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Expanding a Finnish Language Training Company into Sales Training

Assessing Market Demand and Business Viability in Finland

Thesis

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Thesis abstract

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This thesis explores the feasibility of expanding the services of PNP Crossing Borders Oy into the Finnish sales training market. The thesis aims to assess the level of market demand, to understand business expectations regarding training services, and to evaluate whether such an expansion would be strategically beneficial. The topic was selected due to the student's and the company's shared interest in the topic; the company already had expertise in corporate training and an interest in diversifying their service offering.

The research employed a mixed-methods approach. Primary data was gathered through a survey and two interviews. The first interview was structured, and the second was informal. The survey collected responses from professionals in various industries in Finland. The survey focused on respondents' use of and attitudes toward sales training. The interviews were used to deepen the understanding of training needs and purchasing behavior from a managerial perspective.

The findings indicate that sales training is widely recognized as important. Although the actual investment varies by company size and awareness, sales training is widely recognized as an important part of sales. Flexibility in format, relevance to real work tasks, and moderate pricing emerged as key factors influencing training decisions. The results support the conclusion that the Finnish market offers realistic opportunities for entry, provided that services are tailored, competitively priced, and offered bilingually.

¹ Keywords: Sales training, Adult learning, Outsourcing, Finnish market, Training providers

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Opinnäytetyön tiivistelmä

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Tässä opinnäytetyössä tutkitaan PNP Crossing Borders Oy:n palveluiden laajentamisen mahdollisuuksia Suomen myyntikoulutusmarkkinoille. Tavoitteena on selvittää markkinakysynnän tasoa, ymmärtää yritysten odotuksia koulutuspalveluista sekä arvioida, olisiko laajentuminen strategisesti kannattavaa. Aihe valittiin, koska sekä opiskelijalla että toimeksiantajayrityksellä on yhteinen kiinnostus aiheeseen; yrityksellä on entuudestaan kokemusta yrityskoulutuksesta ja se on kiinnostunut laajentamaan palvelutarjontaansa.

Tutkimus toteutettiin monimenetelmällisesti. Ensisijainen aineisto kerättiin kyselyllä sekä kahdella haastattelulla. Ensimmäinen haastattelu oli strukturoitu ja toinen epämuodollinen. Kyselyyn vastasi eri alojen ammattilaisia Suomessa. Kyselyssä kartoitettiin vastaajien kokemuksia ja asenteita myyntikoulutusta kohtaan. Haastattelut syvensivät ymmärrystä koulutustarpeista ja ostokäyttäytymisestä esihenkilötasolla.

Tulokset osoittavat, että myyntikoulutus nähdään laajasti tärkeänä. Vaikka investointien määrä vaihtelee yrityksen koon ja tietoisuuden mukaan, koulutusta pidetään keskeisenä osana myyntityötä. Tärkeimmiksi tekijöiksi koulutuspäätöksissä nousivat joustavat toteutustavat, käytännönläheisyys sekä kohtuullinen hinnoittelu. Tulosten perusteella Suomen markkinat tarjoavat realistisia mahdollisuuksia laajentumiselle, edellyttäen että palvelut räätälöidään, hinnoitellaan kilpailukykyisesti ja tarjotaan kahdella kielellä.

¹ Asiasanat: Myyntikoulutus, Aikuiskoulutus, Ulkoistaminen, Suomen markkinat, Koulutuspalvelujen tarjoajat

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Terms and Abbreviations

SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
PNP	PNP Crossing Borders Oy
SPIN	Sales Methodology, Situation, Problem, Implication, and Need-Pay-off

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In today's primarily competitive business landscape, many companies try to expand and increase their business and revenue. However, entering a new market requires a careful and thorough examination of demand and competition. The case company, PNP Crossing Borders, has primarily focused on language training and consulting, specializing in improving communication skills for professionals. After hiring a new team member, the company has started exploring expansion into sales training.

Sales training can play a significant part in improving the business performance of organizations through improving the communication skills, negotiation skills, and customer relationships of salespeople. Many different companies invest in multiple different sales training and coaching programs. They do it to increase their competence in that area. But it is not known in Finland to what extent different companies spend on external sales training services. While professional development is highly valued, the majority of companies may choose to utilize in-house training or other methods to develop their sales force.

For PNP Crossing Borders Oy, expansion into sales training would be a logical next step, as good sales skills are closely associated with effective communication. And since the communication is a sector in which the company is already successfully operating, there is even more incentive to do so. However, to successfully expand their company, there is a need to analyze the possibility of such growth. That includes measuring the need in the market, finding potential customers, and determining whether Finnish companies would be interested in outsourcing their sales training or keeping it internal.

This thesis aims to analyze whether sales training is a practical and feasible business opportunity for the case company. This thesis will be using a data-driven approach. It will take a close look at the industry, competitors, and potential client needs. The study will provide insights into the feasibility of this expansion and how it fits within the company's strategic goals.

1.2 Problem Statement and Opportunity

The growing significance of sales training in improving companies' ability to carry out sales tasks is known. Even with that knowledge, many businesses remain uncertain whether they should invest in external training services. Some companies prefer to get training done internally and are not interested in investing in external providers. However, in Finland, there is limited research on the length to which businesses are looking for outsourced sales training services and how they perceive their value.

The case company, PNP Crossing Borders, is considering expanding into sales training but lacks the information on whether there is a strong demand in the Finnish market. The company cannot afford reckless risks without understanding the market landscape, customer needs, and competitive environment. You cannot make informed decisions with limited information. The company needs to find out if the other businesses are willing to invest in external sales training or coaching programs.

This study presents an opportunity to connect the missing dots in the knowledge gap. By conducting a thorough market assessment, this study will help PNP Crossing Borders evaluate the feasibility of entering the sales training sector and provide insights into the best approach for positioning its services effectively.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The objective of this thesis is to evaluate the market for its need for sales training services in Finland. Determining if the expansion into this sector would be feasible and strategically beneficial for the case company, PNP Crossing Borders. The study aims to measure the level of demand and analyze companies' stands on sales training. Another objective that this study aims to tackle is to understand industry trends and the factors that influence businesses' decisions on whether to select a sales training provider or not.

To achieve these objectives, the study is looking at the following research questions:

- How frequently do companies in Finland invest in sales training, and what types of training are most commonly used?
- How do businesses perceive the importance of sales training, and what role does it play?
- What are the key preferences of companies regarding sales training formats, language options, and certification requirements?
- What pricing structures and investment levels are businesses willing to consider for sales training?
- How familiar are Finnish companies with existing sales training providers, and what factors influence their choice of provider?

This thesis will provide an assessment of the sales training market in Finland by addressing these research questions. The findings will offer valuable information for the case company and help them make informed decisions on the matter.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction establishes the foundation of the study. It explains the background of the study and the reasons for it. This chapter defines the problem of the study and the opportunity that it presents. Additionally, this chapter defines research questions and objectives. In the end portion of this chapter there is a quick guide through the thesis structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The second chapter presents a theoretical foundation for the research. This chapter draws from existing academic literature, industry reports, and relevant frameworks. It explores key concepts related to corporate sales training. It goes over the best practices in sales training and what impact training investments have on business performance. This chapter also goes over previously limited research on this matter. By using previously established knowledge and research this chapter establishes a theoretical lens through which the study's findings are analyzed.

Chapter 3: Case Company – PNP Crossing Borders

This chapter introduces PNP Crossing Borders, the case company used as a reference point for the study. This chapter takes a closer look at the company's background and current business operations. The chapter analyzes whether sales training aligns with companies current services and evaluates the potential benefits and risks of integrating it into the company's strategy.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter explains details of the methodology used for this study. It goes over research design, data collection techniques, and other different methods used. The study uses a quantitative research method, utilizing a survey to gather data from different kinds of businesses across multiple industries. This chapter describes the sampling strategy, questionnaire design, and methods used for the data collection. This chapter is transparent in its presentation.

Chapter 5: Research Results and Analysis

The fifth chapter reports on the findings that this study has gathered from the survey. It goes over in depth what those findings are and analyzes them in great detail. Additionally, this chapter offers a substantial analysis of these findings. The analysis goes over respondents' perspectives on sales training, including the demand for external training, preferences for different training formats, budget considerations, and factors influencing decision-making when selecting a training provider. The analysis also combines data and research from Chapter 2 with these survey results.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Proposals

This chapter is the heart of the thesis and provides in-depth discussion of the survey results from Chapter 5. The discussion provided in this chapter takes into account results from the theoretical background discussed in Chapter 2. Discussion combines both the survey results and theoretical background for strategic proposals. The discussion addresses the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing sales training versus developing in-house programs. Additionally, it will consider the perspectives of companies that

have already invested in sales training or coaching programs. With all the available data this chapter will provide strategic proposals for the case company.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The final chapter summarizes all key findings of the study and reflects upon them. It goes over the implications for PNP Crossing Borders. It highlights the study's contributions and acknowledges its limitations. With that, it provides suggestions in areas with room for improvement for future research. The chapter concludes with final recommendations regarding the company's potential expansion into sales training.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Sales Training and Business Performance

Sales training describes a planned and continuous effort by organizations to develop the knowledge and skills of their sales staff to improve performance and support strategic goals. Ingram et al. (2015) describe it as an essential part of sales teams development because it contributes to better results by enhancing communication, product knowledge, and sales techniques. Training also provides a strong readiness for customer expectations set by the market. Sales training is not seen as a one-time event because effective sales training is shown as an ongoing process. Ongoing processes can always adapt to new market conditions. This makes it a critical investment for companies aiming to improve individual sales performance and overall business competitiveness. This view is supported by the survey results, where many companies showed a preference for flexible training.

