

# Strategic partner engagement at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus

Tineke Pikaro

Master's Thesis

IBMA

2019



<b>Author(s)</b> Tineke Pikaro	
<b>Degree programme</b> Master of International Business Management	
<b>Report/thesis title</b> Strategic partner engagement at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> 49+2
<p>The objective of this study is to identify strategies to develop long-term partnerships between the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences Porvoo Campus and local businesses.</p> <p>The commissioning organization is the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and the focus of this study has been developed with the Sales &amp; Marketing (SaMPo) team in Porvoo. To develop the curriculum and to remain innovative in the way students learn at the campus, the development of long-term relationships with businesses is essential. The main intention is to understand how to engage business partners in a more strategic way in the SaMPo team.</p> <p>The literature review focuses on Business Relationship Management (BRM), specifically between academia and businesses. The theoretical foundation of the thesis looks at the definition of partnerships and uses this to extrapolate best practices when building new partnership strategies. To support this, the conceptual framework of this study investigates how to build successful strategic alliances and what models would work best for SaMPo.</p> <p>The study was carried out in the form of an action research, conducted in a positivism paradigm, though it includes characteristics of interpretivism as well. The study follows a qualitative approach with small samples and in-depth investigations. The data was collected through interviews and a literature review.</p> <p>The findings revealed a broad variety of development ideas, highly focusing on marketing activities. This includes creating marketing materials, a web presence and online platform and a partnership vision and mission. The results also suggested that SaMPo would benefit from a clearly defined partnership agreement, as well as a dedicated BRM Manager. In addition, the study suggests future projects for students that resulted from this research and the conducted interviews with existing partners.</p> <p>In conclusion, various ideas have been presented in this study, to answer the main research question on how to develop long-term partnerships between SaMPo and local businesses. The main idea that was presented to SaMPo was to assign a team member or a new hire to the role of BRM manager. That person would act as the middle-man between the team and the partners, focusing entirely on finding, building and maintaining partnerships; allowing teachers to dedicate their time fully to their teaching responsibilities.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Business Relationship Management (BRM), strategic alliance, partnerships between academia and businesses, blue ocean strategy	

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	About Haaga-Helia .....	1
1.1.1	The commissioning team .....	2
1.1.2	Inquiry-based learning .....	3
1.1.3	Understanding status quo .....	3
1.2	Research Questions .....	5
1.3	Research importance .....	5
1.4	Structure of the thesis .....	6
2	Business Relationship Management & strategic alliances .....	6
2.1	Business Relationship Management .....	7
2.2	BRM between academia and businesses .....	8
2.3	Definitions and types of partnerships .....	10
2.4	Designing successful strategic alliances .....	10
3	Methodology .....	16
3.1	Research philosophy .....	16
3.2	Research strategy .....	17
3.3	Data collection method .....	17
3.4	Data analysis .....	18
4	Empirical research .....	18
4.1	Research objective .....	18
4.1.1	Development task .....	19
4.1.2	Interview questions .....	20
4.2	Summary of the interviews .....	21
4.2.1	The interviewees .....	21
4.2.2	Previous experience with working with academia .....	22
4.2.3	Business expectations towards academia and students .....	25
4.2.4	Business challenges and potential academic solutions .....	26
4.2.5	Future collaborations and awareness .....	27
4.3	Summary of the interview findings .....	28
4.4	Analysis of the interview findings .....	30
4.5	Research assessment .....	30
4.5.1	Reliability .....	31
4.5.2	Validity .....	31
4.5.3	Assessment of quality .....	31
5	Discussion .....	33
5.1	Conclusion .....	33
5.2	Development ideas .....	36

5.2.1	Future projects with existing partnerships.....	36
5.2.2	Generate Marketing materials .....	37
5.2.3	Recruit a BRM Manager .....	38
5.2.4	Create a partnership agreement.....	39
5.2.5	Create a web presence /partner portal .....	40
5.2.6	Define a vision and mission statement .....	41
5.3	Feedback from the commissioning party .....	41
5.4	Building and implementing a new approach .....	42
5.5	Suggestions for further research .....	45
5.6	Thesis process and learning outcomes .....	47
	References .....	49
	Appendices .....	53
	Appendix 1. Coding transcripts from interview analysis .....	53
	Appendix 2. PowerPoint presentation of development ideas .....	65

# 1 Introduction

This study focuses on how to develop strategic and long-term partnerships between the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences Porvoo Campus and local businesses. There are already a few existing partnerships as references for this study. As these partnerships were project-based and short-term in nature this study aims at focusing on the long-term aspect when searching, entering and maintaining new partnerships.

This first chapter begins by introducing the commissioning party for this study. It further specifies the research questions and importance. As understanding the pedagogical approach at Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus and the status quo are crucial for understanding the background of this study, this chapter also briefly investigates these angles. The chapter ends with a brief look into the study structure.

## 1.1 About Haaga-Helia

The commissioning organization is the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. Haaga-Helia is part of the Finnish public educational system. It is privately run but steered and co-funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. Figure 1 below illustrates the organizational structure of Haaga-Helia.

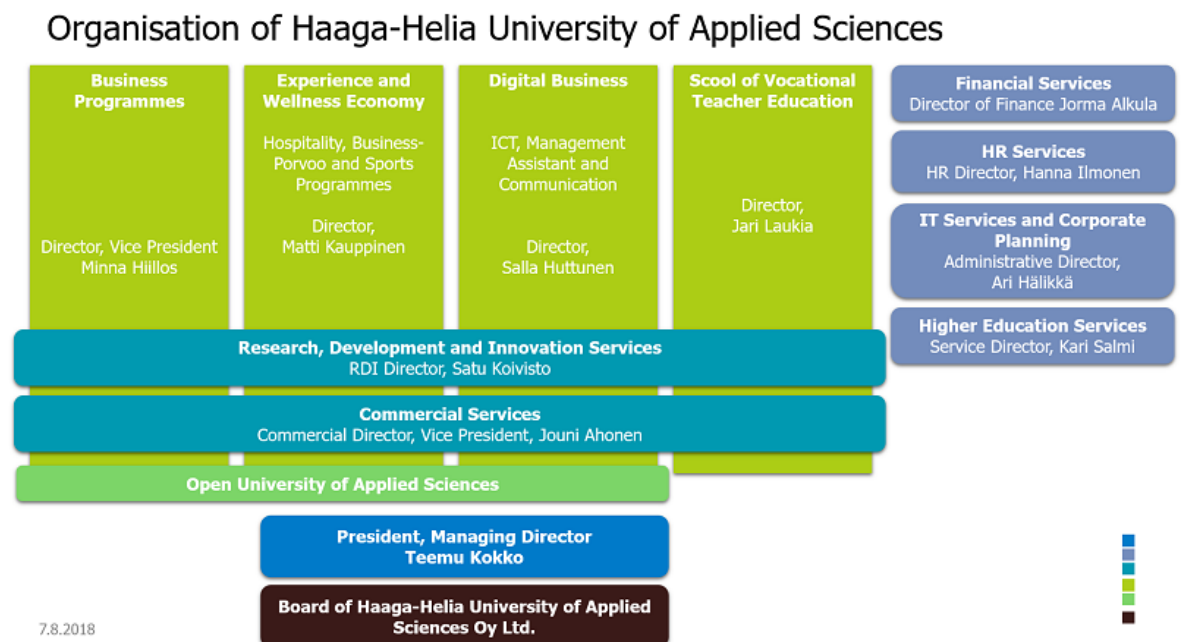


Figure 1. Organisation of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. (Haaga-Helia 2018)

Haaga-Helia operates on five campuses in Helsinki, Porvoo and Vierumäki.

This study will focus on the Porvoo campus, which has approximately 1100 students. The

degree programmes in Porvoo are offered Finnish or in English. The operations of the Porvoo campus are characterised by co-learning and involvement in projects with a focus on working life. The campus is also open to the public daily, giving people access to a restaurant, an extensive professional library and several meeting places. Studies are completed in large modules, and learning is promoted in many ways: reading literature, participating in lectures, seminars and various workshops and finding solution models independently and in groups. (Haaga-Helia.)

Figure 2 below illustrates the organization’s values, vision and mission.



Figure 2. Strategy of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. (Haaga-Helia 2018)

The study request came from Kaija Lindroth, Degree Programme Director at the Porvoo campus. The focus of this study has been developed with the Sales & Marketing (SaMPo) team in Porvoo, which is introduced further in the following chapter. The initial meetings were held on the 23 and 28 May and served as the foundation for the thesis plan, the questionnaire design and research objective.

### 1.1.1 The commissioning team

This sub-chapter focuses on the pedagogical approach as well as the project-led and collaborative way of working within the SaMPo team to clarify their needs for projects. These projects not only need to fit their offering and demand, but also their learning purposes. Based on the feedback received from the team members, the companies they worked with so far are SMEs in the region. The regional aspect is crucial, as students need easy

and convenient access to the companies they work with. Furthermore, having a local network is highly beneficial for the campus, as it allows for efficient networking and fast access to potentially new partners.

### **1.1.2 Inquiry-based learning**

Inquiry-based learning is a pedagogy that was developed in the 1960s and is currently implemented at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus.

This pedagogy is a teaching method that prioritizes student questions, ideas and analyses. With this method, students are required to investigate open questions, use reasoning and problem-solving skills to reach conclusions, while learning to defend and present their findings. For teachers this means to not only encourage student's curiosity but also to enable critical thinking and understanding. During the investigation process, undertaken by the students, the teacher has a supportive role, being there for questions and structuring the overall process. Activities that allow students to develop problem-solving skills are case studies, research projects, group projects and field work. These activities as well as the inquiry-based learning method provide a wide range of benefits: it helps students to develop a high level of thinking and allows for a better understanding of core concepts, it sparks curiosity, it helps to keep students and their brains engaged throughout the day, it makes learning more rewarding, it encourages initiative and independence and last but not least, it can be executed in any size of classroom or group. With this method students can work by themselves or in small groups. (Guido 2017.)

The method is also used with the intention to boost student's engagement. Rather than just delivering information, teachers intend to stimulate curiosity. Once curiosity is triggered, the following four steps of inquiry-based learning come into action. Firstly, students develop questions that they are eager to find answers to. Secondly, the research process begins, in which the teacher acts as a guide. Thirdly, students present their findings and results. And finally, students reflect on the project and the learning process. This reflection should provide not only an answer to the question what they learned, but also how they learned. (Wolpert-Gawron 2016.)

### **1.1.3 Understanding status quo**

To develop the curriculum and to remain innovative in the way students learn at the campus, the development of long-term relationships with businesses is essential.

The kick-off meetings for the thesis process and a short interview with Senior Lecturer and member of the SaMPo team Yücel Ger give a good understanding on how finding partners has been done in the past. The existing partners that SaMPo has currently are mainly found through teachers' own networks. LinkedIn is the social media of choice in this process. Using the platform for posts has been done regularly recently and proven to be useful, says Ger. As the network and LinkedIn activities are tied to individuals, looking for new partners is not a team effort. According to Ger, the search is sometimes conducted in pairs though. The search for potential partners is usually done during the spring and summer time for the autumn semester.

In the daily work of a teacher, there is no time specifically allocated to do partner research. All networking needs to be done on the teachers' own time and initiative. As such, it is hard to say how many hours teachers spend outside their work to look for partners. Taking that response from Ger into consideration, the question on whether the partner searching responsibility should be given to a designated role came up next in the interview. Ger responds that he would prefer that approach, if this effort was centralised and systematised. Further, the missing systematic and centralised approach to finding and building partnerships is the main obstacle that stands in the way of long-term partnerships from SaMPo's point-of-view. Once the team manages to find a partner, they often have several projects with them, says Ger.

The previous sub-chapter introduced briefly the inquiry-based learning method. As this is the pedagogy in the SaMPo team as well, finding partners is crucial in order to educate students with that approach. The project work that can be created with the help of local businesses, gives students an opportunity to work on real-life cases and tackle real business challenges. Finding solutions and presenting these to teachers and companies provides students with valuable analytical and problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to work in a team and take ownership of projects. During the kick-off meeting, the SaMPo team members stated that their role is not a traditional role of an individual standing in front of the class giving a presentation on a specific topic. Instead, the teacher is guiding the students through their project work. Rather than dictating what to do next, the teacher is available to the students with advice and feedback on their work.

The degree program in International Sales and Marketing aims at inspiring students through a unique learning environment, including taking on different roles within teams, encountering people from all over the world, learning to listen, understand and identify customer needs and creating solutions together with businesses. The professional skills that students develop during the program include business and entrepreneurial compe-

tences, sales and service competences and finally personal and professional growth competences. Learning takes place in real business projects in multicultural teams, aiming at helping students to build their own professional networks through project commissionaires. (Haaga-Helia.). Looking at this description of the degree program, it becomes quickly apparent why business partners are of such importance for SaMPo. These partners need to provide the curriculum with real-life business challenges, dedicate time and resources to meet with students and open their network for the students as well. Therefore, ideal partners are local, in order to guarantee easy access for students and small or medium-sized in nature, as these companies typically have business structures that allow for students to easier participate and contribute.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The main research question of the thesis is: How to engage business partners in a more strategic way in the International Sales & Marketing Degree programs at the Porvoo Campus?

The empirical part focuses on how the collaboration is currently done and how it has been done in the past. To answer that question, the meetings held with the SaMPo staff provided a valuable insight. In addition, local businesses that have been collaborating with Haaga-Helia in the past have been asked about their experiences as well. Furthermore, these companies have also been asked about their expectations and challenges in order to add a business perspective to this study.

There are additional questions to which this study intends to find answers to:

- What expectation do businesses have towards collaborations with Universities?
- How to align industry and academia business models?
- What needs and challenges do local businesses have and how could the curriculum and student work help to solve these?

## **1.3 Research importance**

The research is needed as SaMPo is constantly involved with the optimization of their Degree programmes and contents. To remain innovative, business-facing and attractive for students the team needs a better understanding of how to involve and cooperate with businesses long-term. In addition, by collaborating with local businesses, the staff hopes to make the city of Porvoo an attractive place for students to live. Finally, challenges due

to tuition fees and dropping application numbers could potentially be tackled with more business involvement through sponsorships and work placements as well.

#### **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis consists of five main chapters. It starts with an introduction, which aims at providing a short and comprehensive overview of the commissioning organization, the SaMPo team, research questions and importance as well as an insight into the current situation to provide solid background.

The theoretical part of this study consists of chapters focusing on literature review, conceptual framework and methodology. The literature review focuses on Business Relationship Management (BRM), specifically between academia and businesses. The theoretical foundation of the thesis will look at the definition of partnerships and use this to extrapolate best practices when building new partnership strategies. To support this, the conceptual framework of this study investigates how to build successful strategic alliances and what models would work best for SaMPo.

The Methodology chapter provides information about the research type, the data collection method, research philosophy and strategy.

The empirical part of the thesis consists of a summary and analysis of the research findings. The chapter continues with an assessment of the research quality, validity and reliability as well as limitations. It also assesses the value of this study for Haaga-Helia.

The last chapter of this study is the discussion. Here, the results and findings from the literature review and interviews are being summarized, suggestions for further research are made and reflections are being provided. The reflection part focuses on the thesis writing process, the work development project overall and finally, personal learning outcomes.

## **2 Business Relationship Management & strategic alliances**

This chapter presents the literature review for this study. It includes definitions and explanations of key concepts, as well as existing research on topics that are similar to this study's objective. At first, it will go into detail on business relationship management and strategic alliances, with a continuous focus on BRM between academia and businesses. Further, different types of partnership models are introduced and discussed. Finally, it will explore how successful strategic alliances can be designed.

## 2.1 Business Relationship Management

The BRM Institute defines it as follows: “Business relationship management stimulates, surfaces, and shapes business demand across business functions like IT, human resources, finance, legal, etc. and ensures that the potential business value from meeting business demand is captured, optimized, and recognized.” (BRM Institute 2019)

As BRM includes a broad range of competencies (knowledge, skills and behaviours), there are various ways of leveraging them: through BRM as a role, a discipline or a capability.

