

## **Marketing communication plan. Case: EKOenergy**

Elina Jäkälä



<b>Author(s)</b> Elina Jäkälä	
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<p>This project-based thesis has an objective of creating a marketing communication plan for a non-profit organisation. The marketing communication plan targets other non-profit organisations that the case organisation wants to cooperate with. This thesis will introduce theory about marketing communication, give information about the case organisation's target audience and present the actual marketing communication plan.</p> <p>Since the case organisation and its target audience are all non-profit organisations this thesis will apply theory that is typically used in business-to-business marketing communication. The theoretical part will also discuss issues related to relationship marketing.</p> <p>The most suitable marketing communication tools to be used in this project were personal selling and public relations since these are the most effective tools when the objective is to create long-lasting relationships with the audience members. The plan also gives some practical tools on how to contact the audience members.</p> <p>Overall this thesis presents guidelines on how organisations can reach other organisations when the objective is about forming relationships.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Marketing communication, relationship marketing, non-profit organisation, business-to-business marketing, personal selling	

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# **1 Introduction**

This project-based thesis offers marketing communication guidelines to an international non-profit organisation. This chapter will introduce the case organisation of the thesis and present the topic of the thesis. It will also explain the scope of the project and the key concepts.

## **1.1 Case organization**

EKOenergy is a European network of 37 nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that promotes renewable electricity. The goal of the network is to promote the development of the renewable electricity sector, inform consumers about the impact of their electricity purchases and to promote discussion between electricity sector, NGOs and other stakeholders. The network was founded in 2012 and since then, the Secretariat of the Network has been hosted by the Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (EKOenergy a.) The Secretariat is located in Helsinki (EKOenergy b).

EKOenergy is also an environmental label that is managed by the EKOenergy network. It is the only label for electricity which works all over the European market and which is recognised by stakeholders in all European countries. Electricity sold under the EKOenergy label must be produced from renewable resources and it also has to fulfil all the other criteria given by EKOenergy (EKOenergy c.) Energy that has been given a label by EKOenergy can be purchased in Finland, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Russia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey (EKOenergy d).

The daily management of the network and the label is managed by the EKOenergy Secretariat. The daily management includes taking care of external relationships, offering services to stakeholders and taking care of the financial administration of the organisation (EKOenergy e.) At the moment, the staff includes many volunteers that come from different European countries (EKOenergy b).

## **1.2 Thesis topic**

The topic of this thesis is about marketing communication. The purpose of this project-based thesis is to create a marketing communication plan to a non-profit organisation that wants to market itself known among other environmental organisations in the European market.

The case organisation has commissioned this plan because it wants to make its ecological electricity label more known among other European environmental organisations. The target of the plan would be that other organisations that also manage their own environmental labels, would become aware of the case organisation and work together with it in the future. The main goal of the case organisation is that these organisations would acknowledge the importance of renewable electricity and that they would also acknowledge the importance of it, in their environmental label criteria. What the case organisation wishes is that other organisations would always recommend in their environmental criteria, that companies should only use renewable electricity that has been given an environmental label. The case organisation would also want that the other organisations would always refer to EKOenergy when giving a recommendation to use renewable energy.

What the case organization is expecting from the plan is a list of potential cooperating partners that should be targeted with the marketing communication efforts. The plan should also include general guidelines about how to contact these organizations in practice such as recommendations about which communication channels to choose.

The project objective of this thesis is to identify the target market and create a marketing communication plan to reach the organizations chosen as the target. The project tasks are the following ones:

PT1 Gaining understanding about the topic and creating theoretical framework

PT2 Identifying and gaining understanding about the target audience

PT3 Creating a marketing communication plan

Table 1 Overlay matrix of the project tasks

Project task	Description	Chapter
PT1	Gaining understanding about the topic and creating theoretical framework	3
PT2	Identifying and gaining understanding about the target audience	4
PT3	Creating a marketing communication plan	5

### 1.3 Project scope

The main focus of this marketing communication plan is creating awareness about the case organisation and giving guidelines about how to create relationships with the target-

ed audience. The plan will also include identifying potential organisations that the case organisation should target. In terms of relationship marketing this plan will focus building awareness and starting a relationship. Retaining existing relationships will be an issue that is left out from this plan. The marketing communication plan that is created, will only target other environmental organisation, not consumers or businesses.

The marketing communication plan will concentrate on personal selling and public relations out of all the traditional promotion tools. This plan will not include those tools that are normally only used in the consumer market. The actual plan will leave out tools such as advertising, social media and sales promotions.

#### **1.4 International aspect**

The case organisation of this thesis is an international network of NGOs and it has members in many different European countries. The secretariat of the network is in Finland but majority of the people working at the Secretariat are international trainees and volunteers from different European countries (EKOenergy b).

All the target audience members are international and majority of the organisations do not have any representatives in Finland. The communication with these organisations will happen mostly in English.

#### **1.5 Anticipated benefits to stakeholders**

EKOenergy is still a new organisation and it has not yet established a marketing communication plan towards other European environmental organisations. Establishing relationships with other organisations is a slow process and having a concrete and written plan would increase the effectiveness of these processes.

As a new network and label, EKOenergy only has limited amount finances to use in its marketing operations. Having a limited budget means that it has to be well planned where the marketing communication efforts are put into. If the marketing is well-planned the network can promote itself with fewer financial resources.

Since management of the network and the label is mostly managed by young volunteers it is important for the staff to have clear guidelines to follow in their work. Many of the volunteers do not have experience in sales or marketing which means that organisation must have clear guidelines on how to market and promote itself to create new relationships.

## **1.6 Key concepts**

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) is a group of voluntary individuals or organisations that are not usually linked to government. An NGO can be formed to provide services or to support some public policy. Majority of NGOs are non-profit organisations (Karns.)

Marketing can be described as a process of creating value to customers and building strong relationships with them in order to gain value from these customers in return (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 29).

Marketing communication or promotion means communicating organisations offering to its target audience (Fill 2013, 10). It can be seen as a process through which organisation and its audience communicate to each other (Fill 2013, 18).

A non-profit organisation is an organisation that does not aim to generate profit and it does not share its income to any of its members or partners. Typical non-profit organisations include volunteer services, public charities and museums (Legal Information Institute.)