The sales training doesn't just have one beneficial factor in improving technical skills. It also has a strong direct impact on the motivations within sales teams and an impact on supporting performances with sales efforts. Johnson and Hawk (2020) explain that having structured coaching and training programs can help sales efforts be more consistent and build stronger relationships with clients. If the sales training program is carefully designed and is tailored for a specific organization's needs, it will help the sales teams confidence and help to prepare to meet any set performance targets. It is also important to mention that having a coaching or training culture inside the organization can support learning and adaptation skills. Each of these factors is essential in an evolving business environment. This broader impact on both individual growth and team performance demonstrates why companies increasingly view sales training as a strategic investment rather than a short-term fix.

Different training and coaching programs often include structured methodologies. These methodologies assist salespeople in navigating complex situations with better confidence and with a better impact. One of the most widely used frameworks is the SPIN model. This model focuses on four questions: Situation, Problem, Implication, and Need-Payoff. The SPIN model helps in understanding the client's needs and tailored solutions. According to Rackham (1988), successful sales performance in high-value deals is often linked to the

salesperson's ability to ask these strategic questions, like in the SPIN model, rather than relying only on product knowledge. Training programs that use these models give sales professionals a good set of tools to discover the deep motivations of clients and to better manage long sales cycles. Methods like the SPIN model are teachable and measurable. That's the reason why they are ideal training environments. The popularity of models like SPIN is also reflected in how companies value proven, measurable methods when choosing external training providers, as seen in the findings.

Sales training is seen as a strong and smart investment because it directly impacts business results that can be measured. Ingram et al. (2015) point out that effective training helps salespeople improve productivity and sales. At the same time, it is strengthening customer relationships by giving them the right skills to meet customer needs and adapt to market changes. They also focus on that the training outcomes can be evaluated based on changes in behavior. Behavioral changes include aspects such as knowledge retention and financial performance. Similarly, Johnson and Hawk (2020) point out that consistency with coaching enhances individual performance but also reduces turnover, strengthens team cohesion, and creates a more resilient sales culture inside the organization. Having a long-term gain is very valuable in competitive markets where even small improvements lead to significant financial returns. As a result, many companies favor continuous development for their staff.

It is important to understand the value of sales training and how it can improve performance in a strategic way. However, the effectiveness of any training initiative also depends on how the learning process is designed and delivered. The way individuals absorb, retain, and apply new sales skills is shaped by underlying learning principles and instructional approaches. To create training programs that work well, it is useful to look at the theories that explain how people learn in professional environments. The next part looks at the main learning theories that are important for sales training and how they help with long-term skill development. This theoretical grounding provides a good lens that we can use to see how the later survey and interview findings can be interpreted.

2.2 Learning Theories Relevant to Sales Training

It is important to understand how adults learn when designing effective sales training programs. The difference between adult learners and young learners is significant. It is mainly

due to their life experience, self-direction, and practical learning orientation. Adult learning is known as andragogy. Unlike traditional pedagogical methods designed solely for children, adult learning focuses on relevance and immediate application. For sales professionals, this means training must address real-world problems that are built on experience and provide direct value to their performance. Knowles et al. (2015) identify core adult learning principles. These principles are the need to know, readiness to learn, and intrinsic motivation. All of the principles are especially relevant in workplace training environments. Beebe et al. (2012) also support these ideas by highlighting that training should be designed to connect directly with what learners already know and their responsibilities at the workplace. Together, these ideas highlight why effective sales training must be intentionally aligned with how adults learn.

One of the most important frameworks in adult learning is andragogy, which focuses on the specific characteristics and needs of adult learners. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) describe six key principles of adult learning that are especially relevant for sales training. The six key principles include the need to know, self-concept, prior experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation. Principles in question suggest that adults prefer to learn or evolve only if it's relevant to their work and life. Also, adult learners bring valuable experiences that should always be used as a resource during training. Furthermore, adults are usually self-directed, goal-oriented, and focused on problems, which means sales training should be practical, flexible, and based on real-life situations (Knowles et al., 2005). Training that follows these ideas is more likely to keep adult learners engaged in sales training and help them improve their performance in a measurable way.

Sales training is far more effective when it can adapt to the needs of the learners. Interactive delivery methods include simulations and feedback-driven exercises. They are among the most effective ways to develop and reinforce sales skills. These methods provide real-life contexts and allow learners to apply concepts instantly. The Ultimate Sales Training Guide highlights that practicing real-life customer situations helps to improve communication and handle objections far more confidently (Greene, 2023). This is also supported by the work of Beebe et al. (2012), who explain that effective sales training should use real examples and get learners involved through discussions and reflections. Using such methods helps to keep the learning group active. Additionally, it supports adult learning idea of practical use. Because of those reasons, training should center more around interaction and active learning rather than just listening to lectures.

Effective sales training must also recognize that adult learners have different sets of needs and responsibilities. This makes flexibility a key factor in program design. Training that allows learners to engage at their own pace and according to their individual schedules increases effectiveness, especially for professionals balancing real work and personal commitments. According to Beebe et al. (2012), learners who are adults prefer programs that support many learning paces and styles, including independent options, as these improve the motivation of the participants. They also emphasize that adults benefit most when training is relevant and fitting to their job roles. To meet these demands, training needs to include timely content and allow learners to address their individual weak points. And also to have ongoing support and feedback to make sure that participants have knowledge retention and confidence building (Beebe et al., 2012). Considering these things is important to create sales training that is centered around the learner.

2.3 Outsourcing Sales Training

Outsourcing sales training has become much more important for organizations that seek to improve their performance. It is useful when the organization does not want to overextend its internal resources. Many companies use outsourcing when their internal training capacity is limited. Another reason for external providers is that they introduce fresh approaches and update existing knowledge. According to Ingram et al. (2015), external training providers are often used when companies want exposure to innovative ideas or specialized content that their internal teams cannot deliver. These external providers can deliver structured training programs that align with the organization's goals. The Conduent whitepaper (2017) supports this idea by explaining that outsourcing can provide scalable solutions that improve consistency and make operations less complex. This shows that when companies use external providers, they can focus more on their main goals.

The main advantage of outsourcing sales training is the potential to provide scalability and expertise that internal teams may lack. When companies rely only on internal trainers, it can limit efficiency and use too many resources. Instead, companies can focus internal efforts on strategic planning while external partners handle tactical delivery. This helps to keep the training in line with the main business goals without putting too much pressure on the internal resources. Also, Beebe et al. (2012) support the idea that training is effective when it is grounded in instructional design and learning theory. External providers bring specialized

knowledge and established methodologies, which make them a valuable asset for companies looking to enhance learning outcomes and ensure the transfer of knowledge.

Outsourcing sales training does not work for every situation. It is strategically beneficial if it works with the organization's current life cycle and market positioning. Zoltners et al. (2006) emphasize that the structure and support systems of a salesforce should change and evolve with the company's stage of development. Companies can have rapid growth, or they are doing a new market entry. In these cases, outsourcing is a suitable choice due to the urgent and large-scale training demands. In these situations, companies often don't have enough time or the right skills inside the team to create and deliver timely content. Ingram et al. (2015) support this by mentioning that external sales can give a new perspective and special skills that internal teams may not have. Also, the Conduent white paper explains that outsourcing can help lower the pressure on internal resources while maintaining high standards and consistent delivery across teams (Conduent, 2017). When companies consider their timing, goals, and internal resources, they can decide if outsourcing is not just helpful but also strategically beneficial.

2.4 The Finnish Sales Training Market

The Finnish sales training market is part of a broader corporate learning framework. This framework is highly developed compared to other OECD countries. Finland frequently ranks at the top in adult learning participation. Finland has over half of its working-age population engaging each year in learning activities that are job-related (OECD, 2020). Finland has a strong participation rate because of their readiness to focus on the key goal. The main goal is to enable the workforce to handle evolving changes in technology and demographics. Demand for sales training programs that surpass generic corporate training comes from the growing need to have specialized skills. Also, the reports in the global markets show that developed countries like Finland are focusing more on digital and personally tailored methods (Edstellar, 2024). These trends show that Finland's strong adult learning system gives a good base for the growth of sales training services in the country.

Company investments in employee training are tracked by national surveys. According to Statistics Finland's Continuing Vocational Training Survey, Finnish enterprises spent an average of €330 per employee on course-based training in 2020 (Statistics Finland, 2023).

Although this represents a strong commitment to professional development, the same report shows that participation in course-based training has declined since 2015. Decline suggests a shift in how companies approach learning (Statistics Finland, 2023). A possible reason for this trend is that learners often choose learning at work and use digital tools instead of formal training programs. These options can be more cost-effective for companies. Even though the total number has decreased, more than 350,000 employees have still joined formal training programs. This highlights that formal training still has a role to play in workforce development. Data behind the numbers show that demand for improving sales skills remains strong and relevant in Finland.

The changing market with high customer expectations has made Finnish sales organizations face many growing challenges. A study made by Jokela (2024) had interviews with 28 Finnish sales managers and found that many companies are having difficulties keeping their sales teams updated with all the latest skills, like digitalization. The study shows a growing gap between what businesses want to achieve and what their sales staff can achieve. This highlights the need for targeted sales training that helps professionals adjust, think more strategically, and meet changing demands. As these needs increase, high-quality external training is becoming more important to help companies stay competitive.

