure 12 shows the role card for Sales person. The main responsibility of a Sales person is to execute the activities within the re-engineered sales process and to make sure the needed information of each step is recorded into the CRM tool. The Sales person role and the responsibilities within it belong to all case company's employees, due to the limited amount of resources.

5.3 Proposed Sales Process Metrics

The Current State Analysis revealed that there were no defined metrics or evaluation of the sales process. It was decided that there must be some metrics defined in order to measure and monitor the process and its functioning. Metrics were also defined in order to gain transparency and to help in making development decisions in the future. The following table of metrics was selected to be taken into use initially:

Table 4. Suggested case company sales metrics (Based on Selling Value by Kaario et al. 2003)

Category:	Measure (unit):	Per what:	For what:
Results – non financial	Customer retention/loyalty (%)	Customer group	For evaluating if the formed relationships are mutually beneficial.
Results – non financial	Customer satisfaction (bad, satisfactory, reference)	Customer	For evaluating the performance level of the services.
Efficiency	Length of sales cycle (months)	Customer	For time transparency and helping the customer activity planning.
Efficiency	Hit rate (%)	Customer group	For the knowledge of efficiency and effort against results.
Activity	Proposals made (number)	Customer group	To view the development of proposal quality and activities related.

Table 4 above includes the metrics suggested for the case company sales management. The number of selected metrics was kept low, on purpose. It was thought that having a few only will help in evaluating the process in the beginning. Also as the resources of the case company are limited, there is no need to implement a heavy set of metrics to avoid too restricting activities and the risk of reduced motivation. These metrics can and should be reviewed and evaluated in the near future to assure they are essential. The metrics could be evaluated e.g. when the key account management is implemented.

The metrics defined in Table 4 were selected, because they focus on the level of results, efficiency and activity rather than financial results, which are measured already in the finance and profitability calculations at the case company. As customer relationship management is a very important aspect of the case company's sales the metrics should also seek the information and level of performance regarding customer relationship management. The proposed metrics were also selected, since with them the end part of the process, which includes new activities, can be monitored better.

5.4 Suggestion for Next Steps

According to Donaldson's six step performance improvement list, introduced in section 4.2.3, the next step after defining metrics is to involve the sales people and take action. The personnel should be informed about the re-engineered process flow chart, activities, role cards, responsibilities and metrics defined, and they should receive training. Training and informing is an essential part of the implementation of the re-engineered sales process and should be the next step.

When the sales process is up and running, the CRM tool clean-up is needed. The clean-up should include going through and verifying the existing contacts, companies and sales opportunities. After the clean-up decision about the tool migration can be revised. The revision of the tool migration is easier done, after the implementation of the developed sales process and the tool data cleaning, since then the real need for a new system can be thought through. There is no point of making such a decision, when the process that the tool is supposed to support is not working fully. However, once the process has been developed the decision can be made.

In addition, the need for key account management is still valid and needed to be implemented in line with the sales process. It would be recommendable to do a revision and evaluation of the suggested metrics while implementing the account management. The key account management might include similar metrics which is the reason that the two should be aligned in order to gain an adequate level of measurement. If the account management implementation should be postponed, the sales metrics should be reviewed anyway a while after the process implementation.

If the other weaknesses discovered in the Current State Analysis in this study should continue to occur regardless of the re-engineering, it is suggested that further investigation is made. The metrics defined in this study should provide more transparency regarding the problem.

With the proposal for the case company completed, the next section provides the conclusions and evaluation of the proposal.

6 Conclusions and Discussion

This section includes a short summary of the study and the evaluation of the proposed solution.

This case study evaluated the case company's current state of the sales process. Based on the analysis on the current state the weaknesses identified pointed to the importance of studying existing literature on process description, re-engineering and management. As a solution, a re-engineered sales process was proposed including a process flow chart and an activity document, role cards (with responsibilities) and defined metrics for the case company sales.