The BRM manager is a role for an individual within an organization, acting as a strategic interface between the organization and its business partners. Regarding BRM disciplines the institute states that these “BRM disciplines rest on solid, research-based foundations that have been verified and enhanced over a decade of successful implementations in leading organizations. BRM disciplines have proven to be equally effective for a wide range of business functions including IT, human resources, finance, legal, facilities, external service providers, and others.” Looking in more detail on BRM capabilities, the institute adds: “A strong BRM capability converges cross-functional teams and eliminates value-depleting organizational silos. It strengthens collaboration and drives a culture of creativity, innovation, and shared ownership across the enterprise, so that holistic, innovative, and value-driven strategies are created and deliver their intended business value results.” (BRM Institute 2019.)

The institute developed the House of BRM, which will be shown in figure 4 below.

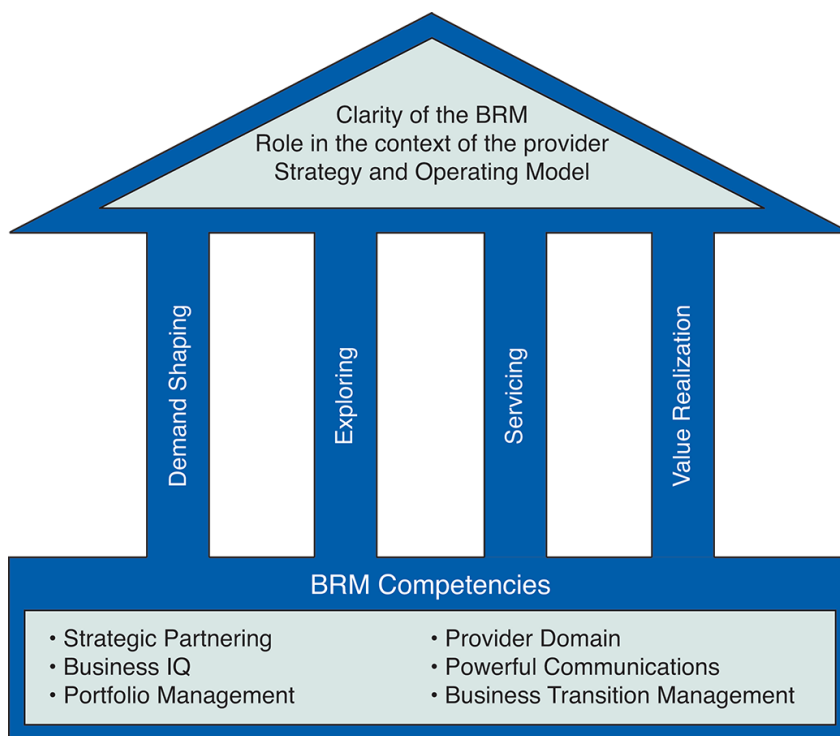


Figure 4. BRM Competencies.

The foundation of this house consists of the BRM competencies, ideally used to ensure value for the business and all business partners. The pillars illustrate the four core disciplines of BRM: demand shaping, exploring, servicing and value realization. Demand shaping focuses on optimizing the business value through prioritisation of demands, while simultaneously ensuring that the business strategy fully leverages the business partnerships. The exploring discipline defines and rationalizes demands. It's an ongoing practice with the aim to review and find new and value-adding business opportunities and initiatives. Servicing focuses on the management of the partnership. This includes the management of expectations, coordination of resources, facilitation of activities and continuous engagement between the business and its partners. The disciplines of exploring and servicing result ideally in value realization. This last discipline includes a wide range of activities: it tracks and review performance, it identifies ways if increasing value from strategic partnerships and it initiates feedback which ideally triggers continuous improvement cycles. Finally, the roof protects BRM within the organization as a key concept through ensuring its value, clarity and necessity as a strategic operating model. (BRM Institute 2019.)

The BRM Institute published an article in December 2017 about the role of the Business Relationship Manager. In this article the role is defined as follows: "Designed to bring value to an organization through the convergence of different business functions, the business relationship manager (BRM) role is a senior-level, strategic business partner who shares ownership for business strategy and business value results." The main objective in this role is to optimize organizational effectiveness and determine strategic direction for all departments within an organization. This practices ideally results in a business environment that focuses on collaboration, innovation and creativity. In addition, BRM supports organizational objectives by partnering with appropriate resources, building and maintaining valuable partnerships, ensuring communication and value optimization between all parties. By executing these objectives BRM automatically enables ongoing improvements within the organization and its staff. In order to succeed as a manager in this field, it is essential to have strong communication skills, ability for strategic thinking and skills for influential relationship building. (BRM Institute 2017.)

## **2.2 BRM between academia and businesses**

Academic research institutions and private industry share a long history of collaboration dating back to the early 20th century. One of the earliest examples was a joint R&D effort between professors at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Standard Oil of New Jersey, which resulted in a critical technological advancement. In the post-war era,

universities relied on abundant federal research funding, while private industry moved towards a centralized R&D model. However, academic researchers kept making key contributions to organizations during this time. Nowadays, long-term strategic alliances, focused around a specific area of study, carry the greatest risk, but have the greatest potential for impact for organizations. Academia involvement with businesses varies in scales ranging from large corporations to small businesses and non-profit organizations, as well as government agencies that share a common set of goals. These alliances have inherent efficiencies, including transparency between entities, sharing resources, breaking down barriers to intellectual property rights and streamlining the process of generating research results. (Corzo 2015.)

In the article “Industry and university collaboration: How partnerships drive innovation” published by VentureWell in 2017, the benefits of such business – academia partnerships are clearly stated: The benefits for academia involve the possibilities to ensure and increase funding, corporate partnerships specifically allow for more resources to undertake and diversify research. Furthermore, universities can highly benefit from knowing demands of the industry and receiving direct feedback from leading organizations. Also, collaboration open the doors for students to find work placements and have a higher likelihood of being hired due to mentoring and networking opportunities. Hiring students and being able to prove a great network of industry leaders also make universities more popular among students and can be therefore be used as powerful PR and marketing. Last but not least, working closely with organizations through hands-on projects and real-life cases, universities create competent and entrepreneurial minded students and ultimately, future workforce. (VentureWell 2017.)

Business leaders agree that they operate in a fast-paced and always changing environment. Companies can get an idea of what the next innovations and trends will look like by aligning them with universities and their researches. Research results and student projects can result in early signals for market changes of innovation idea, which provide companies with a competitive edge. The benefits of a partnership for businesses is not limited to access to research though. Companies are further constantly in need of finding and hiring talented and competent workforce. Having good relationships with universities helps companies to shape and spot talents and use the partnership as a recruitment channel. Furthermore, collaboration with academia can be used as a platform, an environment that makes it easy to find additional business partners and companies that are interested in the same research. To share costs and resources on research projects can potentially be a big financial benefit for companies. In addition, companies can further save huge

amounts of money by using universities to do their research or by hiring students for unpaid work placements.

The empirical part of this study will help to investigate whether these assumed benefits are confirmed by local businesses in Porvoo.

### **2.3 Definitions and types of partnerships**

Strategic partnerships come in all shapes and sizes, they can be marketing or financial partners, as well as strategic suppliers. In the field of academia partnerships often revolve around research and recruitment partnerships. Before zoning in on the different types of partnerships, below a couple of definitions to clarify the theoretical understanding of partnerships in this research. The Cambridge dictionary defines a strategic partnership as follows: “an arrangement between two companies or organizations to help each other or work together, to make it easier for each of them to achieve the things they want to achieve.” (Cambridge Dictionary) The business dictionary defines a strategic partner as follows: “Party with which a long-term agreement is reached for sharing of physical and/or intellectual resources in achievement of defined common objective.” (Business Dictionary) A partnership can often also be defined as an alliance. Thus, the business dictionary defines a strategic alliance as follows: “Agreement for cooperation among two or more independent firms to work together toward common objectives. Unlike in a joint venture, firms in a strategic alliance do not form a new entity to further their aims but collaborate while remaining apart and distinct.” (Business Dictionary)

Strategic partnerships can be horizontal, vertical or intersectional in nature. In a horizontal approach, business within the same business area will work together to improve their market position. The vertical approach involves the collaboration of a companies with businesses within its own supply-chain. Finally, in the intersectional approach, business from different areas come together to share their knowledge for the advancement of all involved parties. Furthermore, partnerships can also take the form of a joint venture, in which companies form a new company and profits are split or an Equity, in which an organization acquires a minor equity stake in another business in exchange for a monetary investment. It is also possible to classify partnerships according to their purpose, such as development partnerships, strategic integration and referral partnerships, cobranding, sales partnerships or supply-chain and channel partnerships. (Powerlinx.)

### **2.4 Designing successful strategic alliances**

Different sources will provide different opinions on the most important elements of strategic partnerships and alliances. It is important to note that such variety in viewpoints is due to the fast differences in business themselves. Each organization, sector, business and

market faces its very own set of challenges and therefore requires a unique set of priorities and solutions. What follows is a brief list of core elements that were found useful and applicable to this research.

The most crucial element of building a successful partnership is to understand your potential partner's needs and proactively provide solutions on a regular basis. Stay in touch in order to make changes and adjustments when necessary. Secondly, be sensitive towards their limitations, especially regarding time sensitive projects. Good communication and planning ahead are key here. When approaching and pitching to potential partners, be aware of all your selling points and leverage them well. In addition, understand the value that you offer and make sure to communicate it well. Finally, prepare marketing materials and use any form of paperwork and references that can help you to deliver a successful presentation. (Verma 2013.)

The sharing of assets is ideally part of any partnerships. These assets can be tangible (resources) or intangible (reputation) in nature. Resources shared can consist of finances, expertise, infrastructure, labour and equipment. For a partnership to function effectively, each party's contribution must be clearly stated in a written contract. At the very least, the division of resources and the designation of responsibilities must be decided upon and understood by all parties involved. (Martin.)

The first focus when entering the early stages of a partnership should be on the benefits. It is recommended to write down a detailed list on how each involved party will benefit from a collaboration. Listing gains can also be supportive when defining the common goals of the partnership. Once the goals are clear, a detailed list of assets should be created. To have a 50/50 split of all assets is not the goal, but rather a fair division of benefits. In the following step, the responsibilities need to be divided equally and clearly. To be clear on what party has the bottom-line authority can be highly useful when facing issues or disputes later on. Finally, all that has been listed and decided upon should be entered in the strategic partnership agreement. This form of contract needs to then be signed by all parties involved. (Ashe-Edmunds.)

Business professionals agree on the most important steps when establishing a new partnership: Identify the need, evaluate potential partners, establish objectives and goals and define roles and responsibilities. Moreover, excellent communication channels are key to every long-term partnership. This includes not only the availability of staff and open ears, but also processes that allow to deal with issues and disappointments. Only when the partnership encourages honesty and feedback can it ultimately develop for the better. This

also leads to the necessity of a conflict resolution system. Misunderstanding can occur in any partnership and it's essential to then provide the ability to take criticism and solutions, as opposed to assigning blame. Ideally, these practices will form another important foundation for the partnership: trust. Through honesty and open communication this can be easily achieved over time. In addition, showing commitment is crucial as well. Make sure the staff and management are involved on both sides and that resources are fully committed as well. As long-term partnerships take time to establish and maintain, it is important to remain patient and open-minded throughout the process. Both attributes will allow for the parties to be receptive to their partners' needs and therefore be more able to see future opportunities. (Turnstone 2016.)

Most of what has been presented in this chapter is generic enough that it applies to partnerships between academia and businesses as well. However, a few viewpoints on how to make alliances work between universities and corporate businesses are presented in the following paragraphs.

**Demands and expectations:** The article "5 Keys to Unlocking Impactful Industry-University Collaborations" published by VentureWell in 2018, provides insight into understanding industry demands and expectations towards collaboration with academia. It is important to notice that academia works at a different pace than businesses, as they are operating on different markets with different demands. Additionally, the opinions on what makes great research are much more defined as opposed to the opinions on what makes a great product. As a result, the research that has been done by academia for a business, might not translate into immediate actions or major changes. This sense of understanding also needs to be there when approaching businesses in terms of academia's flexibility. A stiff approach from academia side might not sit well for businesses, as their demands and challenges are often unique. It is therefore essential to avoid a "one shoe fits all" approach when approaching potential business partners. Again, putting all expectations into a legal agreement can be highly beneficial.

While approaching businesses, it is important to be very clear on academia's expectations, resources and their level of sharing of knowledge and work load. This also needs to be communicated well. Ideally, academia would view any collaboration from the business point-of-view and then find an answer to the question what they can offer. Businesses often prefer to be approached with a concrete idea for a collaboration in mind, as opposed to just being told that academia could potentially help them. In addition, academia should be open for feedback and be willing to adjust their proposals for businesses if needed. Finally, networking and having advocates are essential for academia. To know the right contact person within a company is often the best way in. Academia needs to find platforms to

meet and stay in contact with business professionals; these platforms could be existing ones like conferences or could be created by the schools and universities themselves. (VentureWell 2018.)

Understanding their internal champions can be essential for academia as well. External faculty members and alumni can act as valuable advocates within organizations to promote partnerships with academia. Using internal software or social media can be useful tools to get in touch with alumni and their employers. The overall promotion of academia can be done digitally or in person. In person approaches can include the attendance of conferences, campus tours or workshops. Conferences should serve as platforms that focus on sharing best practices and promote collaborations. Academia might also want to have staff in place to act as customer service professionals, who act as a bridge between businesses and academia. (Davis 2018) In the Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus case, it could also be beneficial to attend gatherings of local businesses or recruitment fairs.

Companies increasingly recognize that to successfully innovate they cannot exclusively rely on their internal R&D. Working with academia allows them to access different pools of knowledge and additionally, save R&D costs. (Perkmann & Salter 2012)

Although academia has become a valuable innovation partner for many businesses over the last years, many still struggle to make long-term partnerships a success. Certainly, academia needs to consider of businesses needs and their challenges, however, a research published by MIT Sloan Management Review found that companies in particular need to move from an ad hoc approach to a more strategic approach when entering partnerships with universities. In an ad hoc approach, university collaborations are first and foremost established by individual researchers in the company and focus on specific needs identified by those individuals. These are often small and agile and nature and come with limitations; broader engagement is often lost. Although, this approach can potentially lead to many more projects, they can be ineffective and highly time consuming as each small project needs to be set-up individually. As a result, both sides have been aiming at a more strategic approach. Introducing strategic agreements in the companies, have allowed academia to become more of a priority and they are no longer dependent on individuals. Instead, companies select universities based on their expertise in an area of strategic importance to them. (Frølund, Murray & Riedel 2017) This is good news for academia, as this enables them to be considered for long-term and major projects as well. The change from incremental problem-solving to shared strategic work on grand challenges is important because it signals that academia are not just places to establish an extended workbench to solve predefined problems but also to tackle more ambitious challenges that have a more open-ended, exploratory emphasis. (Perkmann et al. 2012)

In order for companies to be well prepared for partnerships with academia, they need to have answers to the following questions: What business goals would drive the partnership, what are key focus areas and how do you align them with business goals, how are the existing academia partners and how were they chosen, what collaboration types match your goals, what people, processes and structures are in place to support partnerships and finally, what key performance indicators can be used for evaluating the success of partnerships. (Frølund et al. 2017)

For managers it is crucial to be aware of the differences within academia and organizational approaches and business models. For instance, academia has much more freedom conducting their research, whereas companies need to ensure protection of their intellectual property and products along the way. Furthermore, academia research is often long-term in nature, whereas industrial research is more time-sensitive and require day-to-day adjustments and problem solving. This can lead to the perception that academia is operation too slow and bureaucratic for companies. (Perkmann et al. 2012.)

Managers need to consider two key dimensions when considering working with academia: the time horizon and the degree of disclosure. Short-term collaborations are useful, common and relatively easy to facilitate for companies, if the time limitations and deadlines are properly set. However, academia often prefers a long-term approach and hope not to be made redundant after just one project. Going long-term with academia in the search for new ideas can unlock a range of possibilities for companies, such as the creation of an innovation ecosystem. These require investments and managerial attention to design and governance that may not have been required for short-term collaborations. (Perkmann et al. 2012.)

Perkman and Salter suggest the following four collaboration modes:

1. The idea lab, where managers put aside their desire for secrecy and work with academics to create new options and contacts.
2. The grand challenge, where managers and academics work together to create a new knowledge base that will be shared in the public domain.
3. The extended workbench, where managers work rapidly with university partners on proprietary problems and solutions.
4. Deep exploration, where the company creates rich and long-lasting relationships with university partners that, in turn, offer the business rights of first refusal to license collaboration results. (Perkmann et al. 2012.)