Many respected providers are working in the Finnish sales training market. Sales Energy Finland, Rainmaker, and Adeptus are among the names that are mentioned often. They offer practical and role-specific training that fits Finnish ways of working. Mercuri International. The company originally was from Sweden, but it has built a strong position in Finland. It was listed in the top 20 sales training and enablement companies in 2025 (Mercuri International, 2025). The methods these companies use are different, but the end goal is the same. The goal is to help Finnish salespeople perform better. As demand for modern sales training grows with digital tools becoming common, companies are adapting to meet it (Edstellar, 2024).

2.5 Factors Influencing the Choice of Training Provider

Technology has become an important part of modern sales training. With digital platforms, sales professionals can access training materials anytime and from any place. Time and location mobility provided by digital platforms gives better flexibility and reach of training programs. Online modules, webinars, and mobile learning applications allow learners to

progress at their own pace. According to Beebe et al. (2012), digital learning tools bring better engagement when they are integrated with sound instructional design that matches the learner's environment and job requirements. These tools support the overall learning strategy by making it possible to track progress and give instant feedback. Greene (2023) also points out that good sales training includes simulations, virtual coaching and interactive modules that reflect real sales situations. With these Innovations, companies can make learning more dynamic and personalized.

Before selecting a sales training provider, organizations often weigh the balance between cost and value. Companies usually look for training that shows clear results, such as better performance, higher productivity, or improved client outcomes. Greene (2023) mentions that effective programs should not only improve sales techniques but also result in sustainable changes in behavior and business impact. Also, providers who tailor content to the specific needs are more likely to be viewed as valuable partners. A provider's reputation, previous success, and proven results also play an important role in how companies make their choice. Edstellar (2024) mentions that more companies now prefer training that is scalable, focused on results, and offered in flexible formats like online or hybrid. They prefer them because they help meet different learning needs and manage costs.

2.6 Strategic Frameworks Used in This Study

Besides learning and training theories, this thesis also uses a few strategic planning tools to study the market and build a realistic business model for the Case Company. One of them is the Business Model Canvas, which helps describe the sales training service planned for PNP Crossing Borders. This visual framework helps align the service offering with customer needs, resources, delivery methods, and revenue logic.

To compare market competitors, the Competitive Matrix is used, inspired by tools commonly applied in strategic management (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This method allows for a side-by-side comparison of training providers based on the features they provide. These features are pricing, format, and customization. These factors are also reflected in the survey (Q12–Q14), ensuring practical relevance.

Lastly, a market size estimation model was developed using company and employment data

from Statistics Finland. This estimation follows the logic of bottom-up market sizing, using assumptions guided by survey results (participation rates and pricing).

Together, these frameworks support a grounded analysis of market viability. When combined with the theoretical insights like sales training (Ingram et al., 2015) and adult learning (Knowles et al., 2005), they ensure that both the design and delivery of the proposed service are aligned with practical business needs and evidence-based learning strategies.

3 CASE COMPANY – PNP CROSSING BORDERS

3.1 Operating Environment: South Ostrobothnia

Inside Finland's South Ostrobothnia is a challenging region regarding internationalization, marketing, and language training. In rural areas, foreign languages, cultures, and marketing have traditionally been viewed with at least some degree of caution. Here, people trust word-of-mouth recommendations from neighbors rather than a suspiciously smooth marketing campaign. The latter is often seen as a waste and misuse of funds. On the other hand, Ostrobothnia has become known precisely because of its entrepreneurial spirit, industry, and unyielding nature. Even such typically Finnish modesty isn't necessarily questioned in South Ostrobothnia, but people there are openly and unashamedly proud of their modesty. Projects in this region are usually large, daring, and impressive. A notable example is the city of Seinäjoki, which declared itself to be "Avaruuden pääkaupunki" ('The Capital of Space'). There is no better place for one's own business.

The data shows that South Ostrobothnia is still a good place for business development. In 2022, the unemployment rate in South Ostrobothnia was 6.8%, slightly below the national average of 7.2%, indicating a relatively strong regional labor market (Etelä-Pohjanmaan liitto, 2023). In the province, the proportion of entrepreneurs has long been exceptionally high, but it is slowly approaching the national average. Despite the clear decline, the share of entrepreneurs among the employed in South Ostrobothnia is still the highest of all regions. In total, Finland has 580,048 enterprises (Statistics Finland, 2023). These enterprises employ 1.51 million people and generate tax revenue that funds services for everyone.

3.2 Company Background and Business Model

One of those companies is PNP Crossing Borders Oy, based in Seinäjoki. PNP has operated in the South Ostrobothnia market since 2002, offering effective, tailored, and flexible training packages in the fields of language, marketing, and internationalization. These services are available to large companies as well as, when needed, smaller businesses and even individual clients. PNP's broad range of services includes, among others, translation work, language training, marketing consultation, and advising on internationalization.

The list of services appears highly diverse and credible:

- We help you on your journey to international markets
- We provide new skills and active support for sales activities
- You achieve more efficient international sales
- You receive a clear operational model for your export efforts
- You learn how to create a positive image for your customers
- You gain practical skills that bring value and benefit for years to come
- Development of your company's sales personnel
- Increasing sales abroad
- Growing revenue

(PNP Crossing Borders Oy, n.d.)

The company's current business model is centered on offering flexible and tailored training services in language and internationalization. The company mainly operates on a project-based model, tailoring services to the individual needs of its clients. The company gets its revenue directly from service fees, which are often priced per session or project. Delivery for these sessions and projects is carried out through small teams or external specialists. The company's value proposition is based on providing practical and goal-oriented communication support, which also has a bilingual delivery available when needed (PNP Crossing Borders Oy).

3.3 Strengths and Competitive Advantages

PNP's strengths lie mainly in their mobility and flexibility, allowing them to quickly respond to customers' individual needs and fulfill them. They do it by hiring temporary external staff for specific projects when needed. This demonstrates a well-known benefit of microenterprises: in some fields, they can provide training packages that are just as comprehensive and high-quality as those of bigger companies, but at a much lower cost and with quicker delivery times.

Another factor that is influencing this company's success story is PNP's staff. It is much more comfortable and easier to trust business matters of internationalization and language when the company's staff itself is from an international background. This creates a winning

combination where local knowledge meets with international perspectives. However, one thing strongly unites PNP's founders: a genuine desire to succeed and a willingness to work hard to make it happen.

3.4 Customer Segments and Target Industries

PNP's client list is impressive. You can find many satisfied customers in multiple industries. The company's main focus or area with the highest demand is manufacturing (technology, construction, metal, electronics, etc.). Other sectors that the company tackles are finance, services, and food. It is important to mention that PNP can offer adapted services for employees and specialists at different levels if needed (PNP Crossing Borders Oy, n.d.).

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Approach and Design

The methodology employed for this thesis uses a mixed-methods research approach. Mixed methods merge the quantitative survey method and qualitative interview method (Creswell, 2014). This decision is based on the complex nature of the research questions. The purpose of the questions is to assess both the market feasibility and strategic alignment of the sales training services provided by the case company, PNP Crossing Borders. Using a mixed-methods approach in research upgrades the quality of the research by combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. When research merges both quantitative methods and qualitative methods, it allows to reach complete insights into the sales training market in Finland (Saunders et al., 2023).

The quantitative part of this study is the survey. The survey was created online using SurveyMonkey and was sent to professionals within different industries in Finland. Distribution channels were done with email, personal contacts, and the Reddit platform. The survey's end goal is to collect information that can be measured about existing actions and the market conditions. The second reason for structuring the survey was to examine the awareness of external sales training services and to determine expected interest and views about prices. The reason to use a survey is that it obtains information economically in a wide and scattered geographical sampling, thus ensuring the findings are representative (Saunders et al., 2023).

The study has a limited part of qualitative research. It consists of two interviews, one structured and another unstructured. The unstructured interview is with a former sales training professional who was involved in various training services. The structured interview was with a manager at Wärtsilä Oy. The interviews support the survey by offering a deeper and more detailed view from a professional perspective. This method is very useful for understanding the reasons and choices that people make about sales training. As noted by Creswell (2014, *Chapter 9*), qualitative interviews are instrumental in clarifying and elaborating on quantitative findings, adding explanatory depth to numerical data.

The data in this study is analyzed in different steps. The first step of many will be looking at the quantitative results to identify general patterns and trends. Then followed by a second

step will be qualitative analysis to provide context and deeper insight into the quantitative results. Data will be examined using thematic coding and descriptive statistical methods, as is optimal practice for mixed-method research (Saunders et al., 2023).

The approach used in this study helps build a better and stronger understanding of the topic. Additionally, it also supports the main goals of the thesis. The main goals focus on market feasibility and customer preferences. Ethical matters were considered throughout the research. Examples of ethical matters were getting consent from participants and keeping their information private, following the guidelines from Saunders et al. (2023).

4.2 Data Collection Methods

The primary data for this study was collected using two methods that complemented each other. One of them was an online survey, and the other was a semi-structured interview.

The survey was designed via an online platform, SurveyMonkey. When the survey was designed, it was distributed via email outreach and social media to respondents who work in different sectors in Finland. The survey included multiple-choice questions and rating scale questions. The survey was gathering information about people's experience of sales training, the value they placed on the training, what methods they would prefer, what language they would prefer, and the amount they are willing to spend on external providers. The design of the survey focused on consistency and clarity. It was in line with the best practice guidelines provided by Saunders et al. (2023).

The structured interview was conducted with a manager from Wärttilä Oy. Wärttilä Oy is a well-known Finnish industrial company. The questions were open-ended. Open-ended questions were chosen to ensure that the manager explains ideas more fully and gives deeper insight. The interview gathers data on the company's views on sales training and reasons for outsourcing training. The interview was done online, recorded with permission, and later written out for analysis.