These outcomes were proposed in order to reach the objective of the study, i.e. a more systematic way of conducting sales. Through the re-engineered sales process, the whole case company staff can now execute sales in the same way which makes managing and developing sales easier.

6.1 Evaluation of the Proposed Solution

This case study's objective was to gain a more systematic way for conducting the sales activities. Further, the systemic way would help to increase the amount of sales by directing the sales efforts in a more standardized fashion. The study's objective will be fully reached once the proposed solution will be implemented into the case company and the personnel will be trained accordingly. The implementation will be done with the Head of sales and Marketing manager gradually during 2016 based on the outcomes of this study.

The outcomes of the case study include documents that were needed at the case company. The re-engineered process flow chart helps to define what the actions are after the deal is closed. Follow-up is a very important section, since the customer relationships are needed to be maintained. The flow chart helps to see the overview of the sales process, its activities with the orientation of customer facing activities.

To make sure that the re-engineered process actually is executed and that it works a set of metrics were defined considering the objectives and needs of the case company.

These metrics are quite basic, since it was considered important to keep the process as agile and non-bureaucratic as possible. However, as there were no metrics before, it is believed that the selected metrics will be enough for the future. In addition, as mentioned in section 5.4 amongst the next step suggestions, the metrics should be revised after the re-engineered sales process has been up and running for a while.

The proposed solution considers the case company's two objectives, since the customer aspect has been taken into consideration when proposing the solution. In addition, the needed and desired outcome, a re-engineered sales process is in alignment with the case company needs: it clarifies the roles and responsibilities, activities and the tool usage within the sales process. By doing so, the efforts made in sales gain a more systemic approach which was the goal. Therefore, the outcome meets the objective.

The case company representative, the Head of sales and marketing, confirms that the study's outcomes support the future plans of the case company sales. Based on the study, the case company can further develop sales, CRM tool, reporting and information flow. Overall, the Head of sales and management was pleased with the outcome and estimated that the implementation of the re-engineered sales process will most likely go live in the fall of 2016.

Writing and conducting the case study was an interesting learning process. One of the biggest learning points of the study was that the business challenge, objective and scope needed to be described and carefully considered at the beginning in order to continue with the study's other steps. Overall, the study shows the importance of an effective sales process and Customer Relationship Management in targeting an increase in the revenue of the case company.

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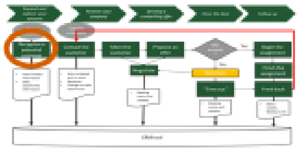
Appendix 1. Interview Questions for Case Company Employees.

1. What is case company's CRM strategy?
2. Does selling actually go according to the sales process?
3. Do you build and expand your network frequently?
4. How often do you identify new opportunities?
5. How do you identify the buyer? Examples?
6. We have discussed a lot about this internally at office – what kind of offers leads into closing the deal?
7. How do you experience developing offers – what is the best way?
8. Why services are hard to push into production at the pipeline?
9. Experience in succeeding at closing the deal? What kind of offers/proposals are accepted at customer end?
10. What happens after closing the deal?
11. How actively (and how) sales expanding is done within customers?
12. When an assignment has been done – how the customer relationship is kept warm?
13. How are these actions saved/recorded into the CRM tool?
    a. If not recorded – why not?
14. Why the CRM tool is not used frequently?
15. Who is responsible of sales?
    a. How do you contribute in order to improve sales?
16. What do you think is/are the most critical factor in sales and customer relationship management?
17. The worst pain point of case company's sales process?
18. The worst pain point within customer relationship management

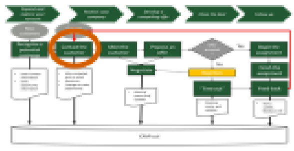
Appendix 2. Process Flow Activity Descriptions



Recognise potential customer

Roles	Activity/Task	Input	Output
Sales person	• Always steer for new potential customers • When a lead is acknowledged it is created into the Podio • Consult SM, who responsible of the contact and what is the action plan for the contact/opportunity	All personal and professional contacts and opportunities	Created company, contact and sales opportunity into CRM tool
Sales manager	• Always steer for new potential customers • When a lead is acknowledged it is created into the Podio		