When determining the best model to follow with academia, managers should carefully assess the nature of the university they are working with. By considering the time horizon and degree of openness, managers can turn universities into valuable partners in both the short and long run, provided the partnerships are designed well in advance to meet both

organizations' goals. (Perkmann et al. 2012) This means for academia to be well prepared for questions and to have marketing materials and references on hand. Academia not only needs to know their value-adding strengths, but also need to be able to communicate them well and proactively.

Having investigated the key elements of successful alliances, it should be briefly discussed and applied to the commissioning team of this study. This chapter results in the following suggestion for the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus' components of long-term partnerships, illustrated in Figure 5 below:

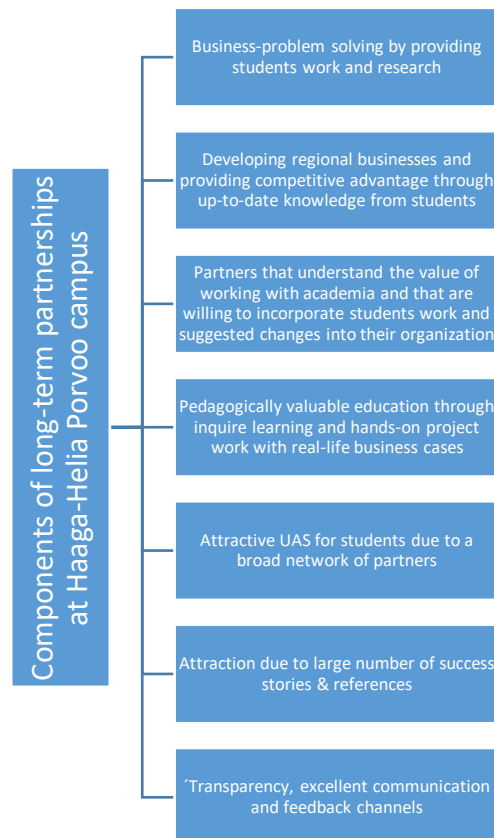


Figure 5. Components of long-term partnerships at Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus.

This chapter provided an insight into the types of partnerships and the elements of successful partnerships. It also made a determination of which model is the most applicable for this research and presented knowledge on how to approach and build successful partnerships between academia and businesses. The empirical part will show to what extent the theories apply in practice, if they have been used in the past and how they could possibly be used in the future. However, before that this research will continue with a chapter on methodology, clarifying how the research for this study has been conducted.

### 3 Methodology

The Methodology chapter provides the theoretical and philosophical background of the studies and allows insight into the choice of research approach, design and techniques as well as data collection method and analysis tools. (Denicolo & Becker 2012., 127.)

The research onion illustrate in figure 6 below, first introduced by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill in 2007 will serve as a foundation for this chapter and guide through the various layers and their application in this study.

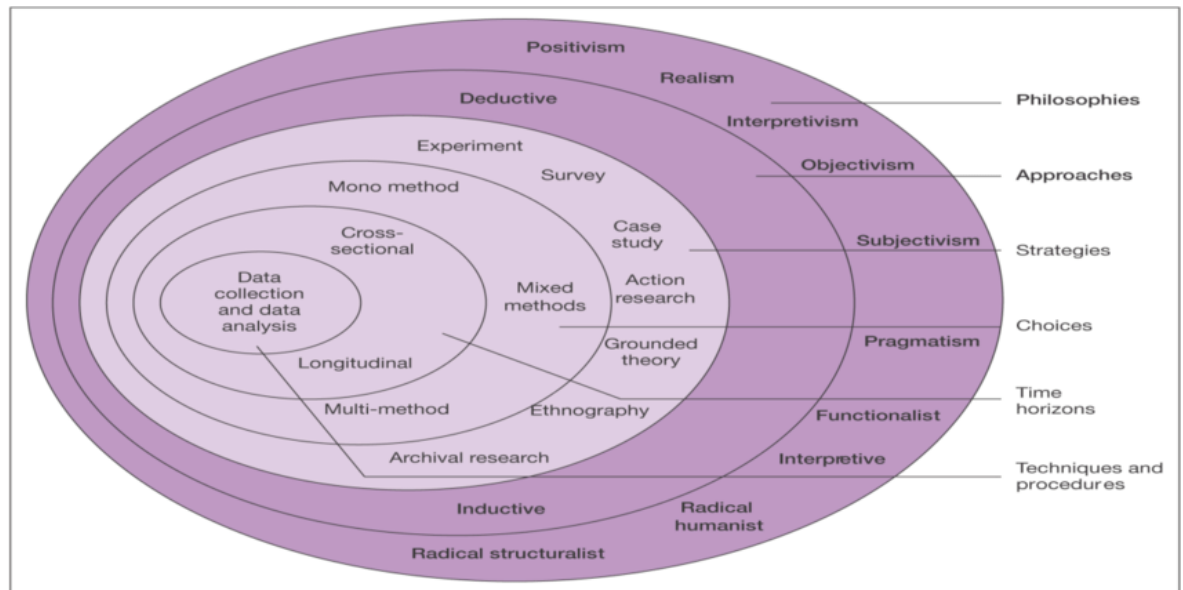


Figure 6. The research 'onion' (Saunders et al. 2007, 102.).

The various layers of the research onion are further introduced and discussed in the following sub-chapters.

#### 3.1 Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge in a particular field. These include assumptions about human knowledge (epistemological assumptions), about the realities in the research (ontological assumptions) and the extent and ways one's own values influence the research process (axiological assumptions). (Saunders 2009, 214.)

According to Saunders, this study is conducted in a positivism paradigm, though it includes characteristics of interpretivism as well. From an ontological perspective the study can be considered external, objective and independent. From an epistemology point of view, the study focuses on generalizations and breaking down data into simple elements. It is also only observatory with the aim to provide credible data and facts. Finally, as far as

Axiology is concerned, this study is conducted in a value-free way, as the researcher is independent of the data and remains objective. The data collection method that is most often used in a positivism paradigm is quantitative in nature and deals with large samples, unlike this study. An interpretivism paradigm on the other hand focuses on a qualitative approach with small samples and in-depth investigations. (Saunders et al. 2009, 119)

Positivism believes that accurate and value-free knowledge of things is possible, that humans, actions and institutions can be researched objectively. It acknowledges that it is possible to study tangible aspects, such as activities, behaviours and speech, but that it faces harsh limitation regarding intangible aspects like interpretation and motivation. It is the intention of this study – as well as of positivism – to create generalizations that help to predict behaviours and provide probabilities, without promising absolute certainty. (Fischer 2007, 17.)

### **3.2 Research strategy**

After the research philosophy has been defined, it was necessary to make a choice between a deductive or inductive approach. As this study does not have any pre-existing assumptions and aims at formulation new theories and strategies, the inductive approach seemed the suitable option. The inductive approach involves the development of a theory based on the results of the empirical data. (Saunders et al. 2009, 593.) Induction is furthermore associated with naturalism and grounded theory in terms of theory formation. (Denicolo et al. 2012., 126.) As such, grounded theory research was chosen to be the strategy for this study. In grounded theory research strategy, a theory is developed through a series of observations and interviews, principally involving an inductive approach to the study. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 592.)

In the following layer of the research onion it was easy to determine that this study follows a mono method approach, as it is based on qualitative research only. Therefore, a single data collection technique and the corresponding analytical procedures are applied. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 595.) Finally, in case of grounded theory, surveys and case studies a cross-sectional time horizon is chosen, as the research's questions are to be undertaken in a short or particular period of time. (Sahay 2016, 5.)

### **3.3 Data collection method**

At the core of the research onion we find the data collection and analysis layer. This subchapter goes into detail on the choices that have been for this study. The primary source

of information comes from interviews, conducted with the commissioning party and experts from local businesses. The secondary source were academic books and articles supporting the methodology chapter as well as being the foundation for the theoretical framework. In addition, various websites providing information on relevant models and theories were included in this study as well. In the final step of the research process, the commissioning party receives a PowerPoint presentation, illustrating the results of this study. The commissioning party's thoughts and feedback are considered and summarized in the conclusion part of this study. The PowerPoint presentation can be found as an appendix to this thesis.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

There are three stages of analysing data in grounded theory that were used in this study in order to analyse qualitative data. The first step is open coding, which involves line by line coding where concepts and keywords are identified and highlighted. The keywords are then moved into subcategories, then categories. The researcher can then make sense of the data, by breaking down the interview transcripts into conceptual components which allows first attempts on building theories. It is important that the data from one participant is compared to the other interviewees whilst looking for similarities. (Noble & Mitchell 2016) This is followed by the second step: Axial coding. This step focuses on identifying relationships and connections between the categories. In the final step, selective coding, the core category needs to be identified, which is then methodically related to the other categories. After refining all categories, they are then integrated together to form the grounded theory. (Noble et al. 2016.)

## **4 Empirical research**

This chapter begins with an insight into the research objective and the underlying development task. It also looks at the choice of research method and research questions in more detail. This is followed by the summary of interviews, looking at each participant individually. The overall outcome is then presented in the summary of research finding, which is followed by the analysis part. The chapter concludes with the research assessment.

### **4.1 Research objective**

The main objective of this thesis is to find development ideas and improvements in the current practice of seeking and approaching existing and new potential business partners. Ideally, this study results in practical advice for the staff at the Porvoo campus to incorporate in their future endeavours. Furthermore, the study aims at providing Haaga-Helia with

knowledge on how to approach businesses, how to communicate the benefits of a partnership and ultimately, what expectations the businesses have towards Haaga-Helia and potential collaborations. By improving Haaga-Helia's understanding of local businesses' needs and challenges they will be able to optimize their approach to them in the near future. Thus, they will have a concrete idea how to use their curriculum and students to help tackle these challenges.

The outcomes shall be practical and applicable to contribute to improvements and developments for Haaga-Helia. Further, it shall encourage further research on the topic to ensure more regular and valuable outputs. Furthermore, it aims at increasing interest and commitments at the Porvoo Campus to apply the suggested changes in the daily operation.

This study is conducted in a real-life context and in a qualitative manner. As such, the data collection method is in-depth interviews and investigations. The data needed for this study must provide information regarding the opinions and thoughts of businesses and their demands and expectations towards academia. It needs to clarify what SaMPo can do to be more attractive for businesses and how to create valuable strategic partnerships.

#### **4.1.1 Development task**

When Haaga-Helia was first approached in the early summer of 2018 to inquire about a potential thesis topic, Kaija Lindroth, who is the Degree Programme Director at the Porvoo Campus, mentioned the need for a better understanding of how to engage business partners more effectively and successfully. A SaMPo meeting was held to kickstart the research process. It also provided an insight into the staff, their daily work and more details on the research needs. The SaMPo team's discussion evolved heavily around the "how to" question when approaching and collaborating with local businesses. In essence, what are businesses' needs and expectations towards working with academia. This includes questions on how to promote the "win/win" situation more and what could be learned from other schools, particularly benchmarking cases from Germany and The Netherlands.

On May 28 the second meeting was held with the whole SaMPo team. When actual interview questions were discussed, the focus of the research was narrowed down to: What are companies' expectations? Do companies see any benefits in working with academia? And how would a collaboration work best for them?

Sirpa Lassila, Senior Lecturer and member of the SaMPo team, stated the importance of understanding companies' daily business challenges. Even though this is a broad ques-

tion, ideally the answers will provide a valuable insight into how SaMPo needs to approach companies and even how to align their curriculum and business model to meet the expectation of local organizations.

#### **4.1.2 Interview questions**

The meetings resulted in a clear list of questions that the SaMPo team had, which were summed up into three main categories: Companies previous experience with working with academia, companies' expectations and their business challenges. Each of the main questions is followed by three sub-questions in order to be able to focus more on specific areas of interest. As the questions were few in numbers, a qualitative approach seemed the logical choice. Furthermore, interviewing well selected individuals and companies that had experience with working with academia and adding input from the SaMPo team members themselves seemed like the right approach to this research.

During the research phase five people from local businesses have been interviewed in order to support the development task. The interviewees were: Petter Larsen from Cospace, Paula Ropponen from the Sipoo Municipality, Nanna Sundman from Ensto, Jan-Christian Forsman from the City of Porvoo and Anna Dementyeva from xEdu.

All interviewees were asked the same set of questions:

1. Do you have any previous experience with collaboration with academia? If yes, please briefly clarify briefly with what schools/universities you have collaborated with and what the duration of these were.
  - 1a. What type of collaboration did you/your company participate in (students for work placements, company presentation on campus, guest lectures, workshops etc.)?
  - 1b. What worked well with these collaborations? Also, what didn't work?
  - 1c. Would you be interested in future collaboration with academia?
  
2. From your company's perspective: What are your expectations towards collaborations with academia?
  - 2a. Do you feel like collaborations with schools and their students are beneficial for your business? Why/ Why not?
  - 2b. What skills, traits and knowledge do you expect students to have for potential work placements and internships?
  - 2c. What would an ideal collaboration with academia and their students look like for you and your business?
  
3. What are the business challenges your company is currently facing?

- 3a. Do you feel like academia and their students could help you with them?
- 3b. Besides student's work placements, do you see a way that academia could support you in dealing with your challenges?
- 3c. Do you feel like you are aware of the opportunities and benefits that could come from collaborations with academia? Have you been approached actively, seen any marketing materials etc.?

## **4.2 Summary of the interviews**

In this sub-chapter the research findings will be presented and summarized. It should be noted that this part of the study summarizes only, without any comments, interpretations and assumptions. Five people were interviewed for this study and are going to be briefly introduced.

### **4.2.1 The interviewees**

The first person to be interviewed was Petter Larsen. He is the founder and manager of Cospace in Porvoo. Located right downtown Porvoo, Cospace is a co-working facility that offers workspace and related services as a package to companies. One can buy a daily or a weekly ticket to a shared workspace or book a private room for a longer period. In addition, they offer several different kinds of meeting rooms with all necessary technology and equipment and act as a host for various events.

Paula Ropponen was the second person to be interviewed. She works as a publicity agent for the municipality of Sipoo, located right next to the capital region with a population of approximately 20.000.

Nanna Sundman was the third person to be interviewed and works as a Customer Care Manager for Ensto, a provider for electrical solutions for electricity distribution networks, buildings, marine and electric traffic. Ensto is an international technology company and a family business, founded in 1958 and employs approximately 1600 professionals in Europe, the USA and Asia. In 2017, the generated turnover was 261 million euros.

The last two people that were interviewed were Jan-Christian Forsman from the Porvoo City tourism and marketing unit and Anna Dementyeva. Dementyeva is working as a Program Manager for xEdu – Accelerating Education. xEdu, headquartered in Helsinki, is a European business accelerator for EdTech start-ups creating transformative learning solutions with pedagogical impact. From product development to market entry and internationalization, they offer coaching and mentoring, real-life testing environments for research

and development. In addition, they provide a global partner network of recognized leaders in the education business for start-ups.

#### **4.2.2 Previous experience with working with academia**

All interview participants had prior experience with working with academia. Their experience was not limited to Haaga-Helia only though; many had experience with other schools and Universities in southern Finland. They each talked about the unique projects they had, as well as various types of collaborations they had been a part of. In addition, the interviewees elaborated on their thoughts whether they found the collaborations to be valuable and if they would be willing to work with academia in the future again. The most common forms of collaboration, that the interview participants were a part of or aware of, were work placements, project work with students and thesis commissions.

The type of collaboration that Larsen has been part of vary, as there have been a few collaborations with universities, among them Haaga-Helia in Porvoo and with Porvoo International college (Point College). Larsen has personally been sparring the students of Haaga-Helia in business plan competitions. Furthermore, Cospace also arranged a large competition of their own called Uplift, in which Haaga-Helia acted as a sub-organizer. This event received more than 50 applicants and focused on business plans and startup companies. The top three applications from each category were selected to the grand finale, in which Haaga-Helia was represented by 3 finalists. Another small aspect of their work that makes student involvement easier for companies at their facilities, is the fact that customers of Cospace can also get extra desks for their trainees/interns without any extra costs, says Larsen.