The unstructured interview was held with a former training professional. The professional holds a PhD and has been involved with multiple different training services, which include sales training and many more. The unstructured interview was done in a calm and relaxing atmosphere and held more as a discussion rather than questioning. The format was

ultimately chosen by interviewees' wishes and preferences.

The interviewees were chosen because of their strong qualifications. Wärtsilä's managers' strong qualifications include many years of experience at a leading Finnish company and his familiarity with sales. The former sales training professional was specifically chosen because of her past experiences. Using both the survey and interview made it possible to check the results from different angles and made the findings stronger. The survey gave a general view of market trends, while the interview provided deeper and more detailed information that could not have been gathered through survey questions alone.

The participants of the survey were professionals working in different kinds of industries across Finland. Participants varied in company sizes. The range of sizes varied from small enterprises to large organizations. A significant part of them were either small or medium-sized companies. The range of people that were surveyed varied from managers to sales executives. Diversity in the surveyed individuals helped to collect a variety of perspectives. Additionally, the qualitative interview offered a deeper viewpoint from a managerial position. That viewpoint provides valuable context to the survey findings.

The mixed methods approach used in this study aligns perfectly with Creswell's (2014) emphasis on using multiple data sources instead of one to enhance and reinforce the validity and intensity of research findings, particularly in exploratory business research.

4.3 Data Analysis

After data collection was completed, the next step was to systematically analyze the data that the research study had gathered from the survey and the interview. Systematic analysis is vitally important to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the patterns present in the data (Creswell, 2014). At first, both quantitative and qualitative data were processed separately, but in a way that their findings could later complement each other.

The data from the survey was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequency and percentages were used to summarize the experiences of the participants. The results also showed their preferences and opinions about sales training services. By using

SurveyMonkey, the responses were organized, and simple visuals were created. Descriptive statistics are appropriate for providing a straightforward summary of data patterns in business research (Bryman & Bell, 2015), especially when aiming to capture the overall tendencies of a targeted sample.

Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data, gathered from the interview. Thematic analysis means reading through the transcript to find repeated ideas and grouping them into themes that connect to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). This method, when used is allows for a deeper understanding behind the different viewpoints held towards sales training. The method provides deeper context that the quantitative data doesn't provide.

Originally, there were two interviews planned, but scheduling difficulties and time constraints made it impossible to complete the second interview within the available timeframe. This is a limitation for the qualitative part of the research, as a wider range of perspectives could have added more depth to the insights gathered. That being said, the one interview that was done without any difficulties continued to provide a strong and insightful contribution.

Using a combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis is especially suitable for mixed-methods business studies, as it allows for both the generalization of trends and the exploration of underlying reasons (Saunders et al., 2023). Dual approach used in this study ensures that the final findings are both comprehensive and grounded in the perspectives of a diverse range of respondents.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Overview of the Survey

The purpose of the survey is to assess the market demand and perceptions in regard to external sales training services among Finnish companies. The data is for the case company, PNP Crossing Borders. The case company will be using data to assess whether expanding into sales training presents a practical and worthwhile opportunity.

The target group included professionals from different sectors in Finland, such as sales, human resources, marketing, business development, and management. Professionals with these roles are typically involved in either taking part in training or making decisions about it.

There were a total of 42 valid responses were collected. The data includes responses from both small and large organizations across a variety of industries. Although the sample size is limited, it offers a range of perspectives that are useful for the initial market assessment.

The survey was conducted in April 2025. It was created using the SurveyMonkey platform and shared through several channels. These included professional email outreach, personal contacts, and social media platforms. That was the approach so that the gathered responses are from a wide range of Finnish businesses rather than from a single industry.

5.2 Demand and Attitudes Toward Sales Training

One of the most important goals of the survey was to evaluate how companies in Finland currently view sales training and whether they invest in it. The results suggest that sales training is generally seen as important across different industries and company sizes.

They were asked whether their company had previously invested in sales training (Figure 1). A majority of respondents reported that their companies had invested in sales training either regularly, occasionally, or to a significant degree. Only a smaller portion of respondents indicated that their company had not invested in sales training at all and was not considering it. This data suggests that the general market awareness of sales training is present and that there is existing demand. The data can be seen in following figure table below.

Q4 Has your company ever invested in sales training?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

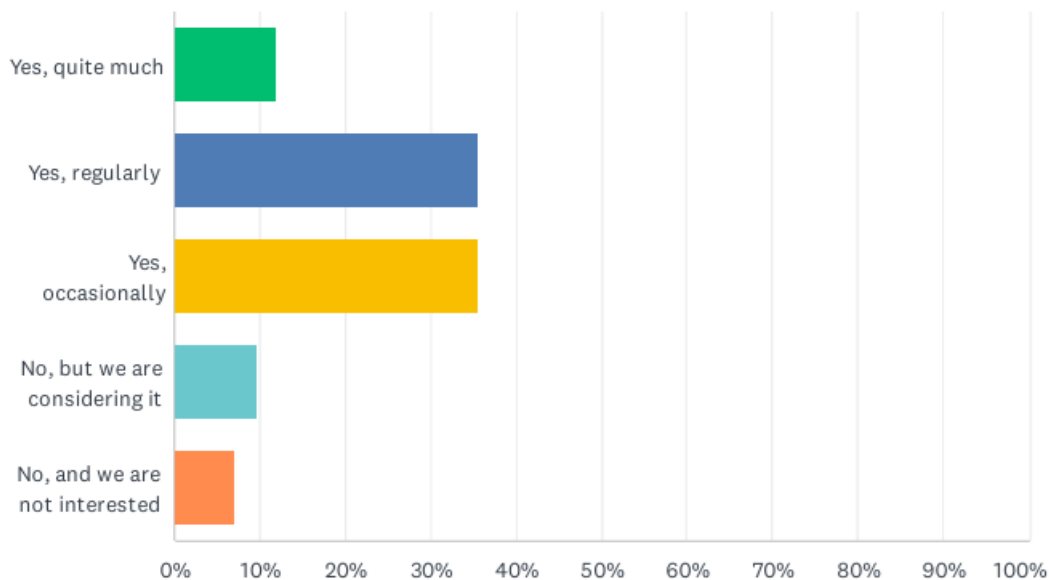


Figure 1. Company Investment in sales training (n=42).

They were also asked about how important sales training is for professional development in their fields (Figure 2). The majority answered that it is either very important or extremely important. Somewhat important was the second popular choice, and the least important category was last. This same answer was given across industries and company sizes. The answers given point out that the value of training is recognized across the board.

Q6 How important do you think sales training is for professional growth in your industry?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

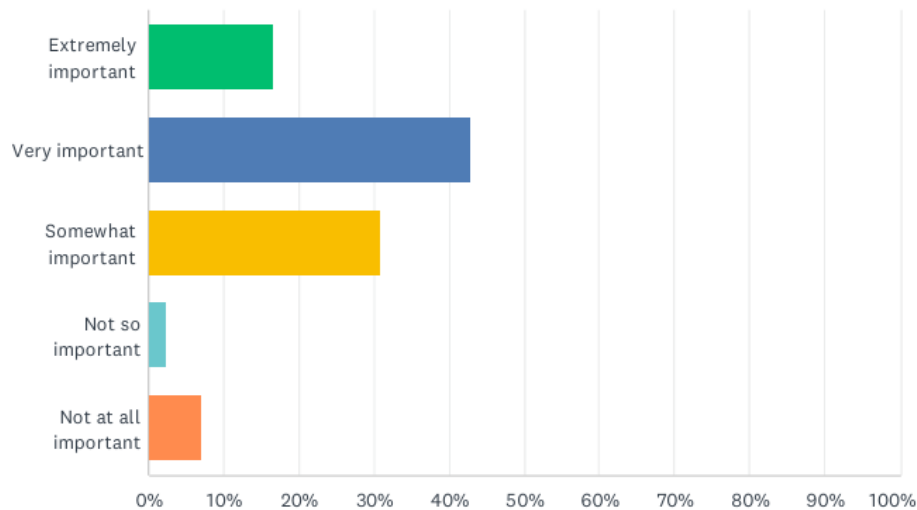


Figure 2. Importance of sales training for professional development (n=42).

The survey also asked about the need for sales training in their own companies (Figure 3). Most of the respondents viewed the need for sales training as moderate. Seeing responses as moderate indicates that some employees could benefit from training. A smaller group reported a high or very high need for sales training. Lastly, only a few respondents considered it unnecessary. These results further confirm that there is interest in developing sales competencies within companies.

Q7 How big do you consider is the need for sales training in your company?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

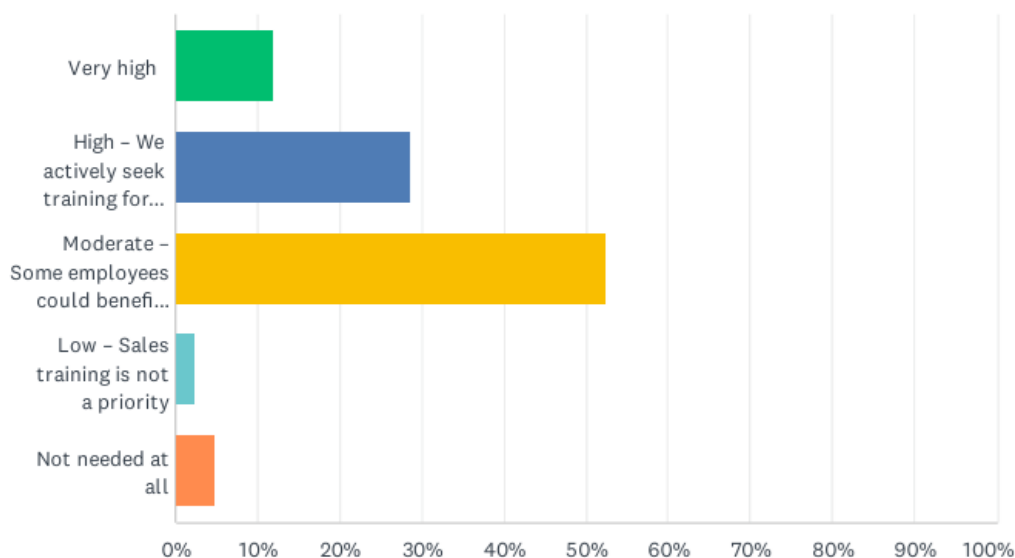


Figure 3. Perceived need for sales training in the company (n=42).