## 2 Project planning

This project-based thesis offers an outlook on the theory behind marketing communication and later offers guidelines on how to use them. This project has three main parts: introducing the theory behind the topic, introducing the target audience of the marketing communication plan and finally, the actual marketing communication plan.

This thesis introduces theory that is needed to create a successful marketing communication plan. This is why the whole project starts from gaining information about marketing and learning about different theories that can be adapted for a marketing communication plan. The theoretical part of this thesis looks first into marketing in general and how it can be used when forming new relationships between organisations. Since the case organisation is a non-profit organisation, this thesis utilises theories that are often used in business-to-business marketing. Since the outcome of this project is a marketing communication plan, the majority of the theoretical framework will handle marketing communication, especially marketing communication planning and marketing communication tools.

The information to create a theoretical framework for the marketing communication plan will be gained through desktop studies. The desktop studies will include looking for suitable literature related to the project tasks. This involves reading literature about business-to-business marketing and marketing communication. Doing desktop studies will be an important way of gaining information and insight of the topic of the thesis. The information gained from the desktop studies will be used when writing the theoretical framework of the project. The used literature includes books about marketing, organisational communication, business-to-business marketing, communication, social marketing and selling.

The next step after gaining knowledge about the topic is looking into the target audience. This means gathering information about the targeted organisations by gaining information about them through online sources. Since there are a lot of organisations in the target audience this thesis will only look into some of the organisations. The organisation listed in the thesis are the ones that fulfil all the required characteristics and that have potential in being possible co-operators of EKOenergy in the future.

The information search about the chosen target organisations includes looking into their activities and values. First step is to look into the general information about an organisation which means basically finding out what an organisation does in general. This is a critically important step since the case organisation only wants to target organisations that offer environmental labelling in European market. Gathering general information also in-

cludes finding out information about the target organisation's location, size and in which countries the organisation operates in.

Since the target is very specific, it is important to choose the right organisations. The chosen target organisations should also share the same values as the case organisation. These organisations should value sustainability and environment. If the values of the targeted organisations are similar to the ones that the case organisation has, it is easier to form relationships and agreements with these organisations.

The main goal of the case organisation is that someday, the targeted organisations would grant their environmental labels only for products and services that have been produced by environmentally labelled electricity. This means that the case organisation wants to have an impact on these organisations' label criteria. Because of this the information search about the target organisations includes looking into their label criteria. The idea is to find out if an organisation's criteria already states something about the use of sustainable electricity. If an organisation has stated something about the use of ecological electricity, it means that the organisation already has acknowledged the issue and its importance.

After recognising the organisations that the marketing communication plan targets the next step is to create the actual marketing communication plan. The marketing communication plan offers general guidelines to the case organisation, on how to reach the target organisations by using marketing communication in practice. The plan is based on the marketing communication theories presented in the theoretical framework of the thesis. It shows how to use in practice those marketing communication theories that are most suitable for this project and for the case organisation.

### **3 Marketing communication as a tool to build relationships**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that will later be the base for the marketing communication plan, which is the outcome of this project-based thesis. This theoretical framework will present the main marketing concepts that are going to be used in the planning. Although this marketing communication plan is made for a non-profit organisation, it will apply theories that are more commonly used in business-to-business marketing. It will also introduce the concepts of social marketing and relationship marketing since these marketing disciplines are most suitable for the nature of this thesis topic and they are both widely used by different non-profit organisations.

Marketing is traditionally seen as a concept of selling products and services but marketing can be also seen as a lot broader idea. More broadly marketing means creating value for customers and creating stable relationships in order to capture value from customers in return (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 29). Marketing is not always used to sell services and tangible products. It can additionally be seen as an act of selling organisations, persons, places and ideas. NGOs often market themselves in order to gain new members. In organisation marketing the aim is usually to build awareness about the organization or to change attitudes towards the organisation (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 252.)

Since marketing can be used for more than only selling tangible products and services, it can be used to make influence in society. Social marketing is a marketing discipline that applies principles of traditional marketing in order to benefit the society (Kotler & Lee 2008, 7.) This means that although the goal is not about making monetary profit, the marketing tools are similar to the ones that are being used in the commercial sector. Social marketing is used by NGOs that tackle with a specific issue. The goal of the marketing is to change the behaviour of individuals or communities (Belz & Peattie 2012, 26.)

Relationship marketing is a division of marketing that concentrates on the relationships between organisations and its customers and stakeholders. When organisations establish relationships with each other, it often involves doing some kind of cooperation together. Together organisations can gain collaborative advantage which means that organisations can accomplish more together than they would alone (Lank 2006, 7.) In case of NGOs this could mean having greater influence on society. In social marketing organisations often do lot of cooperation together because making social change is easier with a partner. Through partnership an organisation will have a greater access to new resources and markets (Weinreich 2011, 20.) According to Grönroos the objectives of relationship marketing are establishing, retaining and terminating relationships. He also points that the key

aim is that the relationships are always mutually beneficial to all parties involved in the relationship (1994, in Egan 2011, 38.) Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987, in Egan 2011, 80-81) suggest that there are five major stages in relationships: awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment and dissolution. Awareness stage is about identifying the potential parties, which is then followed by exploration. During the exploration stage the parties research the possibility of a relationship. Expansion and commitment are the phases when the organisations start cooperating and benefiting from the relationship. Dissolution phase represents the ending of a relationship. This thesis will put the main focus on the early stages of relationship building.

Marketing communication is about organisations communicating with all their different audiences in order to reach their different objectives (Fill 2013, 12). Marketing communication is also known as promotion. Promotion is one of the 4Ps in the marketing mix theory in addition to product, price and place. Although promotion is only one aspect of a marketing it is an important part of it. Especially in social marketing promotion has very visible role (Weinreich 2011, 18-19.)

Marketing communication is normally used to inform or persuade the audience, reinforce experiences or as a way to differentiate from competitors (Fill 2013, 14). The key point of marketing communication is that it is an audience-centred activity. It should engage the audience and encourage it to respond to the organisation. To achieve this the organisation needs to understand its audience. It needs to understand its needs, behaviour and environment. The response that the organisation gets from the audience tells how successful the marketing communication efforts were (Fill 2013, 18-19.)