Working for the municipality Ropponen has a lot of experience working with students and academia. Most collaborations have been students doing their work placements or their thesis work at the municipality offices. Ropponen has been part of two projects that were done with Haaga-Helia in particular. The first collaboration was done with the Porvoo Campus' students from the visual marketing and sales course. Here, students designed different brand guidelines for the municipality of Sipoo. This project was a success, as they ended up picking one group's design as their organization's new brand guidelines. In addition, they also hired two of the students to further work on the brand guidelines for a few months afterwards. In the second project, students were given the task to help the municipality to improve their image and become an attractive employer. The outcome here was various videos that the students made for recruitment purposes.

On the second project the student's work results varied more, Ropponen mentions. Some

were better than others. She believes that they had less chances to give feedback and it was challenging at times to match schedules, which also resulted in a lack of time. Nonetheless, Ropponen states that she would be interested in future collaborations.

Sundman has collaborated with Haaga-Helia and other universities during her work in HR and customer service. The collaborations consisted mostly of sponsoring master thesis projects and work placements. In addition, they worked with academia on a customer service project, which required several meetings and workshops with professors and students. The durations of these projects varied a lot: thesis projects usually last about 3-5 months, work placements take up to 6 months and the project of developing a customer service department took 3 months. The most time-consuming collaboration is to help students with their thesis, Sundman states.

Forsman and the Porvoo city tourism unit have worked with several schools and universities in the past, including the University of Helsinki, Laurea University of Applied Sciences and Haaga-Helia. The teams as well as the duration of the different projects have varied greatly; some have lasted just for a few weeks, others took months. All projects that they have worked on revolved around marketing and tourism, brand building and the city image. Specifically, with Haaga-Helia Porvoo city was involved with work placements, numerous presentations at the Porvoo campus and student projects in which the city acted as a partner. In addition, there have been collaborations in the form of workshops which take place on a regular basis.

xEdu has worked with different academic bodies in the past, for example with the University of Helsinki, in form of presentations or by bringing their start-ups to academic events in order to form new connections. They have started collaborating with the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus a year ago. The collaboration so far consisted of them presenting their organization to the staff and students, they acted as a speaker at an event and finally, offered their portfolio start-ups for potential student case works.

In Larsen's opinion, all collaborations with Haaga-Helia have worked well so far. When asked about whether he would be interested in future collaborations, Larsen states that he would be very much interested. This is due to their expansion to new facilities in February 2019. In addition to their current services, they are also opening a Cospace-Startup and Tech Hub with the intent to serve a younger generation and more newly established companies and startups, as well as universities, schools and students.

When asked what worked and didn't work with these collaborations, Ropponen states that they got a lot out of the first project with the brand guidelines. The student's work and results were very good and on a professional level. Ropponen appreciated the opportunity to be able to give feedback on many occasions during the project. As a result, they were very pleased with the outcomes. Further, the students that were involved were enthusiastic and committed, which contributed to the success as well. Also, their teachers managed to guide them well towards the goals. In the end, Ropponen states, they got a lot more out of the collaboration than expected.

According to Sundman what particularly seems to work well is working with responsible teachers that are guiding their students nicely during their studies and prepping them for the work placement. In terms of work placements, the longer the duration, the better it has been working for Ensto. If the internships are only a couple of weeks short, then the benefits for the company and the student are low. Another upside to internships is, that Ensto has recruited quite many of the students that have done their work placements there, tells Sundman. As a result of these positive experiences, Sundman says that they are certainly interested in more collaboration, especially work placements. She mentions, however, that they would be open to new projects and approaches as well.

Forsman states that the experience they had were greatly successful, resulting mainly in fresh and new ideas for their organization. He further characterizes the collaborations as uplifting for all parties involved. Students have the opportunity to work with actual business life projects and can get a foothold in companies and meet possible future employers. The city of Porvoo on the other hand receives valuable data and results from student's research projects, which can then be used within the organization for their own projects and developments. As a result, they are very interested in continuing collaborating with Haaga-Helia and other academia in the future. Forsman raises the question of whether it would be possible to increase the size of the collaborations; various smaller projects and groups working on a larger concept and scale as before.

The collaborations have all worked very well, as they were concrete and short in nature, tells Dementyeva. As a result, xEdu is interested in working together with academia in the future as well. However, a wider and more systemic approach to a collaboration has been missing, she says. Furthermore, Dementyeva finds the work with academia to be beneficial, especially for start-ups like them and students. Start-ups get project or research work done that otherwise they wouldn't have resources for, and students get to know working life better and do something that will be actually used.

### **4.2.3 Business expectations towards academia and students**

The expectations towards academia and their students varied greatly, depending on the companies' previous experiences as well as their unique challenges. Though all interviewees mentioned a broad array of skills that students should bring to the table, one aspect that became apparent during the interviews was, that businesses seem to value an eagerness to learn, curiosity and an active attitude above all else.

In regard to his expectations towards academia and future collaborations, Larsen states that he sees many parties involved that need to contribute in order to create successful collaborations: Cospace acts as a physical platform, that needs to be maintained and fueled by their own network, the City of Porvoo, local development organizations and public sector actors, to support startup companies and the academic bodies in the region. Larsen's intention is to use this physical platform to create internships and recruitment opportunities between companies and schools. Within this, he finds the collaboration with academia to be most beneficial.

Speaking of internships and recruitment, Larsen states that their customers are looking for broad and different skill sets, depending on the customers' type of business. Essentially, they have been looking for anything from marketing- to IT-skills.

When Ropponen was asked about her thoughts, she says that their expectations are that all involved parties, the municipality, academia and the students get something positive out of the collaboration. For the municipality it is particularly important that any project results in something that gives their organization an advantage and that lessens the workload on their own people. They do, however, also understand that the students and their learning experiences matter highly as well and that they contribute positively to the course contents.

The benefits are clear for Ropponen: They got something concrete and helpful out of all the projects they have done. Furthermore, it helps the municipality to raise awareness in terms of them being a potential employer for students in the future. The expectations towards students and their skills are clear as well: The municipality needs students to be ready to learn and to have basic knowledge of their field already. In addition, they need to have basic IT-skills, particularly MS Office. Finally, Ropponen always hopes that students can bring new ideas and perspectives to the organization.

Sundman's expectations towards the students' skill sets are short and clear: Attitude and openness are the most important ones. Anything else can be taught.

When asked about his expectation towards academia collaborations in the future, Forsman states that they hope collaborations to become even more data driven and based on behavioural psychology and statistics. In addition, projects based on hard facts and knowledge. In order to achieve this, the expectations towards students and their skills are simple: eagerness to learn new things constantly is considered the most important trait. Tourism is an ever-changing field of business and Forsman considers it extremely important to stay curious and up-to-date. Naturally, in their unit basic knowledge of tourism is considered a significant bonus.

Despite skilful students, it is also necessary to have clear and well-defined goals on both sides as well as enough time to execute projects properly, says Forsman.

As far as xEdu's expectations towards students are concerned, Dementyeva says the skills that are needed the most are a "can do" attitude and proactiveness. Regarding concrete expectations, Dementyeva says that a systematic approach for them would mean the creation of a bigger picture for the whole collaboration from the beginning. Equally important would be a regular follow-up from the academia side and the opportunity to provide and receive feedback along the way.

#### **4.2.4 Business challenges and potential academic solutions**

When the interviewees were asked about their challenges, the answers naturally varied tremendously, as this is unique to each business. The second part of the question inquired whether the interviewees believe that students and working with academia could potentially be helpful in tackling these challenges. Whereas the challenges varied, the shared opinion was that students have been and can be also in the future very helpful to local businesses.

For example, when looking at the questions whether he feels like students could help with Cospace business challenges, Larsen states that they potentially could, if there was a model that would make this very easy for both parties involved. One way he sees an opportunity for students to get involved is in the field of research. If a challenge arises that needs some research, he believes that students could find answers for them much quicker.

When asked about their organizations' challenges, Ropponen states that they have more than she could list. This is also due to the fact that they work in many different fields, each facing its own set of challenges. To name examples, Ropponen mentions reaching customers (the people who live/work/stay in Sipoo) amid information overflow. Also, changing

the organization and its personnel to work in modern ways and to be an expert organization is a constant challenge. Finally, there are economic challenges as well.

Ropponen believes that students could absolutely help with some of their challenges. Despite work placements, she believes that being part of the course work and the school's curriculum is a very good way for companies to get involved.

The biggest challenge that Ensto is currently facing is the fast-changing world. If we don't run as fast, then competitors will come and eat up our business, Sundman says. She sees the biggest potential for academia to help with this challenge by developing student projects that would analyse their business practices and look for development opportunities within specific areas.

Regarding the challenges that their organization is facing, Forsman lists the following: reaching out to the right target group, avoiding problems of over-tourism, building a working infrastructure to support tourism, having the right amount of resources (personnel and budget) and finding a balance between tourism and local living.

Academic studies can be used to foresee and prevent problems and create better practices for tour operators and tourist groups, says Forsman. In addition, he sees the broad assortment of nationalities in schools as a benefit, as this can further help them to better understand differences in culture. Furthermore, students can be helpful and supportive to their organization through studies, research papers and questionnaires.

When asked about their challenges, Dementyeva states that these are mostly financial in nature, as they are a start-up company. The way that academia could help here is by providing paid internships. Finally, Dementyeva explains that as a start-up, their resources are scarce, so it would be nice to have a systematic approach and follow-up from the academia side if they see that collaboration is mutually beneficial.

#### **4.2.5 Future collaborations and awareness**

The final part of the interview process focused on thoughts about an ideal collaboration; what it would look like and what would be needed to achieve it. In addition, the interviewees were asked about if and how they were approached by academia in the past and whether they feel like they are fully aware of all opportunities that could come from academia collaborations.

Three statements were made that give an insight into what an ideal collaboration with academia would look like for local businesses: When Larsen is asked what it would look like

for him personally, he states that he is looking for independent and highly motivated students, that are willing to learn from entrepreneurs and start-up companies via the learning-by-doing approach.

An ideal collaboration for Ropponen would mean a project in which the municipality, student and teachers are all enthusiastic about working together and where the outcome is something concrete and applicable. Finally, Sundman finds quite a few benefits when reflecting on their work with students that would be also ideal in the future: They get to know a lot of students, which means a great recruitment channel for the organization. In addition, they get easy access to new and fresh ideas from outside the company. Students are in her experience better at looking outside the box than consultancy bureaus. Also, having access to students is a cheap way for Ensto to develop in various business areas compared to hiring consultancy professionals.

Continuing with the final question, Larsen tells that he has been approached proactively from academia in the past. However, he also feels that a new model and way of approaching would help a lot. Seeing the need for better collaboration himself, he created Cospace – a new platform to bring companies and academia together.

Regarding her awareness of opportunities that could arise from working with academia, Ropponen states that she has never been approached actively by schools. After they started working with Haaga-Helia this improved a little. However, she also mentions that even after doing a broad variety of projects with academia, she still doesn't feel like she is aware of all the different opportunities and benefits that might be out there.

Regarding the issue of academia support at Ensto, Sundman also mentions that while she has some idea what Haaga-Helia can do for them, she is not certain that she has up-to-date information on all possible types of collaboration.

Overall, Forsman and their organization have seen the benefits that come from collaborations with academia. They were also pro-actively approached in the past and there is currently no need to change that.

As they haven't been approached actively in the past, doing that would be a first step in the right direction for future collaborations, says Dementyeva.

### **4.3 Summary of the interview findings**

A brief recap: This study made no assumptions beforehand about the potential answers and outcomes and aimed at asking all interviewees open questions in order to get the

most valuable input. This sub-chapter will summarize the main conclusions and findings that were identified while speaking to the business experts.

Overall, all interviewees were helpful and very knowledgeable when it came to their experiences with collaborations and their own organization, which made their input highly valuable for this study.

All interview participants had past experiences with academia collaborations with more than one school or university. Furthermore, the majority of collaborations were work placements, thesis projects and course projects; all short in nature. It became apparent that especially the long-term aspect of partnerships was missing. It was, however, a welcomed idea that local businesses are willing to participate in in the future. On an additional positive note, all interviewees had been happy with the results and outcomes of the collaborations and are therefore interested in continuing to work with academia. Some even provided suggestions on how to improve projects and collaborations in the future. Overall, working with academia was perceived to be beneficial for the organizations.

The expectations towards students were mostly revolving around character traits. Local businesses value attitude over knowledge and experience. When asked about specific expertise fields, the answers were broad: Any knowledge can be used in the organizations; from marketing to IT-skills. Furthermore, local businesses seem to expect pro-active approaches, teacher involvement, great project and time management skills and the opportunity to stay in touch and give feedback from academia.

It is difficult to summarize local businesses' challenges, as these vary greatly from organization to organization. It's fair to say that they each have them and all agreed that students and academia collaborations could help with tackling a few of them.

Finally, while all interview participants had experience working with academia and had been approached by schools and universities in the past, all mentioned in some form that they don't feel fully aware of all the benefits and types of academia involvement that are available. Having asked that final question, some even came up with a couple of quick ideas on how they potentially see to involve academia more in their business.

The following chapter will go deeper into the analysis of the interviews and allow for a more in-depth view on the research findings.

#### **4.4 Analysis of the interview findings**

As explained in the Methodology chapter, this study follows the grounded theory strategy. A commonly used approach to analysing the qualitative data is done through coding. This has also been attempted in this study. The tables that have been created in order to do the analysing and coding steps can be found in the appendix of this study. The three first tables are the most elaborate and illustrate the first step, also known as open coding. To make it more compact, the following table contains the questions as reference on the left and the keywords found in the answers on the right side. This step helps mostly by identifying broad areas of interest and themes of the interviews. In addition, it is highly supportive in breaking down longer answers into key components, which provides valuable in the next coding phases. When looking at the answers in the transcripts, the words that were essential for understanding the meaning of what was said were considered key words.

In the following phase all keywords are then added to appropriate sub-categories, focusing on the essentials and main themes of the answers. In the last phase of the open coding step, the sub-categories are then summarized into one main category.

After all main categories have been identified, the study proceeds to the axial coding phase. Here, the focus lays on identifying the relationships and connections between these categories.

In the final step, the selective coding phase, the core category of each question needs to be identified and be related to other categories. After this step these refined core categories then form the foundation for this study's grounded theory.

Based on the steps taken and illustrated in the tables created, the following three core categories have been identified: 1. Follow-up & maintenance of partnerships, 2. Meeting businesses expectations and 3. Creating awareness.

These core categories are not only the foundation for the grounded theory, but for the literature review as well. This results in a well-defined and focused search of available books and articles within the broad topic of business relationship management (BRM).

#### **4.5 Research assessment**

This sub-chapter looks at the research process and its methods and assess its reliability, validity, quality, limitations and overall value.

### **4.5.1 Reliability**

In order to ensure quality throughout this study, several steps are taken to ensure reliability. The data collection process happens through competent professionals that are highly knowledgeable. Throughout the study, the data collection process is documented thoroughly. The entire data is handled with great care and there are appendices available, containing all relevant documents to this study. The identity of the interviewees will be handled confidentially if requested; however, the outcomes and responses will be accessible for all readers of this study. The focus of this study is on its research problem and outcomes, not on the persons participating in the interviews. There is a focus on the interviewee if applicable, i.e. if a concrete plan for a collaboration is discussed or the interviewee is the contact person for future collaborations. The data analysis process is clearly documented and explained as well.

### **4.5.2 Validity**

There will be several points addressed in this study to ensure validity. To make this study valid, it is ensured that the findings and analysis are in sync with the provided research questions and theories. As this study creates difficulties to create generalizations, due to it being a real situation and context specific case, it nevertheless creates understanding and interest in this work for the reader. The outcomes intent to be practical and applicable and contribute to improvements and developments for Haaga-Helia. Further, it encourages further research on the topic to ensure more constant and valuable outputs. Naturally, it aims at increasing interest and commitments at the Porvoo Campus to apply the suggested changes in the daily operation.

### **4.5.3 Assessment of quality**

There were several steps taken in the research process in order to ensure quality: First, the process began with a couple of kick-off meetings to ensure that the objective and questions are well understood and clearly defined. In addition, the potential interviewees were contact persons known by the Haaga-Helia staff, ensuring reliable and knowledgeable sources. Knowledgeable interviewees, willing to provide their thoughts on the topic were another factor contributing to the overall quality of this study. Finally, all questions were created and asked as unbiased and non-leading as possible.