Information
Company: name, webpage Contact: title, name, phone, email Sales opportunity: All that are requested on the form

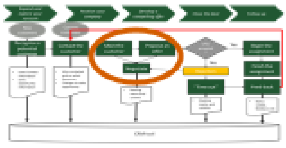


Contact the customer

Roles	Activity/Task	Input	Output
Sales person	• The sales person in charge of the customer, contacts the customer in order to agree on a meeting. • After contacting the customer brief description on the agreed matters are saved into CRM tool	Leads, potential customers and sales opportunities	Agreed meeting date and agenda
Sales manager	• Help sales person if needed • Steer that the information is updated on the CRM tool		

Information
Sales opportunity: Agenda details, agreed meeting date, create needed tasks/actions before the meeting, who are going to the meeting from the case company. If customer do not want to meet up date the response from the customer and save a date of next call into the calendar.

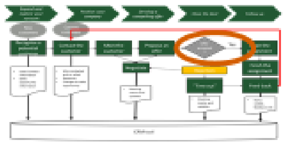
Meet the customer and propose an offer



Roles	Activity/Task	Input	Output
Sales person	• Meet the customer with the agenda agreed • Negotiate to fins out the customer needs • Agree on a next meeting and agenda (Preferable a proposal for x) • Update the details of the meeting • Conduct the proposal • Present the proposal at the customer and negotiate if needed	Meeting date and agenda for the proposal	Offer proposal for the customers needs, agreed offer walkthrough date
Sales manager	• Help sales person if needed • Steer that the information is updated on the CRM tool • Inform the status of the proposals at sales/weekly meetings		

Information
Sales opportunity: Link the proposed offer on the sales opportunity, update the probability and sales amount, create tasks for needed activities, save the offer walkthrough date and time

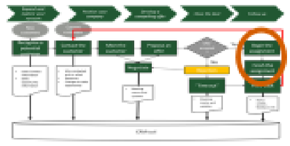
Close the deal



Roles	Activity/Task	Input	Output
Sales person	• Meet the customer and walk through the proposal • Clarify if needed • Convince the customer and close the deal • Update CRM tool with relevant information	Meeting and proposal walkthrough	Closed sales opportunity and next contact or assignment start date.
Sales manager	• Help sales person if needed • Inform CEO and other staff about the closing with the status • Steer that the information is updated on the CRM tool		

Information
Sales opportunity: Update the opportunity status: close win, close reject, close duplicate. Update the sales amount (if won). Update the reason why closed win or rejection. If rejected create a task to contact the customer again in two months in order to reopen the negotiations.

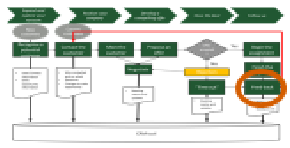
During the assignment



Roles	Activity/Task	Input	Output
Sales person	• Always provide services with excellent quality • Always look for additional sales opportunities during the assignment • Keep the sales manager and CEO updated • Propose next steps and additional offer before the end of the assignment	Assignment start date and assignment agenda	High quality customer service and/or Additional proposal
Sales manager	• Help sales person to recognize and suggest additional sales within the customer • Discuss the status updates with sales person		

Information
Create new sales opportunities (as described earlier) and link the additional proposal, create new contact information with needed details described previously.

After the assignment



Roles	Activity/Task	Input	Output
Sales person	• Ask for feedback from the customer • Update the feedback into CRM tool • Agree on the follow-up date, or create it on the calendar	End of the assignment documents, pleased customer	Feedback and follow-up date for contacting the customer again.
Sales manager	• Make sure sales person requests and updates feedback from the customer • Analyze feedback and act accordingly • Make sure that a follow-up date is recorded		

Information
Feedback added on the company details description field with the assignment name. Create a follow-up date and information. Add you as responsible and additional case company sales person – to make sure contacting happens.