Together, these findings show that the sales training market in Finland is not only present but likely underdeveloped. It is important to mention that not all companies are yet investing heavily in formal training programs, but awareness of training as an important performance driver is present. This data is a positive climate for providers who are able to offer suitable and tailored sales training solutions.

5.3 Preferences for Training Format, Language, and Cost

As one looks at demand for sales training, it also includes looking at format, language, and price that the clients would prefer. These are critical factors that make a difference when creating services that the clients would be interested in.

Respondents who were taking the survey were asked about their preferred training formats (Figure 4). The most frequent option was a hybrid model that merges online learning with in-

person learning. Online-only formats were also widely supported. The support for online learning is providing clear evidence on the growing use and acceptance of digital tools. At the same time, in-person workshops and on-the-job coaching were slightly less preferred, but they still appeared in a significant share of responses. The results showcase that flexibility is a highly valued aspect and that the sales training solution should be adaptable to various delivery modes.

Q9 What format of sales training would you prefer? (Check all that apply)

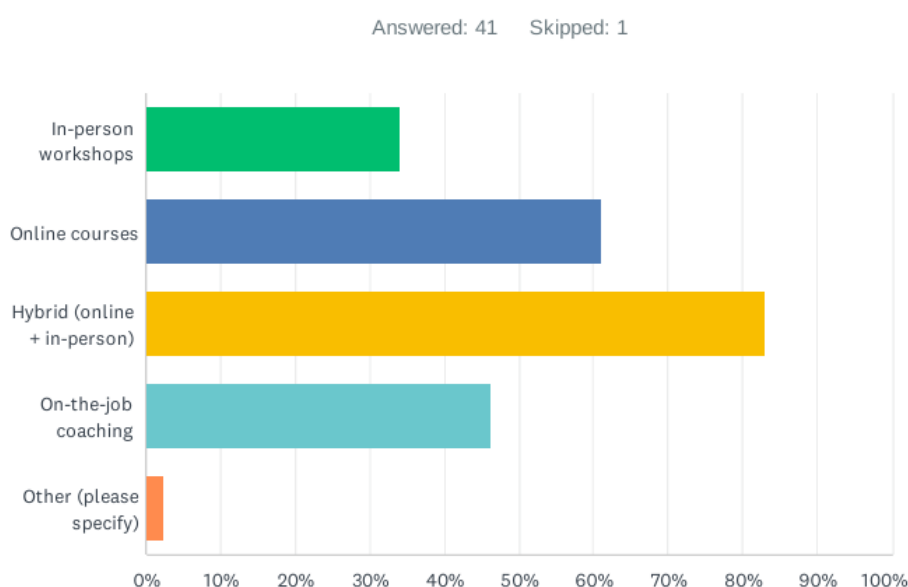


Figure 4. Preferred training formats (n=41).

Language preference was another important consideration in the survey (Figure 5). There was an even split between those who preferred English or Finnish but were open to each other. A small group expressed a clear preference for only English, and very few selected only Finnish. This suggests that training providers should include both of the languages in their offerings to reach a wider audience.

Q10 Would you prefer sales training in English or Finnish?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

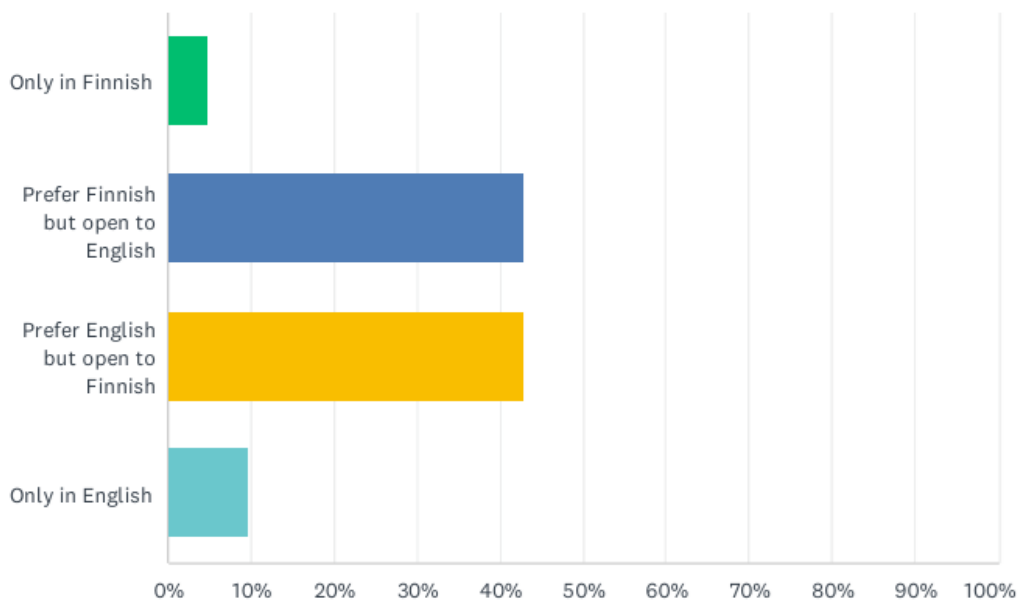


Figure 5. Preferred language for training (n=42).

The survey offered various pricing models (Figures 6 and 7). Most companies were willing to pay between €50 and €150 per participant per hour, with €50–€100 being the most selected option. A small number preferred a lower price under €50, and only a few were open to paying over €200. This shows that there is an interest in investing in sales training. There is an interest in sales training, but most companies still operate with a realistic budget. The price sensitivity may be especially relevant for SMEs, which often face tighter budget constraints compared to large corporations. When asked about pricing models, most answered that they prefer fixed-price courses. Hourly pricing and “no preference” were less common. This shows that predictability and transparency in pricing are important to many companies.

Q12 What is the maximum hourly rate your company would be willing to pay per participant for a sales training session?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 1

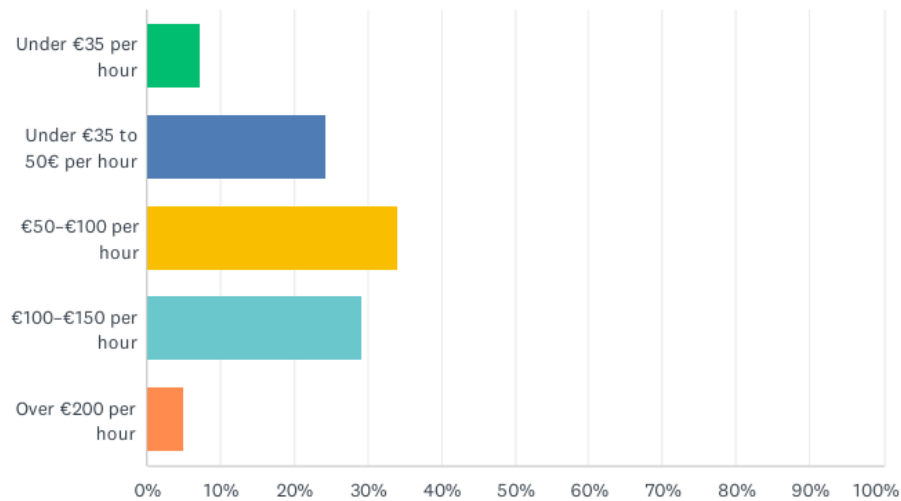


Figure 6. Hourly rate willingness (n=41).

Q13 Would your company prefer a fixed price for full courses or flexible hourly-based pricing?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

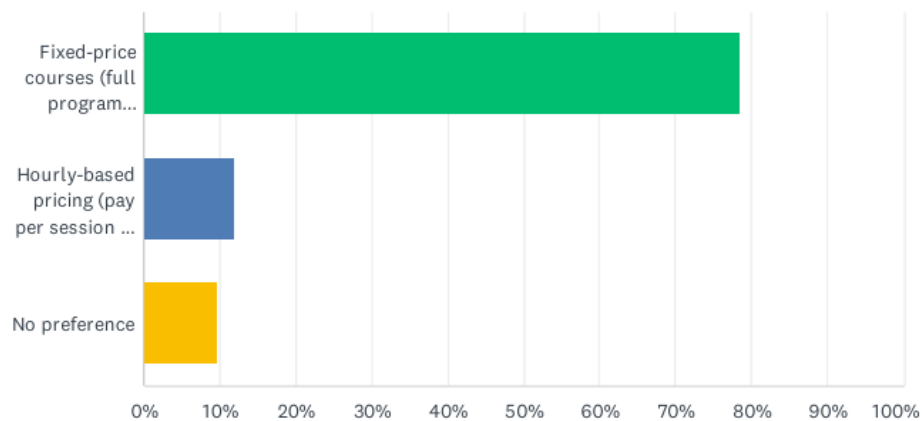


Figure 7. Preferred pricing model (n=42).