Secondly, the master program at Haaga-Helia contributed to the researcher's ability to prepare and conduct the interviews in a professional matter. Several courses, workshops and materials helped with the general preparation for the thesis writing process. Especially in the field of conducting qualitative research, Haaga-Helia offered a broad array of

resources and training opportunities. In addition, Haaga-Helia provided a knowledgeable thesis tutor, to ensure the academic viewpoint is considered and that valuable input for adjustments is given. Due to these adjustments, the focus has been narrowed down several times during the writing process to ensure that the topic doesn't become too wide or broad.

Thirdly, the research resulted in clearly illustrated insights from local businesses and actual suggestions on what to do next. A second round of literature review – to focus specifically in the areas resulting from the empirical research – refined the suggestions even more, adding ultimately to the value for the commissioning party. Finally, the thesis is structured in a clear and logical fashion, making it easy to follow and understand for the reader.

Like any research, also this study fell victim to a few limitations. First, the interviews were not conducted in person, so things being said lack interpretation possibilities and the answers need to be taken quite literally, as an interpretation of body language is missing completely. In addition, this study was conducted as a long-distance research. Potentially it could have been more effective if the researcher would have been more physically present – for the interviews but also at the campus in order to regularly touch base with the Haaga-Helia staff. Due to the long distance and a tight time schedule, the feedback from the commissioning party during the writing process is very limited. While it is being included in the second and final draft of this research, a more frequent input could potentially steer the process and outcomes of this study much more.

As far as the data collected is concerned: The data was not interpreted and analysed by multiple persons. As such, other interpretations were not considered. Further, there is only a small number of interviewees included in this research; each person representing a different organization which poses the risk of personal bias.

This study is valuable as it provides the commissioning party with feedback on the past collaborations as well as the willingness of businesses to continue and deepen the partnerships. It provided also insight into local businesses' expectations and thoughts towards collaborations with academia. This includes an insight into their challenges and how academia can potentially help to tackle them.

While it helps Haaga-Helia to understand their own shortcomings regarding raising awareness and proactively approaching local businesses, this study provides concrete sugges-

tions on how to change the current strategy to approach businesses in the future more effectively. Furthermore, it provided suggestions for future projects. Finally, this study suggests further research and development plans for refining the partnership strategies even more.

## **5 Discussion**

This chapter will present the results of this study. First, it will provide the reader with conclusions of the theoretical as well as the empirical part. This will result in development ideas and suggestions for further research. Finally, there will be a reflection on the thesis process and personal learning outcomes.

### **5.1 Conclusion**

To recap: the objective of this study was to provide SaMPo with knowledge on how to approach businesses, how to communicate the benefits of a partnership and ultimately, what expectations local businesses have towards SaMPo and potential collaborations.

The outcomes intended to be practical and applicable to contribute to improvements and developments within the SaMPo team. Additionally, it intended to encourage further research on the topic and stimulate interest to apply the suggested changes in the daily operation at the Porvoo Campus.

The objective was met, as the interviews clarified local businesses' expectations towards collaboration with academia. Businesses expect to be approached proactively and in a systematic manner. Additionally, they expect high teacher involvement and guidance, project and time management skills and the opportunity to communicate openly and give feedback. They expect that students mostly contribute through work placement, research and project works. Regarding their expectations towards students, it was interesting to see that businesses value attitude over know-how.

During the interview phase it became apparent that Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus faced shortcomings in the marketing and awareness area. Local businesses said that even though they had worked with academia in the past, they were not fully aware of what other opportunities could potentially stem from collaborations. Whereas work placements are common and familiar to everybody, long-term or bigger project opportunities seemed unknown. This realization led to the conclusion that developments within the SaMPo team need to focus heavily on raising awareness and marketing activities. The benefits were clear to all interviewees, so the next question became how to communicate them. That question is particularly tackled in the following chapters revolving around the development ideas. They include potential future projects, the recruitment of a BRM professional, the

creation of a partnership agreement and building a web presence. Furthermore, the question of how to approach businesses boiled down to this: Approach them through proactive marketing activities (such as flyers, brochures, posters), use the existing network to spread the word, collect and advertise references and success stories and finally, make use of digital solution, including outreach via websites, newsletter, partner portals etc. Regarding their practical applicability the suggested developments vary greatly. Most importantly, it depends on whether the changes can be done in-house or if they need external companies' involvement. To reach out to existing contacts to discuss future collaborations is easy and not very time-consuming. Creating marketing materials and their creation depends highly on who is creating them. To have this as an additional workload for teachers seems ineffective, whereas involving student with this can be very practical. To work on the digital outreach and web presence also depends on the existing resources. If the IT department within Haaga-Helia can extend the websites, it's a straight-forward project. If, on the other hand, the extension of such services requires an outside source, it immediately becomes an issue of time and budget. Therefore, the development ideas are followed by a strategy suggestion that can potentially help to tackle issues due to high budget and time requirements.

However simple or complicated they might be, all developments are practical in nature; none is theoretical and over time all of them could be implemented.

Finally, another objective was to encourage further research. One of the following chapters goes into detail on what further research would be recommended. This study is certainly a good foundation that can be used as a jumping-off point for additional projects, including benchmarking studies or investigating potential business sponsorships.

The main research question of the thesis was: How to engage business partners in a more strategic way in the International Sales & Marketing Degree programs at the Porvoo Campus? The literature review for this study resulted in three recommendations to make the approach more strategic: Recruitment of a BRM manager, the creation of a partnership agreement form and the creation of a clear vision.

The interviews illustrated the importance of marketing and raising awareness in order to act more strategic. They also clarified needs and demands, which resulted in a better understanding on what the selling point for Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus are. To be effective (and therefore more strategic) in the communication with potential partners, SaMPo should include the following selling points: Their inquiry based learning approach, stimulating student's curiosity and problem-solving skills, their students providing young, up-to-date, fresh knowledge and ideas into organizations and finally, the many forms a collaboration can take. With the latter it should be emphasized, that students can provide much

more than just doing a work placement or research work. As the interviews have shown, academia makes for a great provider of new ideas and young talents, they are an excellent recruitment channel and can be a great partner in business competitions and workshops. Even though it didn't come up in the interviews, Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus is a fantastic building with plenty of space and rooms to host meetings and conferences. Strategically using the spaces to create awareness and to get local businesses onto the premise is advisable.

During the research process and investigating the current approach to finding potential business partners, it became apparent that the digital possibilities were not been taken advantage of. This resulted in the strong recommendation to use the website as one of the main strategic approaches. It should be noted that this is based on the study author's work experience and not the literature review or the interviews. The recommendation focuses to one part on extending the websites, using them to display success stories, case studies, business professional's statement and references. In addition, the creation of a digital partner portal can be a great strategy in optimizing communication and marketing channels. Also, it holds great opportunities to effectively grow and nurture the partner network – as they could potentially be all accessed and contacted through one platform. Building IT services and a solid IT strategy to support SaMPo in their operations could be highly beneficial in the future.

There were additional questions to which this study intended to provide an answer to. The first one was: How to align industry and academia business models?

The literature review has shown, that rather focusing on aligning business models, academia and businesses should setup clear agreements and contracts. This is supported further through good communication channels and listening skills. All parties involved in a partnership need to be up-front about their expectations, the assets they are willing to share, as well as their limitations. Partnerships often fail due to mis-managed expectations, a lack of commitment and communication or an unfair divide of assets. However, mis-matching business models were not found to be an issue during the literature review process. It should be stated that the original research question was not in vain. Through researching potential alignment, it became clear that this study would benefit more from focusing instead on partnership agreements and contracts.

The second question was: What needs and challenges do local businesses have and how could the curriculum and student work help to solve these?

The interviews have shown that challenges vary greatly from organization to organization. All saw, however, opportunities for students to help with them. Whenever students get involved with organizations, the interviewees agreed that they contribute fresh ideas, out of

the box-thinking and up-to-date knowledge. Tasks and projects that can be externalized and therefore be done by students included research work on future trends and problem prevention and general research work on topics such as organizational optimization, recruitment improvement, reaching customers and challenges that arise from operating in a fast-changing world. All interview participants agreed that students can be of great help with tackling some of their challenges and were willing to work together with students.

## **5.2 Development ideas**

Based on the conclusions this study resulted in a variety of development ideas. The ideas are either based directly on the interview responses or the literature review for the theoretical framework of this study. In addition, suggestion and ideas that emerged during this study's writing process were included as well. Concrete documents that are resulting from this study can be found in the appendices.

### **5.2.1 Future projects with existing partners**

The interview phase of this study resulted in three different ideas for future projects with existing partnerships.

During the Ensto interview it became apparent that they have a need for optimization in various departments of their company. It was specifically stated that they would like to analyse which areas in the company could be developed and optimized further. While this is a broad topic now, it could be worthwhile to be in touch and discuss in which field or department optimization or development is required. If that is unclear, a student project could aim at investigating their business processes and efficiency. Once the area has been specified, it would make a good opportunity for a student project.

The municipality of Sipoo highlighted that they need talented employees, which led them needing a lot of support in developing their recruitment processes. The idea is a project in which the municipality and students go into detail on how to market them as an attractive employer in the future. Another project could focus on how students could be prepared best and most suitable for work life – leveraging the company's perspective on what they expect future hires to bring to the table.

As Cospace mentioned, the past collaboration included a start-up competition and it could be worthwhile to investigate the possibility to make this an annual event. Further, the expansion of their facilities can mean a higher likelihood for companies that rent the workspace to hire students for help. It would be worth discussing with Cospace whether they would be willing to support future marketing activities; by displaying poster and brochures for their customers for example. Another advantage can come from Cospace's network of start-ups and entrepreneurs. It should be investigated to what extent Cospace would be

willing to allow SaMPo access to their contacts. Approaching that network could hold great opportunities for both sides: start-ups can take advantage of students work and students would get hands-on entrepreneurial education in return.

The topic of missing marketing materials came up a few times during this study. Therefore, when thinking about future student projects, the generation of marketing materials came to mind first. The marketing materials could range from brochures and posters to digital marketing through websites and newsletters.

Overall, to raise awareness and use the students as advocates in their communities and work places can be highly beneficial for SaMPo. As such, projects involving the topic of creating awareness and brand building might be worth considering. References and success stories contribute greatly to any form of marketing. The collection and writing of these success stories could be done by students as well. This could be executed in the forms of conducting interviews – as it has been done in this study – or by publishing successful work placement reports. Reaching out to companies and high-level executives, while preparing and conducting interviews might be an interesting project for students to have.

### **5.2.2 Generate Marketing materials**

The interview results showed a clear lack of awareness, which highlighted the importance of all marketing materials; not only for communication purposes but also for raising awareness and brand building. Printed marketing materials, such as flyers and brochures, should highlight forms of partnerships, opportunities and benefits for companies with academia. References, success stories and quotes from business professionals should be added as well. In general, when publishing customer experiences and statements, case studies and reference projects are highly effective when approaching new potential partners. The interviewees in this study could be the first to approach for statements.

According to the interviews, the most common form of collaboration is work placements, which is a great way to establish connections with local business, but unfortunately is short-term in nature. Therefore, SaMPo could focus on strategies to make work placement long-lasting in their effects. One approach could be to develop partnerships with businesses that agree to annually provide internships.

Students have a tremendous outreach when searching and participating in their work placements. SaMPo could utilize this outreach as “a way in” and train students to act as advocates inside the organizations. If feasible, teachers could visit students during their work placements in local organizations and use this opportunity to introduce the team and partnership possibilities. Also, give students brochures and other marketing materials to

hand over to their employers. At the end of the work placement period, it could be considered to host an event, in which students present their experiences and reports. Inviting businesses to this event would be great PR, as well as a good platform to discuss future collaboration. Also, potential partners could be easily invited to this event to see first-hand what a work placement collaboration looks like in practice. How to take advantage of the work placement connections could be a topic for further research as well.

One reoccurring theme in the interview responses was the fast-changing business world and the challenges that come with that. Businesses seem to struggle with the constant demand of keeping up and staying up-to-date on knowledge and technologies. Students are the ideal group to consult and involve in this challenge. Therefore, when creating marketing materials, one focus should be on the advantages of bringing young generations into organizations.

### **5.2.3 Recruit a BRM Manager**

The theoretical framework for this research has shown the importance of a BRM manager in organizations to ensure a proper execution and protection of all BRM practices. As such, this study recommends recruiting a staff member or a new hire to take the role as BRM manager. Clearly defining and executing the role could contribute greatly to the effectiveness of winning new partnerships in the future. Not only would this be a professional, who dedicates his/her time fully to relationship management, it would also take the responsibility and pressure of the teachers; who can then focus on what they do best.

The educational background for this role would ideally consist of an MBA, a graduate certificate in a relevant field and a BRM certification. The work experience should consist of multiple years in a BRM function as well as hands-on experience of implementing and maintaining business initiatives and projects and finally, development and execution of management objectives. The most important skills required for this position are relationship-building skills, communication skills (including negotiations, conflict resolution and problem solving) and leadership. It is further beneficial to possess a high level of energy, focus, assertiveness and diplomacy. Leadership includes the ability to lead change and people by example in form of mentoring and motivating people. In addition, excellent business acumen, great presentation skills, understanding trends, strategies and other business functions as well as the ability to listen are important as well. (BRM Institute 2017)

Within Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus the BRM manager would need to focus on acting as the middle-man between the SaMPo team and business partners. He/she is the first point

of contact and should ensure that ongoing projects are maintained, that feedback is received and evaluated regularly and that there is a deep understanding of partners needs and expectations. He/she also needs to ensure that expectations from both sides are communicated and agreed upon well. In case it is needed, he/she would be responsible for creating the partnership agreement as well. Once communication channels are established, the BRM manager needs to focus on using these channels for educational purposes and measure and communicate business value on a regular basis. Internally the BRM manager would also be required to act as BRM advocate, ensuring that a strong focus always remains on strategic relationship building.

As finding and creating business partnerships would be the key responsibility for this role, the work outside of Haaga-Helia would look as follows: The BRM manager strategically coaches business leaders, partners with relevant management teams within the organization, identifies potential partners and their long-term business needs, integrates these needs into the curriculum and project work for students, while maintaining a strong focus on value.

Furthermore, it would be vital to ensure that teachers and project leaders are knowledgeable about their business partners. An evaluation process and feedback should be integrated into the project work with business partners on regular basis as well. (BRM Institute 2017)

#### **5.2.4 Create a partnership agreement**

The literature review has shown that many professionals in BRM highly recommend the creation of partnership agreements or contracts. To have a set agreement in place might affect the dedication and commitment of all parties involved tremendously; as most things are taken more seriously the moment a contract is attached to it. In addition, working out an agreement is an easy way to make sure all expectations and limitations are clearly stated and documented. This can be hugely helpful in attempts to avoid conflicts and disappointments during the partnership. Overall, when time and effort is spent on the setup of the agreement, it stands to reason that both sides will value the partnership more. A higher level of dedication would be the natural result of such mindset. Moreover, the creation of project or research contracts, as well as partnership agreement, could be a great task for students as well. These agreements would give them a great insight into business negotiations, clear communications and even legal aspects.

Such agreement could also provide potential new partners with a sense of security. There is the possibility of companies unwilling to externalize some of their work or to involve students, as they need to protect their products and underlying patents, intellectual properties

(IPs) etc. Offering such companies an agreement that also has a confidentiality clause in place, makes Haaga-Helia look more professional and trustworthy.

### 5.2.5 Create a web presence /partner portal

Looking at the current situation, Haaga-Helia mentions partnerships and partners only in one graphic on the website, shown below in figure 7:



Figure 7. Partners of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. (Haaga-Helia 2019)

The picture shows great organizations with even greater reputation and outreach. Thus, the suggestion emerged to expand the web presence through publishing success story, case and project works, interviews and statements by those partners. This approach can also work vice-versa: Haaga-Helia could request to be mentioned on their partners' websites and use the exposure to draw in more attention and awareness from external sources. Once a success story has been written, it should be easy to publish it on multiple websites. As a positive add-on, any organization can use their work with students as PR and should therefore be interested in publishing results and collaborations.

Another idea is the creation of a partner portal. This requires more IT services than just publishing articles and references, it could however, hold great potential for existing and future partnerships. This partner portal would be a platform that allows existing and potential partners to communicate (with each other and Haaga-Helia), get to know each other and make the distribution of news and marketing materials more effective. It would also make outgoing mail and marketing activities much more targeted and defined. This overall improved outreach would also result in easier maintenance of existing partnerships.