### **3.1 Marketing communication planning**

Analysis, design, implementation and control are typically listed as the main stages in all marketing plans. There are several different models that can be used to create a marketing plan. SOSTAC planning model, which stands for situation, objectives, strategies, tactics, action and control, is close to this standard. The difference to other marketing plans is that the model is visualized as continuous circle of activities (Egan 2011, 230.) Instead of overall marketing this thesis will only focus on marketing communication. Although marketing communication planning differs from marketing planning, there are many similarities in both types of plans which means that it is possible to use similar planning tools. SOSTAC planning model can be easily applied to marketing communication planning.



Figure 1. SOSTAC planning model (Robinson 2012)

A good marketing communication plan should always start with the analysis of the current situation. SWOT analysis is a practical tool to use to get a good picture of current situation of an organization. SWOT lists strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that have an impact on the organizations marketing. Objectives state what the organization wants to reach with its marketing communication plan. The objectives must be communicable, aspirational and SMART, which means strategic, measurable, actionable, realistic and timely. After creating objectives an organization must move to the next step which is creating a strategy. Strategy is what tells how the organisation is going to reach its objectives. Choosing the tactics in marketing strategy means choosing marketing techniques and media. Action means planning the act of turning ideas into reality. In marketing plan control means evaluating the marketing efforts (Egan 2011, 232-234.)

What is important in the communication is that the message is clear and consistent through all the used communication channels. Integrated marketing communications means that an organization integrates and coordinates its message in a consistent way through different channels (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 436.)

Developing effective communication is a long-term process. Communication could also be defined as managing customer relationship over time, including stages as preselling, selling, consuming and post-consumption (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 438.)

The marketing communication plan puts together all the different parts of the communication mix. Armstrong and Kotler (2012, 439) list six different steps of developing an effective communication:

- Identifying the target audience
- Determining the communication objectives
- Designing a message
- Choosing a media to communicate the message
- Selecting a message source
- Collecting feedback

A marketing communication plan can also include additional elements. Fill (2013, 164) suggest that elements needed in a marketing plan are context analysis, communication objectives, strategy, coordinated communication mix, resources, scheduling and implementation, evaluation and control, and feedback.

Marketing communication in business-to-business market differs from marketing communication in a consumer market and these differences has to be taken to account when making a plan. First of all communication in business-to-business market tends to be very formal and there are many decision-makers in organisations (Fill 2013, 33). In business-to-business market making decisions also takes more time than in consumer market (Fill 2013, 35).

### **3.2 Choosing and identifying target audience and creating objectives**

When creating a new marketing communication plan the organisation needs to decide whom to target with the marketing communication efforts. The target should be chosen in the beginning, so that it will be easier to make the right decisions about how to communicate the message of the organisation in an effective way.

According to Kotler and Lee (2008, 116) there are three steps included in the market selection: segmenting the market, evaluating segments and choosing one or more segments for targeting. Market segmentation is about dividing companies and organisations in the market into smaller segments based on their preferences and other characteristics (Anderson et al. 2009, 47). Segmenting non-profit organisations is similar to segmenting business markets. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2012, 222) business buyers can be segmented geographically, demographically or, by sought benefits, operating characteristics, situational factors and personal characteristics. Vuokko (2013, 144) suggest that in

business-to-business marketing communications audience members can also be segmented based on their industries, sizes and ages.

Before contacting the audience an organisation should assess the target audience. The assessment involves finding out what previous experience the audience has about the organisation, what they think about the message and what is their state of mind (Blundel et al. 2013, 119.) Lank (2006, 36-37) also suggests that an organisation should analyse each individual target organisation separately by making a SWOT analysis.

Communication objective means the desired response the marketer expects from the target audience. The objective can be about how familiar the target market should be with the organisation that is marketing itself. Buyer-readiness stages include awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase. These stages describe how familiar a target customer is with an organisation. A communication objective could be about moving a target customer from one stage to another, closer to the purchase stage. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 440.) Setting objectives will be later helpful when the success of the communication plan is being monitored. The objectives can also be related to the number of the responses the organization wants to get (Weinreich 2011, 248). Generally objectives can be divided to quantitative and qualitative objectives. Qualitative objectives can be defined by numbers. Qualitative objectives can be related to attributes such as organisation's image or gaining publicity (Vuokko 2003, 138-139.)

### **3.3 Creating and delivering a message**

As AIDA model suggests, an effective message should gain attention, hold interest, generate desire and obtain action. To make a message effective, it must have content that appeals to the audience, and a well-designed structure and format. An appeal of a message can be rational, emotional or moral. Using moral appeal is suitable for social marketing because it is directed to the target audience's understanding of what is right (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 441.) Communication between organisations is normally rational and based on information, rather than be emotional (Fill 2013, 35).

A message can be constructed in many different ways. A conclusion of a message can be presented at the end of a message or it can be left out from the message and the receiver of the message can make their own conclusion. A strong message should also include good arguments that can be placed at the beginning of the message or at the end. Those arguments can then be either one-sided or two-sided. One-sided argument only tells positive aspects about the organisation that is communicating. Two-sided argument also in-

cludes possible negative matters. Normally one-sided arguments are more effective but two-sided often seem more credible for receiver of the message. Message format means the way a message is communicated to the audience. This can mean for example using visual tools to make a message more appealing (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 442.)

Personal communication channels mean channels where people get to communicate to each other directly. This type of communication can happen face-to-face or through phone or email. This type of communication allows the receiver of the communication to give immediate feedback about the message. Non-personal communication channels, such as print media lack the personal contact (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 443.) Personal communication is more flexible and the message can be adjusted according to who the receiver is and the message source has more control over the whole situation. This makes personal communication more powerful. The problem with personal communication is that it demands lot of workforce and resources (Vuokko 2003, 32-33.)

When communicating the message the focus should always be on the receiver of the message and the message should sound interesting and coherent. It will be more likely that the message is received and understood if the message is sent through different channels and it is encoded. This can mean for example making follow-up call after an email (Blundel, Ippolito & Donnarumma 2013, 48.)

The message does not need to be completely ready when the communication with the audience begins. Especially when using personal communication channels, the message can be modified based on the reactions and the feedback coming from the message receiver (Vuokko 2003, 169.)

Message source refers to the communicator that brings the message to the audience. In consumer marketing this would often mean celebrity endorsers. A person that is chosen to be the message source should be credible and able to motivate the audience (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 444.) The message source has great impact on how the audience receives the message, especially in personal communication. When the communication happens between two people the personality of the message source can have a great meaning on how the message is received. If the receiver of the message dislikes the source, it can mean that the receiver is distracted from hearing the actual message (Vuokko 2013, 35.)