Questions about the certification were also included (Figure 8). The majority answered that the need for the certification depends on the course and provider. A smaller share responded that it was either essential or unnecessary. This indicates that while certification can add value, it is not a decisive factor for most companies. Including certification as an option could still help attract a broader audience.

Q11 Do you think sales training should include official certification?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 0

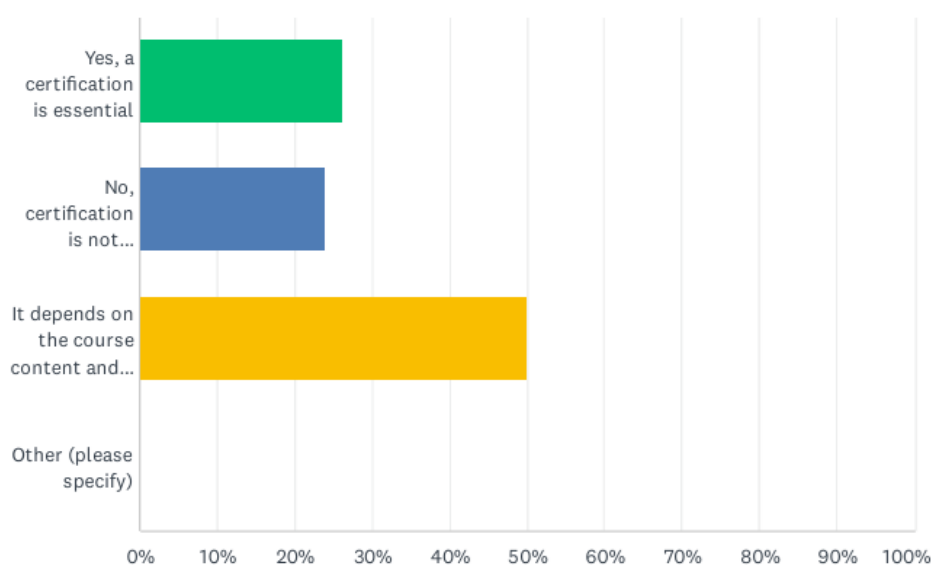


Figure 8. Preference for certification (n=42).

The findings from these questions provide important insights into how sales training should be structured to align with buyer expectations. The most important factors are flexibility in delivery format, bilingual support, and moderate pricing. It is also optional to include any type of certification. These are all factors that training providers should consider when entering the Finnish market.

5.4 Role-Based Differences in Sales Training Perspectives

The survey had a total of 42 participants representing a range of different professional roles. The most common roles were Sales Representatives (14.3%), Sales Managers (21.4%), Business Owners (11.9%), Marketing Professionals (9.5%), HR or Training Managers

(21.4%), and Others (21.4%).

There were minor role-based differences in attitudes toward sales training. Still, the overall perception of its value was consistent. Sales professionals (representatives and managers) typically favored practical, on-the-job formats and emphasized relevance to daily sales work. They showed strong interest in training that helps improve closing deals, working with clients, and communication skills.

On the other hand, HR and Training Managers were more interested in training programs that are organized and easy to track. They preferred options that include certification and support employee development. The priorities that they focused on were long-term results, employee performance measurement, and formal documentation of learning outcomes.

Business Owners and Managers have shown interest in the strategic value of training. They were more concerned with return on investment, improving team capability, and aligning training with broader business goals. Marketing professionals were more neutral but leaned toward training that complements client-facing communication.

Even though different roles had different focus areas, there was overall support for investing in sales training from everyone. Over 80% of answers had chosen that their company already had invested in some form of sales training or was actively considering it (Q4), and more than 70% personally expressed interest in participating (Q8). These answers suggest that sales training is recognized as relevant and valuable regardless of professional role. There are still expectations for format and outcome that differ slightly between functions.

5.5 Interview and Summary of Key Findings

To support data gathered from the survey, there were 2 interviews were conducted. The first was a structured interview with a manager from a large Finnish industrial company. The second was an informal discussion with a professor who has provided training services across multiple industries. These interviews help to put quantitative results into context and provide a deeper understanding of what companies expect from external sales training providers.

In the structured interview, the manager pointed out key challenges faced by sales teams.

These include internal alignment, identifying customer needs, and navigating communication with client decision-makers. One of the main questions asked was what kind of training would be the most beneficial for the company. When asked about it, he mentions three core areas. These areas are product knowledge, structured sales processes, and negotiation skills. This insight supports the survey's findings, where a clear demand for tailored training solutions was evident.

The interviewee also had a positive view toward external training providers. The reason why he preferred outsourcing was that anything that doesn't take away the company's resources is a positive. Trust in smaller or lesser-known providers, he explained, is based largely on proven experience and positive references. He noted that Finnish companies are generally open to outsourcing training, especially when it proves to be more cost-effective than in-house options.

He was also asked about purchasing decisions. He stated that training is typically selected by the sales development and procurement departments. The key factors of the provider were relevance, customization, and the trainer's credibility. They were considered more important than the provider's size or reputation. The company had previously invested in a long-term training program that was delivered by an experienced trainer and aligned with company goals. The training was seen as successful because the content was tailored to the company's specific context. Success is usually evaluated through indicators such as the number of open projects, net sales, and the length of the sales cycle.

The second interview was an informal one. It was held with an academic professional who had experience delivering training in different industries. She focused on case company's ability to provide the training. In her own words, for a small company like the case company, the expansion into sales training should not be overly demanding. It will not be demanding because of the already internal experience available. In this case, one of the new team members has experience with sales training it should not be difficult. Lastly, she mentioned that there is always demand for some sort of training programs, but the price and offer shall play an important role here.

Combining the interviews reinforces the results that were gathered by the survey. It shows

the great importance of company-specific training. They confirm that external providers are welcome when they bring clear value and can meet the needs of the company. The data and insights from it help to build an understanding of the market and provide practical considerations for the case company's potential expansion.

5.6 Market Size Estimation

In order to assess the business viability of sales training for PNP Crossing Borders, a market size estimation was conducted. The estimation used data from Statistics Finland and was supported by responses from the study's survey. The estimation combined the number of companies in Finland by size category with realistic assumptions about participation rates, average number of employees per company, and expected training investment per employee.

Participation rates ranged from 5% for micro-enterprises to 30% for large companies. These assumptions were guided by survey data, which showed that over 80% of companies either currently invest or are open to investing in sales training (Q4). Similarly, price levels between €100 and €150 per employee were used. They reflect the most frequently selected price ranges in the survey (Q12, between €50 and €150 per hour).

Using these inputs, the total addressable market for sales training in Finland was estimated at approximately €43 million annually. The full calculation logic and detailed market estimation table are presented in the accompanying Excel file Appendix 1. Market Estimation Table (attached as a separate Excel file)

Table 1. Market Estimation Table.

Source: Author, based on survey Q12 and statistics Finland

Company Size Category	Participating Companies	Employees Trained	Avg Cost per Employee (€)	Estimated Revenue (€)
Micro (0–9 employees)	27,120	135,600	100	€13,560,000
Small (10–49 employees)	2,446.5	48,930	100	€4,893,000
Small – South Ostrobothnia (10–49)	81.6	1,632	120	€195,840
Medium (50–249 employees)	785.75	78,575	150	€11,786,250
Large (250+ employees)	205.2	82,080	150	€12,312,000

In addition to the national-level market estimate, a regional analysis was also conducted to estimate demand in South Ostrobothnia, where the case company operates. The data was based on the relative proportion of small enterprises in the region and estimated participation rates. The potential local market was calculated to be approximately €195,840 annually. This relative data insight provides a more targeted view for the case company's initial market entry. The South Ostrobothnia estimation is included in the same Excel file (Appendix 1).

5.7 Competitor Comparison

Based on survey data and desk research, several sales training providers were identified as key competitors in the Finnish market. The most frequently recognized names were Mercuri International (64.7%), Rainmaker (58.8%), Adeptus (44.1%), and Sales Energy Finland (38.2%), as reported in survey question Q16. These companies have vastly different offers, target segments, and training formats.

Mercuri International stands out for its international presence and strong brand recognition. Rainmaker is highly recognized, but it offers more generalist sales training and has a minimal amount of customization in its offers. Adeptus is well-positioned among SMEs and is known for transparent pricing. Sales Energy Finland mostly focuses on practical in-person training, though it has limited online offerings and does not offer certification.

When we compare PNP Crossing Borders to these companies, we see that it has a strong opportunity to differentiate itself. It can do that by offering bilingual, hybrid-format training with flexible pricing. It also should target SMEs that value affordability and tailored content. The survey results (Q12–Q14) support the need for training options that are flexible, well priced, and relevant to everyday sales work.

The table below summarizes the key differences between the most mentioned competitors and highlights the potential differentiators for PNP Crossing Borders.

Table 2. Competitive Matrix of Selected Sales Training Providers

Source: Author, based on survey Q16 and provider websites

Feature / Provider	Mercuri International	Rainmaker	Adeptus	Sales Energy Finland
Known by Respondents	64.7%	58.8%	44.1%	38.2%
Language Options	English, Finnish	Finnish	Finnish	Finnish
Training Format	In-person, Online, Hybrid	In-person, Online	Online, In-person	In-person, some online
Customization Level	High	Medium	High	Medium
Certification Offered	Yes	No	Yes	No
Pricing Transparency	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Target Customers	Medium–Large companies	B2B/B2C	SMEs	SMEs

6 DISCUSSION AND PROPOSALS

6.1 Summary and Interpretation of Key Findings

Both the survey and the interview provided useful insights into the current state of the sales training market in Finland. The data shows that there is a strong awareness of sales training and a moderate but growing demand for it. Not all companies are investing in external sales training, but many recognize its importance. Companies are open to future investments if the offer aligns with their interests and a realistic budget. This supports the theoretical framework that training must be relevant and help to achieve the organizational goals to be seen as a strategic investment (Ingram et al., 2015).