### 5.2.6 Define a vision and mission statement

Haaga-Helia already has a partnership statement on the website which is rather broad and general; it could be beneficial to create a statement specifically for the Porvoo campus. Such a statement would be highly valuable for any marketing materials and for making it easier for future hires to understand what the SaMPo team is thriving towards. In addition, having a vision and mission is proven to give a company or a team a direction and functions as a reminder why they exist.

One suggestion can be found below, which directly resulted from the theoretical framework of his study:

*HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus is looking for local companies to help each other and work towards a common goal. The foundation of a partnership consists of sharing of knowledge, research and physical spaces to achieve a common objective. Even though the collaboration aims at long-term benefits, all parties involved remain apart from each other.*

This vision and mission statement should also be part of any web presence and easily accessible for potential partners.

### 5.3 Feedback from the commissioning party

In April 2019 the writing process for this study came to its final stages. All development ideas presented in the sub-chapter above were briefly summarized and illustrated in a PowerPoint presentation. It should be noted, that this presentation can also be found as an appendix to this study. Marika Alhonen, Senior Lecturer at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus and member of SaMPo, kindly provided her thoughts on the results. First, she states that it is true that the business partners are vital to their way of learning on the Porvoo campus. Also, she agrees with the statement her colleague Yücel Ger made by saying that finding good partners is currently based on personal networks and one's ability to seeing opportunities. She adds however, that it has never felt hard to engage companies to work with students; on several occasions SaMPo had to leave some of the projects out. Overall, she continues, it would be good to take a more systematic approach towards approaching partners, especially on a local level, which is often left out of the Haaga-Helia common partnership management. While it should be certainly more systematic, it should not become too rigid though. This is due to SaMPo's feeling that a very structured approach applied in Haaga-Helia centrally does not fit the way of working in Porvoo. What is needed is a flexible system to build partnerships with the project partners. For the future, Alhonen states, we need to look at the Porvoo Campus as a whole, not only at Sampo separately. For the main suggestion made in the presentation, to assign somebody to the role of BRM Manager, this means that the appointed person and his/her

tasks should incorporate also the other programmes in Porvoo. Finally, Alhonen believes that a BRM role is most likely not a full-time job, but rather part of a lecturer's or project manager's responsibility.

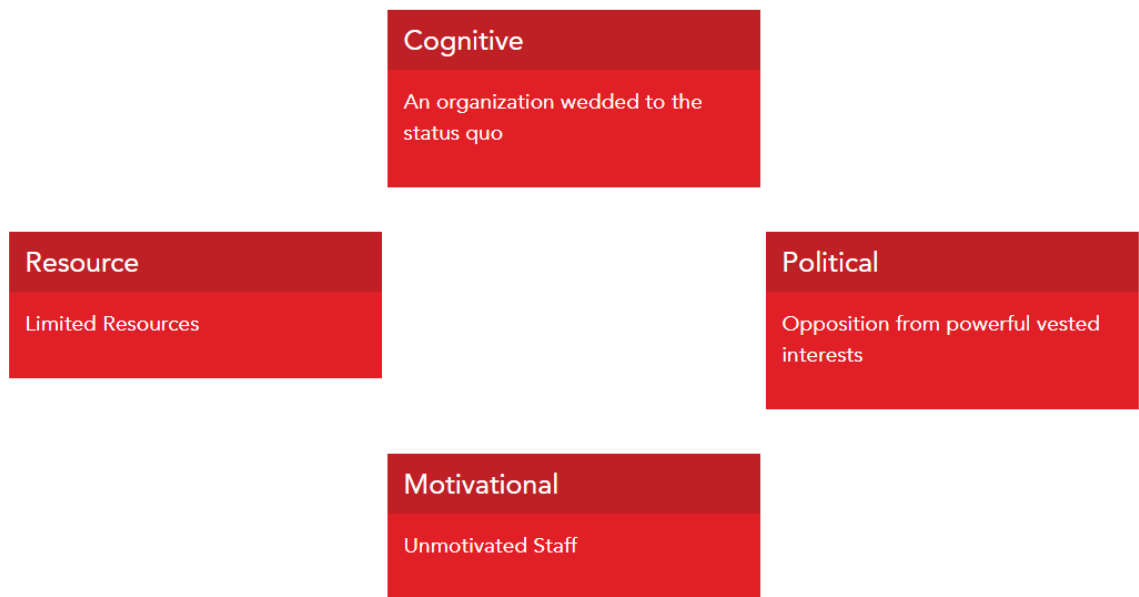
#### **5.4 Building and implementing a new approach**

On January 7 2019, President of the Caribbean Maritime University (CMU), Professor Fritz Pinnock was speaking at a leadership development webinar focusing on the Blue Ocean Strategy, at the University of the West Indies (UWI) Regional Headquarters. In his speech, he encouraged heads of educational institutions to employ the Blue Ocean Strategy as a transformational tool, suggesting that a school does not only need principals and high-class teachers, but CEOs that run the schools as well.

Even though the Blue Ocean strategy is commonly known as a management and leadership paradigm often used in the business world, Pinnock states that it can also be applied to academia as well. This is achieved through the utilisation of transformational teaching and learning to meet industry needs. In essence, he states that "We go from industry to classroom as opposed to classroom to industry. As a result, we enjoy the highest placement of graduates in jobs within six months after completion, of which 89 per cent find their way into productive employment". Additionally, Professor Pinnock says utilisation of the Blue Economy Strategy has also resulted in student enrolment moving from 289 to 6,000, the staff complement growing from 38 to over 900, and revenue increasing by 6,479 per cent in 10 years. (Smith 2019.)

Inspired by that article, this chapter will briefly look into the opportunities for SaMPo to use this innovative idea to use the Blue Ocean paradigm as a foundation for a new business partnership strategy. At the very least, with the recommendation made in this study, looking at Blue Ocean can provide insight into what hurdles to expect, how to potentially tackle them and how to implement new ideas efficiently.

Considering a Blue Ocean approach brings a lot of new challenges with it. In order to unlock it, it is important to be aware of obstacles that may arise. Companies may face four different types of hurdles to strategy execution. Knowing how to tackle them is key to successful strategy execution. (Kim & Mauborgne). Figure 8 below illustrates the four hurdles and what they entail:



© Chan Kim & Renée Mauborgne. All rights reserved.

Figure 8. The four hurdles of strategy execution. (Kim & Mauborgne)

SaMPo could jump over the cognitive hurdle, by emphasizing the importance of the change and by providing detailed information on what that change entails and how it affects the organization, as well as the individuals working there. Additionally, SaMPo could also take advantage of tipping point leadership, a leadership approach developed by Kim and Mauborgne, to implement Blue Ocean strategy.

The conventional theory of organizational change rests on transforming the mass. To change efforts are focused on moving the mass, requiring steep resources and long time frames — luxuries few executives can afford. Tipping point leadership developed by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, by contrast, takes a reverse course. To change the mass, it focuses on transforming the extremes: the people, acts, and activities that exercise a disproportionate influence on performance. By transforming the extremes, tipping point leaders are able to change the core fast and at low cost to execute their new strategy.” (Kim & Mauborgne.) Figure 9 below will illustrate this further:

## Conventional Wisdom

The theory of organizational change rests on transforming the mass and these efforts require steep resources and long timeframes.



## Tipping Point Leadership

To achieve a strategic shift at low cost, focus on the extremes – the people, acts, and activities that exert a disproportionate influence on performance.



© Chan Kim & Renée Mauborgne. All rights reserved.

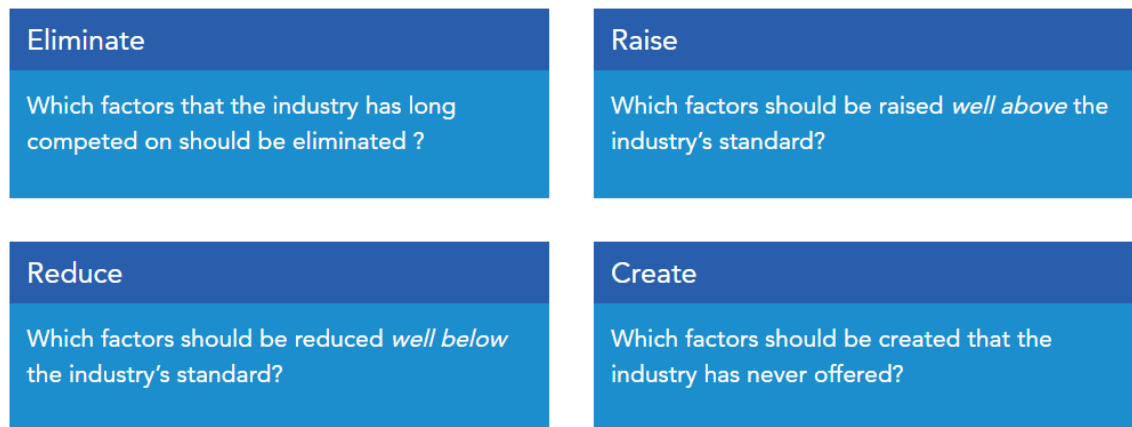
Figure 9. Tipping point leadership. (Kim & Mauborgne)

Any organization, facing these obstacles, will look typically at ways to increase budgets to counter the status quo and gain additional resources, motivate staff and knock-out the opposition. The most successful strategy implementations, however, do not require bigger budgets. They require someone to identify and act upon the factors that have a disproportionate influence within the organization. This is called Tipping Point Leadership. A tipping point leader exploits the fact that in every organization there are things, like people or activities, that have influence on performance. (Intrafocus 2016.)

People, who are often the most valuable asset, find it difficult to change. Rather than focusing on numbers and statistics, tipping point leadership will show employees the reality of the situation on a more emotional and sensory level. Regarding the resources hurdle, a tipping point leader will focus on the existing resources and follow the so-called 80/20 rule. Meaning, that 80% of the benefit can be gained through focus on 20% of the problems. It is crucial to identify the area of activity that will benefit most from applied resources. Furthermore, motivating staff to accept strategic change should always be considered a priority. Rather than providing mass information and running internal campaigns, the tipping point leader would focus highly on key individuals in the organization; those with a high level of influence. Getting these key players on board with the new strategy will automatically lead to the rest following over time. Finally, it is time to face the political and opposition hurdle. Opposition will most likely come from those that feel disenfranchised or believe that changes will negatively impact them. The best way for the tipping point leader to deal with it is firstly through gaining understanding on the workings of the organization and

its people. The leader can then collect information about different levels of support. Secondly, it is important to deal with the opposition quickly and early on. This can be done through appeasement and ensuring they understand what their new role will be or through radically letting them go early in the knowledge they will not provide a positive influence. (Intrafocus 2016.)

The Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create (ERRC) Grid developed by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne is a simple matrix like tool that drives companies to focus simultaneously on eliminating and reducing, as well as raising and creating while unlocking a new blue ocean. (Kim et al.) Obviously, this grid is not geared towards academia – as the whole Blue Ocean strategy- but could be applied after undergoing a few modifications. This grid, illustrated in figure 10 below, allows organizations to create a new strategic profile, which is essential to unlocking a new Blue Ocean strategy.



© Chan Kim & Renée Mauborgne. All rights reserved.

Figure 10. ERRC grid. (Kim & Mauborgne)

Based on this study, the grid could be applied as follows:

Things to raise include the level of pro-activeness when finding new partners, follow-up activities to nurture existing partnerships and feedback opportunities during student projects. Things to create include a managerial role, someone who is acting as the bridge between academia and businesses, digital services and marketing materials.

To make statements about what to reduce or even eliminate are difficult to make at this point, as this study focused on changes, rather than criticism of the current strategy.

## 5.5 Suggestions for further research

Due to the strict time limitation, this study and its results did not have the luxury to be tested. All development ideas when implemented in the future, have no possibility to be

evaluated and further fine-tuned in this study. Thus, there is an opportunity for another researcher to re-visit this study in a few months, evaluating what development ideas have been executed, what changes were made (if any) and what results did these actions bring to the commission party.

The first idea that was suggested early on during the kick-off meeting was to investigate other countries for benchmarking purposes; The Netherlands and Germany in particular. Even though that was too big of an undertaking to include in this study, a lot can be learned from other cases and countries. Even though that study would need to take local regulations into consideration, ideas on how to approach potential business partners and develop long-term relationships with local business should be generic enough to apply at the Porvoo campus as well.

Another point that was raised early on, but not included in this study was how the local business involvement could potentially help with tuition fees in the future. A further research could investigate whether sponsorships or scholarship could be made available by companies to support students in their studies in order to tackle declining application numbers. Based on this, a quit-pro-quo system could be developed, stating what companies can expect in return for offering sponsorships.

The issue of tuition fees also resulted in students preferring to live in Helsinki instead of Porvoo, in order to have more job opportunities to support themselves. As such, a further research could investigate opportunities for the city of Porvoo to be more attractive for students to live in. One main research question could be how the city could create a network of companies that are willing to tackle this issue collectively. After all, the city and local business might benefit greatly from a high number of international students living and working in the city and it's worth looking into what opportunities that might bring.

Having suggested the generation of a web presence among the development ideas, another potential research could focus on investigating web and IT solutions not only to create a website but also an online portal that would make collaborations, contacting, networking and referencing easier and more effective in the future.

Finally, a major development idea was the generation of marketing materials. While this study made an attempt at clarifying their importance and potential content, it does not provide a ready-made product. A further study with a heavy focus on partnership marketing could be conducted to develop marketing materials on a broad scale; meaning not only hand-outs but also consider conference and fair presence, digital marketing etc.

## 5.6 Thesis process and learning outcomes

This thesis process started in the summer of 2018 and ended in spring 2019. During these 10-month period I moved from Porvoo, Finland to Austin, Texas. This was a huge and time-consuming undertaking that had a tremendous impact on the thesis writing process. The start was very successful, and I was very happy to receive feedback from Kaija that they are willing to act as the commissioning party. When participating in the two meetings to kick-start and discuss the thesis, I felt very motivated. The team members were clear on their needs and expectations and were also willing to provide support along the way. I am highly appreciative of them giving me such a good start and their willingness to discuss their work and challenges with me. Also, later in the process the team has been very responsive to any inquiry I had, and they provided me with excellent input and feedback to my first thesis draft.

When thinking about the outcome I feel very critical of myself. The honest bottom line is: I did not do the best I could. I did the best under the circumstances.

These circumstances include the fact that moving to the US took weeks of preparation, weeks to execute and even more weeks to settle in the new country. All this time I was unable to work on this study. Once I had a basic setup ready that allowed me to write the thesis, I found myself far away and in a completely different time zone from all potential interviewees and the SaMPo team. This made the interview process much more challenging and limiting than I had hoped. It was originally my intention to conduct all meetings face-to-face, to have a much higher quantity of them and to even meet with new potential partners, as opposed to just existing contacts. Having had very high ambitions for this study from the beginning, as well as my wish not to let the commissioning team down, this study felt often like a huge disappointment in the making. A feeling that I am not accustomed to, especially after having been very successful with the rest of my master studies. To put minimal effort into something or to just “make do” is against my personal attitude and convictions, which is why I wish I would have had better circumstances during this thesis process. That being said, I do believe in looking at the bright side, which I will attempt in this paragraph. Firstly, I feel a sense of relief that this thesis was completed within the planned timetable. I am further grateful for the guidance, feedback and support I have received from my thesis tutor, the commissioning team and the interviewees. Further, I like to think that this thesis ended with valuable suggestions: for further research as well as changes that SaMPo could undertake in the future. Since this study did not provide all the answers or perfect solutions for all demands, it can however be used as a great jumping-off point for further inquiry.

Personally, I learned a lot during the thesis process. This included personal growth with understanding that perfection cannot always be attained, that ambitions and expectations sometimes need to be adjusted to circumstances and that the pressure of wanting to deliver perfection can be crushing at times.