### **3.4 Marketing communication tools**

Marketing communications mix or promotion mix means the specific blend of promotion methods that an organisation can use to communicate its message. The types of promotion include advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 432.) Additional promotion tools include social media, media advocacy, special events and entertainment that are all typical methods in social marketing (Weinreich 2011, 18).

Advertising means any form of paid and non-personal promotion or presentation by a sponsor that can be recognised. Personal selling is personal presentation that is made to sell or to build relationships. Sales promotion represents short-term incentives that are offered to encourage purchases. Public relations means building good relations to build a positive image. Direct marketing is about communicating directly with a specific and a carefully chosen consumer (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 432.)

It is important to choose the right tools to communicate organisation's message. Organisations should consider at least the following characteristics: degree of control over the message, financial resources, credibility, size and geographical dispersion of the target audience, and communication tasks. Control over the message means that the organisation can ensure that the intended message is communicated to the right audience in right form and that it is received by the audience. Tools that offer high level of control are advertising and sales promotion. Financial resources in this case refers to possibility of paying to a third party to transmit organisation's message to the target audience (Fill 2013, 31.) Credibility refers to how the target audience perceives the message and the source of the message. A third party that transmits the message is often seen a more credible source by the target audience than the organisation that the message is about. Third party comments are seen as more credible because the audience expects them to be more objective and trustworthy. This makes public relations a credible marketing communication tool. The geographical dispersion means, where the members of target audience are located. This and the size of the target audience must be taken into consideration when choosing the most effective communication tools. Communication tasks are the specific goals that the organisation wants to reach with its communication. The organisation should choose communication tools that help it to achieve all the required tasks. For example when the task is to persuade the audience, the organisation should consider direct marketing as a tool (Fill 2013, 32.) This thesis will look closer to personal selling and public relations since they are the most suitable promotion tools for a marketing communication plan that has an aim in building relationships between organisations.

### 3.4.1 Personal selling

Personal selling is the most common tool in business-to-business marketing communications (Fill 2013, 34). Personal selling is effective in forming customer relationships since it allows interpersonal communication (Kotler and Armstrong 2012, 448). Because of the interpersonal communication it can be used in complex selling situations as it allows the seller to adjust offering to fit the needs of the customer (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 489). The seller has an opportunity to adjust the message at the same time as the communication is happening based on feedback and clues from the buyer (Vuokko 2003, 169). Traditionally, personal selling is used to sell products or services but it can also be used to create new relationships. Salesforce of the organization play a key role in the personal selling process since they are the crucial link between the organisation and the customer. The sales person represents the organisation to the customer, while at the same time representing the customer to the organisation. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 489-490.)

The strength of personal selling as a communication tool is the two-way communication it enables between the seller and the buyer. It allows the parties to have effective interaction and it allows the buyer to give feedback at the same time as the sale is happening (Fill 3023, 520.) The effective communication also gives the seller an opportunity to explain its offering to the buyer in a detailed manner. This makes personal selling a great tool to use in business-to-business marketing as it is a suitable tool for occasions when the offering of an organisation is complex and difficult to explain to the audience (Fill 2013, 522.)

The weakness of this marketing communication tool is its cost. Doing personal selling is time consuming and it requires a lot of financial resources. Other problem of personal selling is about the control over the messages. Personal selling allows the seller to adjust the message based on who the message receiver is, but this may cause the overall communication to be inconsistent. Inconsistency of the communication may then lead to misunderstandings that may jeopardise the relationship between the parties (Fill 2013, 520.)

Starting a relationship with a new customer is a long process. The process consists of seven stages that all need to be gone through to start a long-term relationship with a new contact (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 502-504):

- Prospecting and qualifying: identifying potential customers
- Pre-approach: learning about the potential customer
- Approach: first meeting
- Presentation and demonstration: presenting the offer of the seller

- Handling objections: overcoming objections
- Closing: finalising the sale
- Follow-up: ensuring customer satisfaction

Before starting to make any contacts sales process should start from making research about the target audience and looking for potential customers. This saves time since the organisation will not then waste resources on contacting those whom do not belong to the actual target audience. Learning about the target audience is important before making the first contact. Before making the first approach a sales person should have some basic information about the target's needs. This makes it easier for the seller to prepare for the actual sale. After the preparation the seller makes the first approach by using some personal communication channel, such as phone or email. When the sales process goes further, the seller should try to gain more information about the needs and criteria of the target and based on this information, present the message in a way that is desired by the target. Followed by this is the phase when seller has to answer to the questions and objections presented by the target. After these steps, seller should finalise the sale. After making a sale, seller should continue being in touch with the target and make sure they are satisfied. This includes answering to inquiries and receiving feedback (Vuokko 2003, 174-175.)

The target of personal selling is to finalise a sale which requires wide set of skills from the sales people of an organisation. Finalising a sale is often a long process and requires negotiation skills. Negotiation is type of persuasive communication that involves discussion and making of proposals. To build a long-lasting relationship with the counter negotiator is important to find mutually beneficial solution to the negotiations. The decisions that are made should serve both parties' long-term interests. (Blundel et al. 2013, 365.) Meldenhall, Punnett and Ricks (1995 in Blundel et al. 2013, 366) list five steps that are taken during the negotiation process:

- initial relationship building activity
- exchanging information
- bargaining and persuasion
- concession and agreement

Starting the personal sales process include making a decision on whom to contact in the organisation. It is important to choose the right person in the target organisation to approach first. It may not always be the best call to head straight to the head of the organisation but instead contact some lower-level person in the organisation. The sales person should find the person in the organisation who is most likely eager to listen and who can

provide the seller with important information. This person does not necessarily need to be a decision maker in the organisation. After first approaching the lower-level of the organisation, the seller can contact the real decision makers of the organisation (Castleberry et al. 2009, 211-212.)

It may be necessary to present the offering to several different people in the organisation and have discussion with each of them separately. This is typical when sales are done between two organisations since there are often many decision makers involved (Castleberry et al. 2009, 212-213.)