The data shows that the majority of respondents see sales training as either very important or extremely important for professional development. However, the actual investment in training changes from company to company. Some companies reported regular use of external training. Some other companies mention that they rely on internal resources or remain undecided due to budget or lack of awareness. The different levels of investment show that internal motivation and the felt need for training are closely linked to the readiness to learn described by Knowles et al. (2005).

The survey showcased that a lot of companies valued flexibility. Hybrid training models that combine online and in-person elements were the most preferred, followed by the online-only option. Language flexibility is also valued. Many chose bilingual options, with both Finnish and English being acceptable depending on the context.

Another area where the survey questioned the respondents was the pricing. Most companies were willing to pay between €50 and €150 per hour per participant. Fixed-price models were preferred over hourly billing. The answers show that companies value transparency, and they prefer predictable expenses. Certification was seen as beneficial but not overly important. Certification can serve as an added bonus or a cherry on the cake, but not as the main requirement.

The two interviews held confirm the findings from the survey. The first structured interview

with a manager from Wärtsilä Oy confirmed that there is a need for tailored training. External providers were seen as positive, especially when they can offer customization.

Overall, the findings reflect the already existing theoretical framework established in Chapter 2. The clear preference for hybrid models and bilingual delivery aligns with Knowles' principles of adult learning. The emphasis on customization supports Greene's (2023) view that adult learners engage more deeply with tailored content. The split in willingness to invest based on company size mirrors what Ingram et al. (2015) described as strategic alignment. He mentions that training is only seen as valuable when it supports performance goals. These connections validate the study's relevance and support the market viability of a tailored training service by PNP Crossing Borders.

To summarize all the data, the case company PNP Crossing Borders has a strong potential to enter the sales training market in Finland. Success depends on the offering, and if it is flexible with formats. Also, having relevant content, bilingual delivery, and pricing models that reflect customer expectations.

6.2 Proposals for the Case Company

Based on the overall research of this study, it is clear that PNP Crossing Borders can enter the Finnish sales training market. It can do it by carefully aligning the offerings with the expectations and realities of potential clients. The company has past experience in training and communication that can help it in sales training. However, to compete effectively, PNP needs to make intentional decisions about the design, delivery, and pricing of its services.

The first proposal for the company is to adopt a flexible training delivery model. This theory is supported by Beebe et al. (2012), who highlight that adult learners are more motivated when they have control over how and when they learn. The survey revealed that hybrid formats combining online and in-person sessions were the most popular ones. The survey also showed that right after was the all online option. This suggests that the company should develop training options that can be delivered in multiple ways. The flexibility in delivery is appealing to clients because it allows clients to select a method that suits them and their team. The structured interview showed that companies appreciate this kind of adaptability, especially when training can be tailored to their specific projects.

A second proposal is to develop a pricing structure that balances value and predictability. The survey responses showed that most companies are willing to pay €50–€150 per participant per hour, showing a clear preference for the fixed-price option. This suggests that PNP should offer course bundles with transparent pricing, rather than only hourly billing. Otherwise, it might turn many clients off. During the unstructured interview, it was mentioned that when entering a competitive market, pricing and a strong offer will play an important role. In this case, introductory offers or bundled services could help attract the first clients and build trust.

The third proposal is self-evidently to focus on delivering company-specific, customized training content. Both interviewees mentioned that having a tailored training that connects directly with the company's needs is very valuable. This is also supported by Greene (2023), who explained that customized training leads to better engagement and performance outcomes. The Wärtsilä manager emphasized that past training programs were successful because they were long-term, practical, and very ready to adjust to the organization's context. The unstructured interview also noted that the case company already has internal expertise through one of its team members, which could support the development of highly relevant and cost-effective content without relying heavily on external input.

Not as important as previously mentioned, but still valuable, is to have the delivery in various languages. Although the case company was interested in providing only sales training in English, it is highly suggested that they have the Finnish option as well. Survey results clearly show that while many respondents prefer Finnish, a large share is open to English or bilingual options. So the case company should have a flexible offering available. As PNP already operates in the language market, it should actively use and highlight this strength.

Lastly, PNP should invest in measures that build their credibility. Both interviews showed that clients are more likely to choose a provider who has evidence of experience. Good evidence is to have strong references and great results. To build trust, PNP could begin by offering pilot sessions, collecting testimonials, and collaborating with existing clients to co-develop training packages. Additionally, offering optional certification may help enhance the perceived value of its programs.

Together with these proposals, PNP Crossing Borders can create a roadmap for how they can enter the Finnish sales training market. They need to mainly focus on flexibility, tailored content, pricing clarity, language options, and trust-building. With these, the company will be more likely to gain a foothold and succeed in the Finnish market.

6.3 Considerations for Implementation

The results from the data show potential for the case company to expand into the Finnish sales training market. It is important to mention that successful implementation will depend on several factors. The company should begin by taking a look at its current capabilities and how these can support a new service offering. Since one of the new team members already has experience in sales training, it would be a smart move to make this person take a leading role. This allows the company to build from within while minimizing startup costs.

Another important step is testing the market with a smaller-scale pilot program. This would allow the company to gather valuable feedback and make necessary adjustments before committing to a broader release. The pilot program should reflect the preferences found in the research data.

PNP Crossing Borders should also have a good communication strategy. Many responses showed that they were unfamiliar with Finnish training providers, which suggests that visibility is a challenge in the industry. Having good credibility through testimonials, references, and content marketing could help establish the company's presence. The service offering should have a clear structure and show how it is adapted to meet the specific needs of each client.

Also important to mention is that the case company should define how to measure success. The interviewees mentioned important indicators for success, such as better sales results, stronger client relationships, and clear business impact. Setting these measures early can support future development and help show potential clients the value of the training.

6.4 Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The survey and both interviews suggest that the case company has a clear opportunity in the sales training market. With that said, there are still considerable risks in entering the market.

These risks can affect both the effectiveness of the training services and the ability of the company to attract and retain clients. This view is also held by Greene (2023), who states that successful implementation depends on aligning training with the company's goals.

One of the most common challenges is making the training content align with the specific needs of the client. If training is too general or theoretical, it might not produce significant enough results. According to Flaherty (2025), one major obstacle in modern sales training is the failure to connect training content directly to the daily realities of the sales team. The company can avoid this by making sure that all training programs are personally tailored and include exercises that reflect actual real working life situations.

Another possible risk is time. A lot of companies don't want to take part in training programs if they take too much time away from daily work. Flaherty (2025) mentions that businesses often find it hard to carry out training programs because they don't have enough time and don't always see it as important. One way to deal with this is by offering flexible training that comes in smaller parts, like hybrid models, so it can fit better into busy schedules.

Risks can also come from measuring results. If the clients don't see clear outcomes, they won't continue with their training. Having a bad word of mouth on results could be detrimental to the company in the sales training market.

In addition, it is always risky to enter the market with strong established competitors. The structured interview suggested that companies prefer to have an established relationship with the provider. This means for the case company, it will be even harder to win someone over. In order to reduce the risk company would have to differentiate itself through pricing, personalized service, or unique positioning such as bilingual delivery.

By preparing for these risks and implementing proactive strategies, the company can improve its chances of success in the Finnish sales training market.

6.5 Proposed Business Model for Sales Training

The proposed business model for sales training would follow a lean and scalable structure that builds upon PNP's existing strengths in training and communication services. The value proposition is to offer practical and customized training that is affordable, flexible, and meets

the specific needs of each client. The target customer segments include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in South Ostrobothnia and nearby regions, with the possibility for future expansion at the national level.

The service would be offered in a hybrid format that combines digital learning with on-the-job training. This approach coincides with the survey findings, which highlight a preference for flexible and cost-effective solutions. Training would be provided in Finnish, English, or both, depending on client needs.

The revenue model would have three pricing tiers. The first tier would include a fixed price offering for standard training modules, typically priced between €500 and €2,000, depending on the scope. The second one would have custom training projects, where the price is based on the content and delivery method. This would be either hourly or a flat price. The third one would be planned for later stages, which would be subscription-based access to an online training portal.

Certification would be optional and would add value without making the training cost too much. Trainers would be chosen from both the company's own staff and a group of freelance professionals. Marketing would focus on online channels, direct contact with clients, and using current client connections for referrals and test sessions. The proposed model is also presented visually in the Business Model Canvas (Figure 9).