On an educational level I learned how to conduct research. Having basic knowledge from the work on my bachelor's thesis certainly helped, however, learning about research methods and philosophies was much more complex this time around. I also learned what the expectation towards master theses are and what guidelines Haaga-Helia had set. As far as the thesis itself is concerned: I learned a lot about how the SaMPo team operates and what their pedagogical approach looks like. I got an excellent insight into collaborative work amongst teachers and students, as well as different teaching methods. I got an excellent understanding of why business involvement is crucial for the Porvoo campus. Moreover, I learned what needs and expectations local businesses had towards partnerships. Having learned about the inquiry learning method, here a short reflection on how I learned: During the kick-off meetings and interviews I learned through careful listening and vigorous note taking. Later in time I tend to go back to those notes and use them as a foundation to create more questions and further areas of interests. I ask myself if anything is still unclear, I double-check that I have asked all the questions I intended to, and I check whether I made notes on what to include in this study. During the actual writing process, I learn through reading articles, books and references and summarizing the main points. To embed those main points in my memory even further, I sometimes re-read summaries and chapters that I have been writing. Finally, I learn through reflection on what I wrote during the day. Often, I get ideas on how to continue and what to add to the thesis when stepping away from the laptop.

Overall, I would like to state that I appreciate the education I have received from Haaga-Helia. Absolutely everything in my life has changed during my master studies and I am grateful that the university was willing to give me the time I needed to sort things out and finish my studies.

On a final note, I actually wish I could apply for the role of BRM manager recommended in his study in order to continue the work that I have started with this thesis. I believe that to be a challenging, but very rewarding field of work that has the potential to shape Haaga-Helia and the city of Porvoo greatly in the future.

## References

Ashe-Edmunds, S. What Are the Basic Elements to a Strategic Partnership? Azcentral Republic Media. URL: <https://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/basic-elements-strategic-partnership-10593.html> Accessed: 16 March 2019.

Blue Ocean. ERRC GRID. URL: <https://www.blueoceanstrategy.com/tools/errc-grid/> Accessed: 21 March 2019.

Blue Ocean. TIPPING POINT LEADERSHIP. URL: <https://www.blueoceanstrategy.com/tools/tipping-point-leadership/> Accessed: 21 March 2019.

BMJ Journals 2016. Noble, H. & Mitchell, G. 2016. Research made simple – What is grounded theory. URL: <https://ebn.bmj.com/content/19/2/34> Accessed 3 February 2019.

BRM Institute 2019. About Business Relationship Management. URL: <https://brm.institute/about-business-relationship-management/> Accessed: 18 March 2019.

BRM Institute 2019. The House of BRM. URL: <https://brm.institute/wp-content/uploads/the-house-of-brm.png> Accessed: 18 March 2019.

BRM Institute 2017. The Role of the Business Relationship Manager. URL: <https://brm.institute/the-role-of-the-business-relationship-manager/> Accessed: 18 March 2019 & 19 March 2019.

BusinessDictionary 2019. Definition of strategic partner. URL: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/strategic-partner.html> Accessed: 16 March 2019.

BusinessDictionary 2019. Definition of strategic alliances. URL: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/strategic-alliance.html> Accessed: 16 March 2019.

Cambridge Dictionary 2019. Definition of strategic partnership. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/strategic-partnership> Accessed: 16 March 2019.

Corzo, J. 2015. R&D. How Academic Institutions Partner with Private Industry. URL: <https://www.rdmag.com/article/2015/04/how-academic-institutions-partner-private-industry> Accessed: 18 March 2019.

- Cospace 2019. Create – Work – Inspire. URL: <https://www.cospace.fi/> Accessed: 18 December 2018.
- Davis, M. 2018. eCampus News. 5 ways for universities to build corporate partnerships. URL: <https://www.ecampusnews.com/2018/06/08/5-ways-for-universities-to-build-corporate-partnerships/> Accessed: 18 March 2019.
- Denicolo, P. & Becker, L. 2012. Developing research proposals. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Ensto 2019. Making life better with electricity. URL: <https://www.ensto.com/en-US/> Accessed: 20 December 2018.
- Ensto 2019. About Ensto. Ensto in brief. URL: <https://www.ensto.com/en-US/company/about-ensto/ensto-in-brief/> Accessed 20 December 2018.
- Fisher, C. 2007. Researching and writing a dissertation. A guidebook for business students 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. FT Practice Hall.
- Frølund, L., Murray, F., and Riedel, M. 2017. MIT Sloan Management Review. Developing Successful Strategic Partnerships with Universities. URL: <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/developing-successful-strategic-partnerships-with-universities/> Accessed: 18 March 2019.
- Guido, M. 2017. Prodigy Blog. All About Inquiry-Based Learning: Definition, Benefits and Strategies. URL: <https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/inquiry-based-learning-definition-benefits-strategies/> Accessed: 19 March 2019.
- Haaga-Helia. Porvoo Campus. URL: <http://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/about-haaga-helia/campuses/porvoo-campus?userLang=en> Accessed: 3 June 2018.
- Haaga-Helia. Organization. URL: <http://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/about-haaga-helia/organization?userLang=en> Accessed: 3 June 2018.
- Haaga-Helia. Haaga-Helia Strategy. URL: <https://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/about-haaga-helia/haaga-helia-strategy?userLang=en> Accessed 3 June 2018.
- Haaga-Helia. HAAGA-HELIA'S PARTNER COLLABORATION. URL: <http://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/services/haaga-helias-partner-collaboration-0> Accessed: 19 March 2019.

Haaga-Helia. DEGREE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL SALES AND MARKETING, PORVOO. URL: <https://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/education/bachelor-degree-programmes-english/degree-programme-international-sales-and-marketing?userLang=en> Accessed: 23 April 2018.

Intrafocus 2016. Four Hurdles to Strategy Execution. URL: <https://www.intrafocus.com/2016/10/four-hurdles-to-strategy-execution/> Accessed: 21 March 2019.

Kim, C. & Mauborgne, R. Blue Ocean. FOUR HURDLES TO STRATEGY EXECUTION. URL: <https://www.blueoceanstrategy.com/tools/four-hurdles-to-strategy-execution/> Accessed: 21 March 2019.

Martin, M. What Are the Basic Elements to a Strategic Partnership? Chron Hearst Newspapers, LLC. URL: <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/basic-elements-strategic-partnership-35782.html> Accessed: 16 March 2019.

Perkmann, M. & Salter, A. 2012. MIT Sloan Management Review. How to Create Productive Partnerships with Universities. URL: <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-to-create-productive-partnerships-with-universities/> Accessed: 18 March 2019.

Powerlinx 2019. TYPES OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS Which type of partnership is the right fit for your business? URL: <https://www.powerlinx.com/resources/types-strategic-partnerships/> Accessed: 16 March 2018.

ResearchGate 2009. Saunders, M. 2009. Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309102603\\_Understanding\\_research\\_philosophies\\_and\\_approaches](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309102603_Understanding_research_philosophies_and_approaches) Accessed: 6 February 2019.

ResearchGate 2016. Sahay, A. 2016. Peeling Saunder's Research Onion. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309488459\\_Peeling\\_Saunder's\\_Research\\_Onion](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309488459_Peeling_Saunder's_Research_Onion) Accessed: 6 February 2019.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. 2007. Research Methods for Business Students 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Pearson Education Ltd. Harlow.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. 2009. Research Methods for Business Students

5<sup>th</sup> edition. Pearson Education Ltd. Harlow.

Sipoon kunta 2019. About Sipoo. URL: <http://www.sipoo.fi/en> Accessed: 20 December 2018.

Smith, A. 2019. Jamaica Information Service. Educational Institutions Urged to Employ Blue Ocean Strategy. URL: <https://jis.gov.jm/educational-institutions-urged-to-employ-blue-ocean-strategy/> Accessed: 21 March 2019.

Turnstone. A Steelcase Brand. 2016. 10 Ways to Ensure Your Strategic Alliances Are a Success URL: <https://myturnstone.com/blog/10-ways-ensure-strategic-alliances-success/> Accessed: 16 March 2019.

VentureWell 2017. Industry and University Collaboration: How Partnership Drives Innovation. URL: <https://venturewell.org/industry-and-university-collaboration/> Accessed: 16 March 2019.

VentureWell 2018. 5 Keys to Unlocking Impactful Industry-University Collaborations. URL: <https://venturewell.org/industry-university-collaborations/> Accessed: 18 March 2019.

Verma, S. 2013. 6 CORE ELEMENTS OF DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS. OpenView Venture Partners. URL: [https://labs.openviewpartners.com/strategic-partnership-6-core-elements/#.XI\\_jsShKiUk](https://labs.openviewpartners.com/strategic-partnership-6-core-elements/#.XI_jsShKiUk) Accessed: 16 March 2019.

Wolpert-Gawron, H. 2016. Edutopia - George Lucas Educational Foundation. What the Heck Is Inquiry-Based Learning? URL: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/what-heck-inquiry-based-learning-heather-wolpert-gawron> Accessed: 19 March 2019.

xEdu 2019. About xEdu and our Community. URL: <https://www.xedu.co/#about> Accessed: 23 January 2019.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Coding transcripts from interview analysis

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
1. Do you have any previous experience with collaboration with academia? If yes, please briefly clarify briefly with what schools/universities you have collaborated with and what the duration of these were.	Petter Larsen / Cospace	Yes, we have been working with Haaga-Helia in Porvoo and with Porvoo International college/Point College	Working with , Haaga-Helia Porvoo
	Paula Ropponen / Municipality of Sipoo	Yes, but personally only on two projects with Haaga-Helia. Other than that, my workplace, the municipality of Sipoo, has had many kinds of collaborations, especially several students here for work placements from universities and other schools on many different occasions.	Two projects, workplace, collaborations, many different occasions
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	Personally, in my responsibility areas, which has been HR and Customer Service, I have collaborated with Haaga-Helia and additionally with some other Universities when helping students write their master's degrees. We have also had students for work placements. The duration for the final assignments has usually taken 3-5 months. When developing customer service department, the project took around 3 months and students work placements have usually been quite long, approx. 6 months.	Helping student with master thesis work, work placements, projects
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	We have done multiple collaborations with different academia in Porvoo and Helsinki. The partners have varied from universities to schools. The durations have also varied in great extent, some projects have lasted for a few weeks while other months. We have worked with for example the University of Helsinki, Laurea and Haaga-Helia universities of applied sciences. Due to our work, most projects have been conducted around marketing and tourism, brand building and city image.	Multiple collaborations, partners, varied durations, projects,
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	We have started collaboration with Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus a year ago. We've also done some collaboration with University of Helsinki for example by coming to speak or inviting our startups to events connected to our area of expertise.	Started collaboration a year ago

Question	Interviewee	Answer	Keywords
1a. What type of collaboration did you/your company participate in (students for work placements, company presentation on campus, guest lectures, workshops etc.)?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	We have done a few collaborations with universities. I have personally been sparring the students of Haaga-Helia in their business plan competitions. We have also arranged a large competition of our own called Uplift. Haaga-Helia was a sub organizer of this event. We had two categories, business plans and startup companies and we received more than 50 applications. The top three from each category were selected to the grand finale. From the total of six finalists, 3 were somehow connected to Haaga-Helia.	Few collaborations, sparring, students, business plan competition, arranged, competition, sub-organizer, event, start-up companies, applications, finalists connected to Haaga-Helia
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	Work placements. Some students have done their thesis or researches in collaboration with Sipoo, on subjects that also are of interest to our organization. Myself I have collaborated on two projects with Haaga-Helia, specifically with Porvoo Campus students of visual marketing and sales programs. On the first project students designed as a part of their course different brand guidelines for the municipality of Sipoo and we ended up picking one groups design as our organizations new brand guidelines. We also hired two of the students to further work on the brand guidelines for a few months. One second project students worked also as a part of their studies on Sipoo's image as an employer and for example made videos that we can use in recruiting new employees.	Work placements, thesis, research, of interest to organization, students designed, part of course, hired two, further work, a few months, image as an employer, recruiting new employees
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	When guiding students in writing their final assignments, the collaboration with the student has taken most of the time. Additionally, meetings with professor has been organized. With the customer service project, we had some common workshops and meetings.	Final assignment, guiding students, additional meetings with professors, common workshops, meetings
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	We have collaborated in great extent with students from HAAGA-HELIA. Students have performed work placement for Porvoo City and our department has been a part of numerous presentations on campus. Haaga/Helia has also executed student projects with Porvoo city as a partner. Workshops are also attended on a semi-regular basis.	Great extent, work placements, numerous presentations, executed student project, workshops, semi-regular basis
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	We presented xEdu to students and staff, took part in an event as a speaker and offered our portfolio startups for student case work.	Presented, speaker, event, portfolio, case work

Question	Interviewee	Answer	Keywords
1b. What worked well with these collaborations? Also, what didn't work?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	I would say that all the collaborations have worked well so far	Collaboration, worked well
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	We got a lot out of the first project with brand guidelines. The students work results were very good and on a professional level. We had a chance to give feedback on many occasions and we were very pleased with the results. The students that were involved were enthusiastic and committed and their teachers managed to guide them well towards our goals. We actually got a lot more out of the collaboration than we expected before the project. On second project the students work results varied more. Some were better than others. I think we also had less chances to give feedback on their work than on the first project. So, I believe that effected a lot with the results. Sometimes it was also difficult to get our busy experts and students' schedules to match and find time together fast enough.	Work results, very good, professional level, chance to give feedback, many occasions, very pleased with results, students involved, very enthusiastic, committed, teachers managed and guided, results, effect on results, schedules, match, time, fast enough
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	Regarding development projects the teachers are very responsible and they are nicely guiding the students. We have had only good experience of having students for work placements. The longer the period is the better for us. If it is short, only a couple of weeks, then the benefits are quite few - both for student and company. We have actually recruited quite many of the ones that have done their practice in our company.	Development projects, responsible, teachers guiding students, good experiences, work placements, longer periods, actually recruited, practice
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	We have had many great success stories with student collaborations and have received many new and fresh ideas for our work. Most collaborations have been positive and uplifting experiences for both parts.	Success stories, fresh ideas, positive and uplifting experience
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	It works fine with concrete spontaneous actions like mentioned before. A wider or more systematic approach is missing.	Concrete actions, systematic approach missing

Question	Interviewee	Answer	Keywords
1c. Would you be interested in future collaboration with academia?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	Very much. We are expanding to some new facilities in February 2019. We are opening a Cospace-Startup and Tech Hub across the street from our current facilities. The Hub will serve a younger generation and more newly established companies and startups, as well as universities, schools and students.	Very much, expanding, new facilities, opening, start-up and tech hub, serve a younger generation, newly established companies, support, start-up companies, universities, schools and students
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	Yes.	
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	Yes, for sure. Especially having more students for work placements, but why not new projects as well.	Work placements, new projects
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	We are definitely interested in continuing and deepening collaborations with HH and other academia in the future.	Definitely interested, continuing and deepening
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	Yes, interested to collaborate in the future too. We are hoping for a more systematic approach though.	Interested, hoping for systematic approach

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
2. From your company's perspective: What are your expectations towards collaborations with academia?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	We want to be a physical platform powered by the Cospace network, the city of Porvoo, local development organizations and public sector actors, to support both startup companies and the universities and schools in the Eastern Uusimaa -region.	Physical platform, network, city of Porvoo, development organizations, public sector, support, start-up companies, schools, universities, region
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	Our expectation is that we both, students or academia and our organization, get something positive out of collaborations. Something that we can use to our organizations advantage and something that meets the amount of work the collaboration takes from us. Of course, it is also important that students have the learning experiences that they are supposed to have during their courses.	Expectations, something positive, collaboration, organizations advantage, work amount, learning experience courses
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	N/A	

	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	We hope to see more inspiring collaborations in the future. We expect collaborations to become even more data driven and based on behavioral psychology and statistics. Projects based on hard facts and knowledge.	Inspiring collaborations, data driven, based on behavioral psychology, statistics, project based, hard facts, knowledge
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	Once again, a more systematic approach and more follow-ups as well as creating a bigger picture for the collaboration.	Systematic approach, follow-up