### **3.4.2 Public relations**

Public relations (PR) is used to gain positive publicity and to build a good image for an organisation. Press relations, product publicity, public affairs, lobbying, investor relations and development are all types of PR (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 478.) The main reason to use public relations should be to create relationship between the organisation and its audience (Fill 2013, 452). To build relations with the public, an organisation can use some of the following tools (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 480-481):

- News
- Speeches
- Special events
- Written materials such as annual reports and brochures
- Audiovisual materials such as videos
- Corporate identity materials such as logos and business cards
- Public service activities
- Social media
- Company website

The key task of public relations is giving a picture to the target audience that they are important for the organisation. Public relations should be used to share information about the organisation but also to make the target audience feel that they are being invested in (Vuokko 2003, 287.)

By using public relations as a marketing communication tool, an organisation's goal is to maximise opportunities to present itself in a positive manner. This would mean trying to get as much positive attention from media as possible. This can mean being mentioned by other websites and social media. Other reason to use public relations is that it is a great way to create discussion with stakeholders. Organisations should especially aim to have

discussion with journalists and bloggers since they are the ones that can share content about the organisation to others (Fill 2013, 447.)

There are different ways that organisations use public relations. Normally it is used so that the communication flow is one-way which means that the organisation that is the communication source has all the power in the communication and there is no dialogue between the communication source and the receiver. The reasons to use public relations also differ between organisations. Some use it to convince the receiver and some to provide information. Especially governmental organisations use this tool to provide information and to advise the audience. Other organisation typically use it to persuade the audience and to convince them of a new idea or product. Sometimes public relations can be even described as a form of propaganda and the information shared might not be completely truthful (Fill 2013, 449.)

Communication can also be two-way when using public relations. The two-way asymmetric model of using public relations suggests that the receiver of the message should have a chance to give feedback to the sender. In this model the purpose of the communication is to persuade the receiver which means that the communication is not equal and the sender has more power in the communication. When using the two-way symmetric model the power between the sender and the receiver is more equally balanced. In this model the dialogue offers both parties a chance to share information. This gives the both sides an opportunity to change their attitudes and behaviour based on the new information they receive from the opposite party (Fill 2013, 449-450.)

Media relations are the activities to provide information to the representatives of media. These activities include press releases, press conferences, interviews and events. Sending releases is a common activity. When a change takes place in an organisation it is typical to then send out a press conference to media. A press release is a written report that should be short and attract attention. Press release is normally used when an organisation wants to announce some developments in the organisation such as a new product or a contract. When bigger events take place organisations tend to held press conferences. This an activity that can be used in crisis situations. Giving interviews for representatives of media is a way for an organisation to share its views or opinions to the audience. In addition to this, organisations can also send out articles to media that have written by themselves (Fill 2013, 456).

### **3.5 Implementing a marketing communication plan**

When a marketing plan is implemented, the implementation process should be monitored in case some problems arise during the implementation. The problems will be easier to avoid if they are identified at an early stage. Monitoring will also help to ensure that all parts of the plan are carried out as planned and it helps to assess the end results of the process (Weinreich 2011, 247.)

The success of the management can be monitored by collecting partner feedback through phone calls or surveys to measure the effectiveness of the marketing strategy (Weinreich 2011, 251). When an organization is implementing a marketing plan, a good timing to collect feedback is after sending a message to its target audience. This allows the organization to measure how well the message was received by the audience (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 444.) Feedback can also be collected from the staff that has been involved in the process. The feedback can then be used to improve the marketing activities. (Weinreich 2011, 251.)

Process evaluation can be done to determine if the information was delivered to the target audience as it was planned. The evaluation can help to identify which parts of the marketing plan were effective in practice. The results can be then used to improve the marketing plan. Summative evaluation evaluates the outcome and the impact of the marketing. It is typically done in the end of a marketing program. This part usually evaluates if the campaign objectives were reached (Weinreich 2011, 260-261.)

## 4 Identifying the target audience

There are numerous organisations that grant labels for environmentally friendly companies and products. Ecolabel Index which is founded by Canadian Big Room Inc. is the world's largest directory of global ecolabels (Big Room Inc. 2016). The index lists that there are 463 ecolabels in 199 countries (Ecolabel Index 2016).

The case company wants to form relationships and be in contact with organisations that grant labels in different European countries and that focus in different industries. This thesis lists ecolabels that are used in the European market and labels that are used in industries that are significant users of energy.

Organisations that grant ecolabels to companies view the importance of sustainable energy in different ways. Today many organisations recognise the importance of sustainable energy but there are also organisations that do not even mention energy usage as part of their label criteria. Some organisations only grant their labels for companies that only use sustainable energy but majority of the organisations only recommend it.

This thesis includes an overview on different ecological labels that are used in Europe. These labels are granted by different organisations that can be potentially interested in working together with EKOenergy in the future and that should be contacted by the case organisation in the future.

This thesis will not include all European organisations that operate in the field of environmental labelling but it offers an overview into many different organisations that operate in different industries and countries. The listing also includes organisations based outside of Europe but that have wide operations in at least some European countries. What is common amongst all the organisations chosen on this list is that they all grant some type of labels or certificates for companies or other organisations based on their over-all environmental and ecological performance. The list concentrates on those labels that are given to organisations in industries where electricity consumption is high.

Instead of starting to contact all the environmental organisations at the beginning it is better to start the marketing communication efforts by first contacting a limited amount of companies. The first 12 organisations listed are all organisations that could have potential to cooperate with the case organisation. They all offer environmental labels for products and services in Europe and their label criteria's concentrate on sustainability issues. Some of these organisations already mention sustainable electricity use in their label criteria. A

few of these organisations are also at the moment revising their current label criteria. These are the first organisations that the case organisation could possibly aim at with its marketing communication efforts. In addition to these 12 organisation this chapter also lists ten other organisations that could also be potential future partners for EKOenergy.

#### **4.1 Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute**

The Cradle to Cradle Certified Product Standard is a certificate by the Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute. The institute is a non-profit organisation which has its headquarters in San Francisco in the United States and offices in the Netherlands. The Cradle to Cradle Certified Product Standard is a criteria for consumer products and it was developed to be used by product manufacturers and designers in product development to produce more sustainable consumer products (Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute 2014a.)

The certification has five different levels: basic, bronze, silver, gold and platinum. For a product to reach the platinum level, all the energy used in the manufacturing stage should be renewable (Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute 2014b.) At the moment the product standards are being revised and the revision will be completed in year 2017 (Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute 2014c).