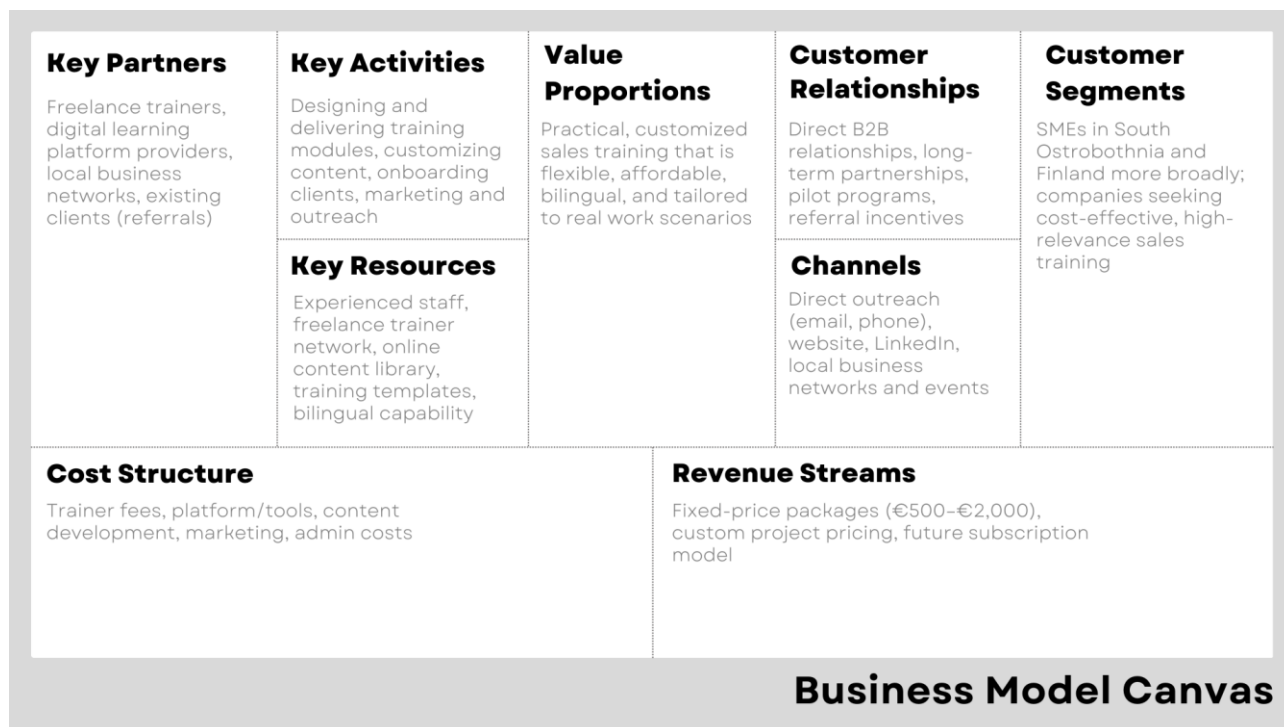


Figure 9. Business Model Canvas for PNP's Sales Training Service.

7 CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to look into sales training demand in the Finnish market and whether it was viable for the case company, PNP Crossing Borders. The purpose of the study was to find out how the different industries perceive sales training and whether they are willing to invest in it. The study used a mixed-methods approach. When the Mixed-methods approach is used it combines quantitative survey results with a couple of qualitative interviews.

Results from the study show us that while not all companies currently invest in external sales training, there is a clear recognition of its importance for professionals. A majority of responses saw sales training as very important or extremely important for professional development. The results showed a clear preference for flexible options in sales training. These flexible options are hybrid models and moderately priced service options. Many participants of the survey also strongly supported the different language options available. The interviews supported this, showing that companies prefer training that is practical, customized, and aligned with their specific business goals.

The results of the study show that there is a strong opportunity for PNP Crossing Borders to enter the sales training market. Since the company already has experience in communication and training, it can enter the market more confidently. This gives the company a competitive base to build and improve on. However, success will depend on how well the service offering reflects client expectations. The company needs to focus on flexibility, customization, and competitive pricing with its offerings if it wants to stand out.

Now combining with the general findings, a market estimation and competitor analysis were conducted. They were done to support practical applications. The market size was estimated to be €43 million annually in Finland. The survey data showed clear pricing and format preferences among the responses. A proposed business model was developed in response. The business model focused on hybrid delivery, bilingual content, and flexible pricing. These elements align with both the uncovered market gaps and PNP's core strengths. This makes the launch of a tailored sales training service a realistic and well-supported opportunity.

The proposed business model Canvas framework aligns with the customer's needs identified in the study. It mainly focuses on what SMEs are looking for. They mostly are looking for

bilingual delivery and different kinds of hybrid formats. These aspects differentiate it from other competitors. It especially makes a difference in the South Ostrobothnia region, where PNP already operates. This strong entry strategy is practical and supported by both the market estimation and survey insights.

The research provides valuable insights into the Finnish market in sales training. Even though the study is valuable, it has some limitations. The survey, while distributed across various platforms, had a relatively small response size. The sample goal for the survey was 80 answers however the survey gathered less than 50 responses for various time constraints and sample requirements. These limitations indicate that, although the findings offer valuable insights, they may not represent the full range of perspectives in the Finnish market. However, using multiple data sources helps strengthen the overall validity of the conclusions. Future research could benefit from having a larger and more diverse sample to validate whether these results are the same across different business environments, as recommended by Creswell (2014).

In conclusion, the research provides a solid foundation for understanding current trends and opportunities in Finland's sales training market. The research shows that there is moderate but growing demand. It is especially shows with the SMEs. PNP Crossing Borders is well-positioned to serve this segment by offering hybrid, bilingual, and customized services. The findings also validate several theoretical principles. These principles include the importance of relevance (Knowles et al., 2005), measurable outcomes (Greene, 2023), and strategic alignment (Ingram et al., 2015). The study had a limited sample size, which was a big limitation. It was improved by the use of multiple data sources to increase confidence in the conclusions. For future research or company planning, adding a much larger sample size would go a long way.

The company recommendations is to proceed with the business model adaptation that will allow the expansion from a Finnish Language Training Company into Sales Training space, the market demand is strong in the region of South Ostrobothnia of and the new business seem viable considering that the company has possesses the skills and competences comparable to the industry main competitors.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Market Estimation Table

Appendix 2. Survey Questions

Appendix 1. Market Estimation Table

Company Size Category	Number of Companies (approx.)	Number of Employees (approx.)	Share of Total Employees (%)	Estimated Sales Workers (within total)
Micro (0-9 employees)	542,400 (93.5% of total enterprises)	419,000	14.50%	Included within "Service and Sales Workers" category
Small (10-49 employees)	16,310 (approx. 2.8% of total)	325,332 (for 10-49 employees in 2020)	22.5% (for 10-49 employees in 2020)	Included within "Service and Sales Workers" category
Medium (50-249 employees)	3,143 (approx. 0.5% of total)	294,090 (for 50-249 employees in 2020)	20.3% (for 50-249 employees in 2020)	Included within "Service and Sales Workers" category
Large (250+ employees)	684 (approx. 0.1% of total)	507,391 (for 250+ employees in 2020)	35.0% (for 250+ employees in 2020)	Included within "Service and Sales Workers" category
TOTAL	~580,000 (Enterprises in 2023)	~1,510,000 (Personnel, staff-years in 2023)	100%	~71,000 (Service and Sales Workers in 2020)

Appendix 2. Survey Questions

1.What industry do you work in? (Multiple choice, select the most relevant)

IT & Software

Manufacturing

Retail & E-commerce

Finance & Banking

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals

Education & Training

Hospitality & TourismReal Estate & Property Management

Automotive & Transportation

Energy & Utilities

Consulting & Business Services

Media & Advertising

Telecommunications

Construction & Engineering

Government & Public Sector

Agriculture & Food Industry

Other (please specify)

2.What is your current job role?

Sales representative

Sales manager

Marketing professional

Business owner

HR / Training & Development Manager

Other (please specify)

3.How large is your company?

Small (1–50 employees)

Medium (51–250 employees)

Large (251+ employees)

4.Has your company ever invested in sales training?

Yes, quite much

Yes, regularly

Yes, occasionally

No, but we are considering it

No, and we are not interested

5.If yes, what type of sales training has your company used before? (Select all that apply)

In-house sales training

External training from Finnish providers

External training from international providers

Online sales training courses

Other (please specify)

6.How important do you think sales training is for professional growth in your industry?

Extremely important

Very important

Somewhat important

Not so important

Not at all important

7.How big do you consider is the need for sales training in your company?

Very high

High – We actively seek training for our employees

Moderate – Some employees could benefit from sales training

Low – Sales training is not a priority

Not needed at all

8.Would you personally take a sales training course to improve your skills?

Extremely interested

Very interested

Somewhat interested if it is affordable and relevant

Not so interested

Not at all interested

9.What format of sales training would you prefer? (Check all that apply)

In-person workshops

Online courses

Hybrid (online + in-person)

On-the-job coaching

Other (please specify)

10.Would you prefer sales training in English or Finnish?

Only in Finnish

Prefer Finnish but open to English

Prefer English but open to Finnish

Only in English

11.Do you think sales training should include official certification?

Yes, a certification is essential

No, certification is not necessary

It depends on the course content and provider

Other (please specify)

12. What is the maximum hourly rate your company would be willing to pay per participant for a sales training session?

Under €35 per hour

Under €35 to 50€ per hour

€50–€100 per hour

€100–€150 per hour

Over €200 per hour

13. Would your company prefer a fixed price for full courses or flexible hourly-based pricing?

Fixed-price courses (full program pricing)

Hourly-based pricing (pay per session or coaching hour)

No preference

14. Would your company sponsor sales training for employees?

Yes, for all employees who need it

Yes, but only for selected employees

No, employees would need to pay themselves

Not sure (depends on the offer)

15. Are you familiar with any sales training companies in Finland?

Extremely familiar

Very familiar

Somewhat familiar

Not so familiar

Not at all familiar

16.If yes, which companies have you heard of or used before? (Mark all that apply)

Mercuri International

Rainmaker

Sales Energy Finland

Adeptus

Other (please specify)

17.What factors are most important when choosing a sales training provider? (Rank from 1–5)

Trainer's expertise

Training format (online, in-person)

Certification availability

Pricing & cost-effectiveness

Customization for company needs

18.Would you consider a new sales training provider if it offered better quality or pricing than existing options?

Yes, definitely

Maybe, if the offering is strong

No, I prefer established providers

I would consider good offers

19.Any additional comments or preferences regarding sales training?