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
2a. Do you feel like collaborations with schools and their students are beneficial for your business? Why/ Why not?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	Yes, we want to use this physical platform for internships and recruitment between companies, schools and universities	Physical platform, internships, recruitment
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	Yes. We have got something concrete out of all the projects that I have experience of. Also, collaborations help us to raise awareness of us as a potential employer among the students.	Something concrete, projects, experience, raise awareness, potential employer
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	One advantage is for sure that we get to know students and it can be a good recruitment channel. We also get new fresh ideas from outside our company. It has also been quite a cheap way of developing in comparison with consultancy bureaus - that are of course more professional and effective on the other hand. But students are maybe better in looking outside the box.	Get to know students, good recruitment channel, fresh ideas, outside the company, cheap way of developing, outside the box thinking
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	We believe the collaborations are beneficial for both the students and us. Students have the opportunity to work with actual business life projects and can perhaps get a foothold in companies and meet possible future employers. We on the other hand receive valid data and results from students and are able to use this information on our own projects.	Beneficial for both, opportunity to work, business life projects, future employers, receive valid data, results, information

	Anna De-mentyeva / xEdu	I feel that collaboration is beneficial both for startups and students. Startups get project work or research done that otherwise they don't have resources for and students get to know working life better and do something that will be actually used.	Beneficial, project work, research, resources, working life
--	-------------------------	---	---

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
2b. What skills, traits and knowledge do you expect students to have for potential work placements and internships?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	Anything from marketing skills to IT-skills, our customers are looking for different skill sets.	Marketing, IT-skills, our customers, different skill sets
	Paula Roppo-nen / Municipality of Sipoo	We expect students to be ready to learn and also already to have basic knowledge of their field. They need to have also basic skills on working with Office-programs and rest depends a lot on what their area of work is. Also, we hope that students can bring new ideas and perspectives.	Ready to learn, basic knowledge of their field, basic skills in of-ice-programs, new ideas, new perspec-tives
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	Attitude and openness are the most important skills according to my mind. The rest can be teached.	Attitude and open-ness, rest can be taught
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	The most important trait for a student in this field is the hunger to learn new things. This is an ever-changing field of business, as is work life in general, and it is extremely important to stay curious. Basic knowledge of tourism and travel is naturally a significant bonus.	Hunger to learn, ever changing field, curi-ous, basic knowledge of field a significant bonus
	Anna De-mentyeva / xEdu	"Can do" attitude and proactiveness.	Attitude, proactive-ness

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
2c. What would an ideal collaboration with academia and their students look like for you and your business?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	Independent students with high motivation to learn by doing taught by entrepreneurs and startup-companies.	Independent, high motivation, learn by doing, taught by en-terpreneurs, startup-companies
	Paula Roppo-nen / Municipality of Sipoo	An ideal project is where both us and the stu-dents and their teachers are enthusiastic about working together and we all get something con-crete out of the collaboration.	Enthusiastic, working together, something concrete

	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	N/A	
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	Open communication and clear goals from both sides. Time to execute and pull through different projects. Perhaps different projects could form a larger concept? Different groups working together on a larger scale.	Open communication, clear goals, time to execute, larger concept, larger scale
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	N/A	

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
3. What are the business challenges your company is currently facing?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	N/A	
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	We face many different kinds of challenges since we have many fields in which we work. So, there are more challenges than I could name here. But for example reaching our customers - the people who live, work and stay in Sipoo - in the midst of the information overflow that surrounds us all. Also changing our organization and personnel to work in modern ways and to be the expert organization that we need to be. Of course, there are always economic challenges also.	Different kind of challenges, reaching customers, information overflow, changing organization, personnel, modern ways, expert company, economic challenges
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	I guess one of the biggest challenges definitively is the fact that the world is changing so fast. If we don't run as fast, then competitors will come and eat up our business.	World is changing fast, competitors, eat up business
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	The business challenges for Porvoo as a tourist attraction are quite the same as for many small cities: reaching out to the right target group, avoiding problems of over-tourism, building a working infrastructure to support tourism, having the right amount of resources, personnel and budget, and finding a balance between tourism and local living.	Business challenges, reaching out, target groups, avoiding problems, building working infrastructure, right amount of resources, right personnel and budget, balance
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	We face mainly financial challenges.	Financial challenges

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
3a. Do you feel like academia and their students could help you with them?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	Potentially yes, if the model is made easy for companies and universities alike.	Potentially yes, model, made easy, alike
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	Absolutely, at least with some of the challenges.	Absolutely, some challenges
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	Maybe some lectures could be good and why not have projects where we would analyze what could be developed within our company - maybe some specific area.	Some lectures, projects, analyze, develop, specific area
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	Academic studies can be used to foresee and prevent problems and create better practices for tour operators and tourist groups. The broad assortment of nationalities in schools can also help out with differences in culture. There are many things students can help us with.	Academic studies, foresee and prevent problems, better practices, broad assortment of nationalities, differences in culture, help
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	As a startup, our resources are scarce, so it would be nice to have systematic approach and follow-up from the academia side if they see that collaboration is mutually beneficial.	Resources, systematic approach, follow-up, bigger picture

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
3b. Besides student's work placements, do you see a way that academia could support you in dealing with your challenges?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	Yes. I believe that academia can help find the answers we are looking for much quicker.	Help, find answers, looking for answers, quicker
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	Well, we have good experiences of collaboration during a whole course. I believe that that is a very good way for many projects.	A whole course very good for projects
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	N/A	
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	Studies, papers and questionnaires are very helpful tools and support our work to a great extent.	Studies, papers, questionnaires
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	Internship paid by the academia could be one option to help. Also, Haaga-Helia staff work rotation period would be an interesting option.	Internship paid by academia

Question	Interviewee	Answers	Keywords
3c. Do you feel like you are aware of the opportunities and benefits that could come from collaborations with academia? Have you been approached actively, seen any marketing materials etc.?	Petter Larsen / Cospace	I have been approached, but I believe a new model would help a lot. Hence, we are putting together a new model where we, Cospace, offer both companies and universities a platform for collaboration.	Been approached, a new model, companies, universities, platform for collaboration
	Paula Roppo- nen / Municipality of Sipoo	I myself haven't been approached actively, at least not before we started working together with Haaga-Helia. I would say that I'm not aware of all the different opportunities even after being involved in collaborations.	Havent been approached actively, started working together, not aware of different opportunities
	Nanna Sundman / Ensto	I have some idea since we have collaborated with Haaga-Helia, but I'm not fully sure that I have the freshest information on new possible things.	Some idea, not fully sure, about freshest information or new possibilities
	Jan-Christian Forsman/ City of Porvoo	We are approached actively and have seen the benefits of collaboration.	Been approached actively, seen benefits
	Anna Dementyeva / xEdu	We haven't been approached actively.	Havent been approached actively

Questions	Keywords
1. Do you have any previous experience with collaboration with academia? If yes, please briefly clarify briefly with what schools/universities you have collaborated with and what the duration of these were.	Haaga-Helia Porvoo, Point college, Universities, schools, projects, collaborations, different occasions, master thesis work, work placements, projects, multiple collaborations, partners, varied durations, projects, started collaboration a year ago, few collaborations, business plan competition, sub-organizer, event, start-up companies, applications
1a. What type of collaboration did you/your company participate in (students for work placements, company presentation on campus, guest lectures, workshops etc.)?	Sparring students, business plan competition, events, work placements, thesis, research, course work, hired two students, further work beyond project, image as an employer, recruiting new employees, final assignment, guiding students, additional meetings with professors, common workshops, meetings, work placements, numerous presentations, executed student projects, workshops, presented, speaker, event, portfolio, case work

1b. What worked well with these collaborations? Also, what didn't work?	Worked well, work results, very good, professional level, chance to give feedback, very pleased with results, students involved, very enthusiastic, committed, teachers managed and guided well, results, schedules, match, time, fast enough, development projects, responsible, teachers guiding students, good experiences, work placements, longer periods, actually recruited, work practice, success stories, fresh ideas, positive and uplifting experience, concrete actions, systematic approach missing
1c. Would you be interested in future collaboration with academia?	Very much, expanding, new facilities, opening, start-up and tech hub, serve a younger generation, newly established companies, support, start-up companies, work placements, new projects, definitely interested, continuing and deepening, interested, hoping for systematic approach

Questions	Keywords
2. From your company's perspective: What are your expectations towards collaborations with academia?	Physical platform, network, support, start-up companies, schools, universities, region, something positive, collaboration, organizations advantage, work amount, learning experience, courses, inspiring collaborations, data driven, based on behavioral psychology, statistics, project based, hard facts, knowledge, systematic approach, follow-up
2a. Do you feel like collaborations with schools and their students are beneficial for your business? Why/Why not?	Internships, recruitment, something concrete, projects, experience, raise awareness, potential employer, get to know students, good recruitment channel, fresh ideas, outside the company, cheap way of developing, outside the box thinking, beneficial for both, opportunity to work, business life projects, future employers, receive valid data, results, information, project work, research, resources, working life
2b. What skills, traits and knowledge do you expect students to have for potential work placements and internships?	Marketing skills, IT-skills, different skill sets, ready to learn, basic knowledge of their field, basic skills in MS office programs, new ideas, new perspectives, attitude and openness, rest can be taught, hunger to learn, ever changing field, curious, basic knowledge of field a significant bonus, attitude, proactiveness
2c. What would an ideal collaboration with academia and their students look like for you and your business?	Independent, high motivation, learn by doing, taught by entrepreneurs, startup-companies, enthusiastic, working together, something concrete, open communication, clear goals, time to execute, larger concept, larger scale

Questions	Keywords
3. What are the business challenges your company is currently facing?	different kind of challenges, reaching customers, information overflow, changing organization, personnel, modern ways, expert company, economic challenges, world is changing fast, competitors eat up business, moving fast, business challenges, reaching out, target groups, avoiding problems, building working infrastructure, right amount of resources, right personnel and budget, balance, financial challenges

3a. Do you feel like academia and their students could help you with them?	Potentially yes, easy made model needed, absolutely with some challenges, some lectures, projects, analyze, develop, specific area, academic studies, foresee and prevent problems, better practices, broad assortment of nationalities, differences in culture, help, resources, systematic approach, follow-up, bigger picture
3b. Besides student's work placements, do you see a way that academia could support you in dealing with your challenges?	Help, find answers, looking for answers, quick answers, a whole course very good for projects, studies, papers, questionnaires, internship paid by academia for financial challenges
3c. Do you feel like you are aware of the opportunities and benefits that could come from collaborations with academia? Have you been approached actively, seen any marketing materials etc.?	Been approached, a new model needed, need for platform for collaboration, haven't been approached actively, not aware of different opportunities, some idea, not fully sure about freshest information or new possibilities, been approached actively, seen benefits, haven't been approached actively

Question	Sub-categories	Main category
1.	Variety of academia, variety of experience, types of collaborations, varied length of collaborations	Experience with academic bodies
1a.	Project work, work placements, thesis projects, types of collaboration, meetings, recruitment	Types of academia collaborations
1b.	Success stories, results, professionalism, teacher guidance, positive experiences, new ideas	Results of academia collaborations
1c.	High level of interest, new opportunities, expansion, start-ups	Future opportunities

Question	Sub-categories	Main category
2.	Start-ups, positivity, work, advantages	Organizational advantage through academia collaborations
2a.	Work placements, concrete actions, projects, recruitment, development, opportunities, resources, fresh thinking	Beneficial collaborations for local businesses
2b.	Various skills, attitude, eagerness to learn	Skills expected from students
2c.	Motivation, learning from professionals, communication, goal-driven, large scale	Characteristics of ideal collaborations for businesses

Question	Sub-categories	Main category
3.	Broad variety of challenges, fast changes, constant change, resources, competition	Local business challenges
3a.	Help and support, academic advantages	Possibilities for academia to help business with their challenges
3b.	Answers needed, course work, project, academia support	Needs from local businesses that academia can tackle
3c.	Platform needed, difference in awareness, lack of knowledge on opportunities and possibilities, improvements in approaching needed	Awareness of possibilities

Questions	Notes for axial coding - relationship and connections between categories
1. - 1c.	1. Collaborations are common, have been very positively received, collaborations with academia have brought real results for local businesses, this all results in great opportunities in the near future
2. - 2c.	2. Lots of benefits and advantages for local businesses to work with academia, businesses have a clear idea what their expectations towards students and academia are
3. - 3c.	3. Local business face a broad variety of challenges, with which academia could help a lot, one of the main challenges is the fast and constant changes in the modern world, which is an ideal challenge to work with young generations on, businesses need support from academia, awareness one of the main things for academia to focus on

## Appendix 2. PowerPoint presentation of development ideas



Notes: This is the thesis results presentations; presenting all development ideas and focusing on the next steps in more detail of one them.



Notes: Above the presentation of all development ideas that were suggested in the thesis, including the suggestions on when they could be started. It's important to note that some of the suggestion are highly time-consuming and might take month to implement and develop. The suggestion of the web presence may even require research. Therefore, the suggested starting dates only refer to when the suggestions should be considered / discussed and potentially initiated. The focus of this presentation shall be on one particular development idea, highlighted above as bold text.

---



## BRM MANAGER AS A ROLE - SETUP



**Who:** The SaMPo team

**When:** Spring 2019 – before the summer break

**What:**

- Discuss on whether a BRM Manager is considered useful / valuable for the team members
- Decide on whether this should be the role of someone within the team or a new hire
- Check within Haaga-Helia the availability of financial resources
- Clearly define what the tasks of the BRM Manager should be and what expectations the team has towards that role
- Write a job description based on the tasks and expectations
- (Consider to ) Publish the job advertisement and receive applications during the summer break

Notes: This slide presents the steps that the SaMPo team could take before the summer break in their pursuit to add a BRM manager to this role. While there might be things that can't be predicted, for example the availability of budget, it can be beneficial to decide on tasks and expectations and have a fundamental discussion if this development idea is considered valuable by all team members. In this discussion, the possibility of an existing team member filling this role should be discussed. An internal hire would avoid the challenge of having to find budget for a new hire. A crucial decision that needs to be made here is when to publish the finalized job advertisement. The summer might be a nice opportunity to collect applications: however, it might also cause a loss of momentum for suitable candidates. As such, it should be considered to start the search for a BRM Manager with the new semester after the summer

---



## BRM MANAGER AS A ROLE - IMPLEMENTATION



**Who:** The SaMPo team

**When:** Autumn 2019 – with the autumn / winter semester

**What:**

- Publish the job advertisement and review applications
- Conduct job interviews
- Choose the right candidate for the job
- Introduce the BRM Manager to the team and familiarize that person with the campus, the team and workspace
- Hold introductory meetings in which the goals and expectations of the team and the BRM Manager are discussed and agreed upon

Notes: The steps presented on this slide only apply in case the decision was made to go with an outside hire. Important considerations for the introductory meetings: These are the foundation of the future work

together. The BRM Manager needs to make sure to present his/her plan and strategy with this new role, while making sure that the expectations of the team are met. Goals need to be discussed and agreed upon; including a clear understanding of how much time the team will need to allocate (on top of their teaching task) to support the BRM Manager. In return, the new manager needs to have a comprehend understanding of how much support and time he can expect from the SaMPo colleagues. Later on, regular meetings between the team and the new BRM Manager will be critical to ensure that all projects are clearly defined and on track/ in sync with the team's degree programs and timetables.

## BRM MANAGER AS A ROLE - EXECUTION

**Who:** The BRM Manager

**When:** Autumn 2019 – first weeks on the new job

**What:**

- Act as a middle-man between the SaMPo team and business partners
- Maintain ongoing projects
- Research and contact potential business partners
- Coach and educate businesses on the advantages of collaborating with academia
- Integrate businesses' needs and projects into the curriculum
- Receive and evaluate business partner's feedback on regular basis
- Ensure a deep understanding of partners' needs and expectations
- Build and secure a constant communication channel between SaMPo and their partners
- Create a partnership agreement form
- Measure business value of the partner activities for Haaga-Helia on regular basis; make adjustments if necessary
- Internally act as BRM advocate, ensuring that a strong focus always remains on strategic relationship building

Notes: The slide above presents the tasks of the new BRM Manager; including the external and internal role and responsibilities. The first weeks on this job would be filled with understanding the status quo and getting an overview of past and current business collaborations. Early on, the new manager should begin with networking locally and contacting potential business partners. In order to do so, the BRM Manager also needs to create suitable marketing materials and presentations; as well as a partnership agreement. In the near future the role needs to focus on creating and maintaining efficient communication channels: With the partners to receive feedback and develop the activities; and internally with the SaMPo team to ensure that BRM remains a focus.



# THANK YOU



For your valuable time

For the opportunity to work with you

For your guidance and input during the thesis writing process

For your feedback and thoughts on the thesis outcomes and this presentation