#### **4.2 EarthCheck**

EarthCheck is an international benchmarking, certification and advisory group for travel and tourism industry. The clients of the group include destinations, multi-national companies, local governments and small businesses. To its client the group offers consultation services and certification programs. The headquarter of the group is located in Brisbane, Australia (EarthCheck. 2016a.)

The group offers certification for those companies that meet the EarthCheck Company Standard. The indicators used to measure the performance of companies include greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency (EarthCheck 201b.) EarthCheck also manages EarthCheck Evaluate which is an entry level program that measures the environmental, social and economic performance of companies. Organisations that participate in the program are awarded with an Earth Rating that tells the achievement level of the company (EarthCheck 2016c.)

In addition to the other certifications the group also offers certification for buildings. The EarthCheck Building Planning and Design Standard (BPDS) and Precinct Planning and

Design Standard (PPDS) are used to assess sustainability of buildings (EarthCheck 2016d).

### **4.3 Ecocert**

Ecocert is French inspection and certification body. Today it works internationally and it has remained as independent company. It is specialized in certifying organic agricultural products. In addition to agricultural certifications the company has also created environmental standards for many products such as cosmetics, cleaning products and spas (Ecocert 2016.)

Natural and organic cosmetics is one product group that has its own Ecocert standard. The standards of this product group focuses on use of ingredients but the standard does mention energy management as well. In the standard it says that companies that manufacture natural and organic cosmetics should develop a plan on how to increase the use of renewable energy in their manufacturing (Ecocert 2012, 26)

### **4.4 UL**

UL is an international organisation that does environmental assessment. It manages ECOLOGO, which is a label given to products and services or packages that have reduced environmental impact. Products that are given the label must undergo testing and auditing to prove their environmental performance. The products are assessed in following categories: materials; energy; manufacturing and operations; health and environment; product performance and use; and product stewardship and innovation. ECOLOGO has created specific standards for many different products and services, such as mobile phones and toys (UL 2015a.)

Other environmental label granted by UL is GREENGUARD which focuses on chemical emission over other environmental indicators (UL 2015b). UL is an international company with facilities around the world. It has customer service centers also in Europe, for example in Sweden (UL 2015c.)

### **4.5 Forum Ethibel**

Forum Ethibel is a Belgian non-profit organisation specialised in certification of financial products and services. The certified products and services must fulfil standards regarding ethics and sustainability (The Forum Ethibel 2016a.)

Forum Ethibel had two labels: Ethibel Pioneer and Ethibel Excellence. These labels are given to financial products that guarantee that they only invest in shares and bonds listed in Ethibel's Investment Register. The Investment Register is a listing of companies that have passed the assessment of Ethibel (Forum Ethibel 2016b).

#### **4.6 Global Sustainable Tourism Council**

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) has established global sustainable standards to increase knowledge about sustainability and promote sustainable practices in the tourism industry. The independent organization consists of experts and it is registered in USA (Global Sustainable Tourism Council 2016a.)

The organization has created two sets of criteria: one for destinations and other for hotel and tour operators (Global Sustainable Tourism Council 2016a). At the moment the criteria does not require hotels and tour operators to use renewable energy but it is encouraged. The current criteria is from year 2012 and currently it is being revised (Global Sustainable Tourism Council 2012.)

#### **4.7 Ethical Company Organisation**

The Ethical Company Organisation was founded in United Kingdom and it is a self-sustaining Limited Company (The Ethical Company Organisation 2016). Good Shopping Guide by the Ethical Company Organisation helps consumers choose eco-friendly and ethical products. The shopping guide which is available online shares information about companies and brands and it shows ethical ratings given to different products by different brands. The rating is based on many different ethical indicators such as environmental reporting and animal rights. (The Good Shopping Guide 2014a.)

The most ethical companies can be credited by the Good Shopping Guide. These companies can use the Good Shopping Guide's logo on their products, websites or advertising. Companies that want to be endorsed by the organisation must go through research process ran by the Ethical Company Organisation (The Good Shopping Guide 2014b.)

#### **4.8 Green Globe Certification**

Green Globe offers certification for tourism industry. It is based in Los Angeles, USA and it operates worldwide (Green Globe 2016a). It has members around the world including Europe. Its European member include hotels and resorts in countries like Germany and Italy (Green Globe 2016b.)

The Green Globe certificate assesses the sustainability performance of businesses in travel and tourism industry and their supply chain partners. The certification standards vary according to the type of certification and local factors. Green Globe has developed certification standards for 12 different types of businesses including attractions, hotels, spas, golf courses and transportation companies. Standards are reviewed and updated twice a year (Green Globe 2016c.) Green Globe's stance on energy use is that use of renewable energy should be encouraged. In the standard criteria of the certification, it stands that energy sources should be indicated and measured and that energy consumption should be decreased and use of renewable energy increased (Green Globe 2016d.)

#### **4.9 Green Key**

The Green Key is a program of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and it was originally founded in Denmark. Today the program is international and it has representation in more than 40 different countries (Green Key a.) The program promotes sustainability and environmental responsibility in the tourism industry. Green Key manages its own label that is awarded to hotels and other businesses in tourism industry for excellent performance in sustainability (Green Key b.)

To gain the Green Key certificate a company must meet high environmental standards. The certification program has different standards for different types of businesses. Green Key has developed own standards for hotels and hostels, small accommodations, restaurants, attractions and campsites. The current criteria are valid until June 2016 because new certification standards are at the moment under development. Later in 2016 there will also be own criteria for conference centres. (Green Key c.) To be able to use the Green Key certificate companies do not need to fulfil all the criteria given in the standards but they must fulfil certain minimum criteria. Companies that have been part of the Green Key program for 10 years or more have to fulfil 50 % of the criteria. The current criteria does not require companies to use renewable energy but for example the criteria for hotels states that use of renewable energy is designed to be part of the point system (Green Key 2012.)

#### **4.10 The Swan**

The Swan is the official Nordic Ecolabel established by the Nordic Council of Ministers given to environmentally friendly products. It is awarded to products in 60 different categories (Joutsenmerkki a.) By today thousands of products have received the label, such as

candles, shampoos and tables (Joutsenmerkki b). In Finland the label is managed by Motiva Services oy (Joutsenmerkki a).

Different standards have been set for different product and service categories. Some of the standards do not mention energy consumption at all and some standards only mention the issue shortly. The standard for stores requires that stores use energy in an efficient manner and that they are aware of their CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels. (Pohjoismainen ympäristömerkintä 2014, 9). The standards for textiles and leather products require, that companies that apply for the certification must provide details about their energy consumption. However, the standard does not require the energy sources to be renewable (Nordic Ecolabelling 2015, 27.)

#### **4.11 Milieukeur**

Milieukeur is a Dutch environmental label. In January 2015 it had been already awarded to over 860 different companies in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Spain and South Africa (Milieukeur 2016a.) The label has different certification standards for different product categories including plants, fruits and processed products.

The label has recognized the importance of environmentally sustainable energy and the label has its own standards for producers of green energy. At the moment this label is only used in then Dutch market (Milieukeur 2016b). The label for energy is also mentioned in other standards by Milieukeur. The international standards for data centres lists energy labelled as “Green Energy” as optional certification criteria (Milieukeur 2015, 6.)

#### **4.12 The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning**

The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning is voluntary initiative of the European cleaning industry. It promotes sustainable practices in the industry (The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning.) Only companies that have joined the charter and follow its criteria, are allowed to use the logo of the charter. The charter does not require its members to use sustainable energy, but it uses energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as an indicator to measure the performance of its members (The A.I.S.E. Charter for Sustainable Cleaning 2010).

The charter is developed and managed by A.I.S.E., the International Association for Soaps, Detergents and Maintenance Products (A.I.S.E. 2014a). In Finland it is represented by Teknokemian Yhdistys ry (A.I.S.E. 2014b).

#### 4.13 Other organisations

There are also many more environmental organisations that offer environmental certification in the European market. These organisations could all be potential partners of EKOenergy in the future.

4C association is a member organization that promotes sustainability in the coffee industry. The members include farmers, traders, industry players and civil society (Ecolabel index 2015.) The association has certain environmental requirements for its members but it does not have strong requirements regarding energy. Its code of conduct from April 2015 only states that renewable energy sources should be identified and their use should be evaluated (4C 2015, 33). The code of conduct of 4C is being revised at least every five years (4C 2015, 6).

Austrian Sustainable Building Council promotes sustainability in Austrian building industry. It offers building assessments and shares information about sustainable building. Membership is open to all companies and institutions that want to promote sustainable building in Austria (ASBC.)

Beluga is a group of Icelandic consultants specialised in environmental management. The group offers help and educational services to companies and institutions and it offers certifications to those companies and organisations that fulfil Beluga's standards (Beluga.)

Blue Angel is founded by the German government (Blue Angel a) and it is supported by The Environmental Label Jury, The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, the Federal Environmental Agency and RAL gGmbH (Blue Angel b). Label given to products that are environmentally friendlier than other products serving the same purpose and each product group has its own criteria (Blue Angel c).

BREEAM is a sustainability assessment method used to assess buildings and infrastructure. It is owned by BRE Global Ltd. which is an international provider of certifications for fire, security and environmental products and services (BREEAM 2015a.) BREEAM has different standards for different types of buildings. Different technical standards apply to buildings that are under construction and that are already in-use (BREEAM 2015b). BRE Global offices are located in United Kingdom (BREEAM 2015a) and BREEAM has partners also in Netherlands, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Germany and Austria (BREEAM 2015b).

German Sustainable Building Council DGNB assesses buildings and urban districts on how they meet different environmental objectives (DGNB 2016a). It has developed 14 different building schemes for different types of buildings such as for hotels, industrial locations and offices. All the schemes are developed for international use and they can be adapted to local conditions (DGNB 2016b). The DGNB focuses on the overall sustainable performance of buildings. The DGNB criteria, which has three levels of achievement, states that buildings' use of renewable energy should be maximised (DGNB 2016c).

Good Environmental choice is a label by Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) for widely used products and services. The organization also labels energy suppliers that generate electricity from renewable sources. According to SSNC solar power, wind power, and biofuel are all regarded as renewable energy sources (Naturskyddsforeningen 2016.)

Green Tourism is a non-profit organisation that has its own international certification programme. The organisation awards tourism companies for their performance in environmental sustainability in United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Canada and Zimbabwe. (Green Tourism a.)

ICEA is an Italian environmental and ethical certification institute that offers certification organic farming and other bio related sectors such as cosmetics. ICEA has several different certifications for different industries that each have own standards. It has created own standards for organic food, textiles and buildings. At the moment it controls about 14,5 thousand companies (ICEA.)

The ehc eco certificate can be awarded to businesses, hotels and holiday destinations that fulfil the minimum environmental criteria. The criteria has been developed by the team of Eco Hotels Certified which has its offices in both Austria and Germany (ehc eco hotels certified 2016a.) The use of green energy is mentioned as a compulsory criteria for a company to gain the ehc eco certificate. If green energy is not available in the region, companies must pay compensation to decrease the CO2 emissions (ehc eco hotels certified 2016b.)

## **5 Developing a marketing communication strategy**

This part of the thesis offers guidelines to the case organisation, to help it start relationship building with organisations presented in the previous chapter of this thesis. It offers tools and steps that can be helpful for the case organisation, when it wants to start contacting these organisations, in order to build relationships with them and cooperate in the future.

To market itself to other organisations in the field of environmental labelling, the case organisation needs to have clear plan on how to do it. Making a plan includes defining goals and making a strategy. This part of the thesis will present guidelines to the case organisation to help it achieve its long-term goals and give it tools to help it build relationships with other environmental organisations.

The plan will begin with an analysis of the organisations current situation. It will lists the organisations strengths and weaknesses when it comes to doing marketing communisation. The plan then moves on to defining the objectives of the plan. After this the plan explains how to form the message that the organisations wants to send to its target audience. The plan then presents the marketing communication tools that are most suitable for the case organisation. The main focus will be on personal selling, which is the most efficient tool when the goal is to target a very specific audience. Another tool that is presented is public relations. Finally, the plan explains how to manage the marketing communications and how to implement the plan.

### **5.1 Situational analysis**

As a small organisation, EKOenergy has limited resources to use in its marketing efforts but despite this the organisation has already been able to establish some successful relationships among other organisations. The organisation also has many partners in different European countries, which means it already has skills in marketing and relationship building. The organisation also has lot existing marketing material that can be found in electronic form on the organisations website.

The case organisation has already managed to create successful relationships with other international environmental organisations. EKOenergy's label for sustainable energy is already recognised in some other environmental standards. Most important of these standards is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, also known as LEED. It is a system used to rate the design, construction and operation of high performance green

buildings, homes and neighbourhoods. LEED has been developed by the U.S. Green Building Council and it is also used in Europe. The European version of the standard explicitly recommends that EKOenergy labelled electricity should be used. In addition to this, Green House Gas Protocol which is carbon accounting standard, developed by World Resources Institute and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, refers to EKOenergy in its Guidance for carbon accounting (EKOenergy f.)

EKOenergy is already an international network and it has contacts in many different countries. There are many companies in different countries that already sell electricity labelled by EKOenergy. These existing company contacts could be used as a reference when the case company later tries to contact new organisations in different countries. Having already a wide company network also shows the potential partners that EKOenergy is international and has potential to grow.

EKOenergy does not yet have many paid workers but it has many trainees and volunteers working for it from many different European countries. These people have great language skills which makes contacting new potential partner organisations easier. They can easily contact organisations based in their home countries or other countries that use the same language. Although all the workers and trainees do speak English, it can be more efficient to use also other languages when the case organisation communicates to outside.

As small organisation, EKOenergy does not have excessive financial resources that it could use in marketing communication. This is one of the reasons why the organisation mainly relies on trainees and volunteers. Problem with using trainees instead of paid workers is that trainees only work in the organisation for a short time. This means that the amount of time that can be used to train the trainees is limited and they have to gain lot of knowledge in a very short period of time. Also because people only work at the case organisation for a limited period of time, it means that the communication and relationship building activities with other organisations cannot rely too much on individual trainees or volunteers.

There are some other environmental organisations in Europe that label sustainable electricity in the same way as EKOenergy. This can be both a threat and an opportunity for the case organisation. It can be a threat since having many organisations in the field means that for an organisation like EKOenergy, it can be difficult to stand out from the others. At the same time, these organisations have similar goals as EKOenergy which means that it could be useful for them to cooperate instead of competing against one another.

## 5.2 Objectives

The main goal of EKOenergy is to grow in the European market and to become more influential player in the electricity markets. At the moment there are many companies in several different countries in Europe, that sell EKOenergy labelled sustainable energy. Now EKOenergy wants to take the next step. The long-term goal of the organisation is that other environmental organisations, that also grant environmental labels for services and products, would acknowledge the importance of sustainable energy and that they would only grant their labels for products and services that use electricity that has been environmentally labelled by EKOenergy. This is a goal that can be reached in the future but it can take many years. This marketing communication plan will list objectives that the case organisation should reach before reaching its ultimate main goal.

In the previous chapter of this thesis there were 22 different organisations listed. 12 first organisations on the list are all organisations that could be potentially interested in working together with EKOenergy. The case organisation should start by concentrating on these organisations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Global Sustainable Tourism Council and Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute are at the moment revising their label criteria. This means that the case organisation should contact these organisation as soon as possible because now it is a good moment to make an effect on their criteria's.

Gaining awareness is an obligatory step to take when an organisation has ambition to grow. Since EKOenergy wants to be acknowledged by other environmental organisations, it has to build awareness among these organisations through different marketing communication activities. This can mean for example contacting organisations by using email. Gaining awareness is the first step when the marketing communication plan is first implemented in practice.

After making the first contact, starts the long process of building a relationship with the other organisation. Some of the organisations being contacted might not be interested in doing any cooperation with EKOenergy but this means that the case company should then purely concentrate on those organisations that have more interest in working with the case organisation. When another organisation shows interest in working together, the case company should then immediately start building a relationship with this organisation. This means exchanging emails, phone conversations and meeting face-to-face if possible. The idea of this phase is to exchange information about organisations and their goals and interests. The goal of the EKOenergy would be that at least some of the organisations

being contacted, would in the future refer to EKOenergy in their environmental label criteria. Reaching this goal will probably take years since most of the environmental label criteria are revised approximately once in two or three years. Because of this, a main objective for this marketing communication plan would be to build good relationships with as many of these target organisations as possible. Achieving this objective will later help the case organisation to reach its long-term goals.

### **5.3 Message**

In marketing communication planning and designing a message means deciding what an organisation wants to communicate to its target audience with the chosen marketing communication tools. The message can be presented in emails, brochures, face to face communication and telephone conversations. The message should be something that gains attention, holds interest, is desirable and eventually leads to action. More specifically it means that the communication should gain the attention of the target audience and make them interested in hearing more about the case organisation. The message should make the target become interested in working together with the case organisation and eventually make the target organisation take action to start a relationship with the case organisation.

When a message is created, it has to be clear what the organisation wants to tell to its target audience and what the objectives are. After this the organisation has to decide how to present the message and how to carry out the message. When the actual communication later takes place, the message can be modified if needed. When using personal communication channels the organisation should not limit its possibilities by relying on one type of message and one message structure. If needed the organisation should adapt its communication tactics according to the reactions and feedback it receives from the target audience.

#### **5.3.1 Message content**

The case organisation wants to tell its target audience what the organisation does and gain attention. This is the first message the organisation wants to communicate to the audience. At the same time the organisation should communicate that it is interested in working together with its audience. All this should be part of the message content. The message should have a clear theme and appeal that draws the attention of the audience.

As part of the message content, the case organisation should introduce itself since there are many members in the audience that are not familiar with it. The organisation should

first introduce itself on general level. This includes telling who is running EKOenergy, what it does in practice, how does it operate in the electricity market and what is EKOenergy's label about. The introduction should offer the target audience an overview of EKOenergy and tell what it is. After introduction the case organisation should make the audience aware what the goal of the communication is. The organisation should tell in its message that it has interest in working together with the other environmental organisation in the European market. The content of the message should give the target audience the picture that the case organisation is a credible player in the European electricity market and that it is a potential partner to work together with.

When the communication goes further, the case organisation should convince its target audience that they should work together with EKOenergy and that they should acknowledge the importance of using environmentally labelled electricity. The organisations that are targeted with the communication efforts, should become more aware of the importance of sustainable electricity production and they should consider the use of environmentally labelled electricity to become part of their label criteria.

To get the desired outcome the message should appeal to the target audience. The message can appeal to the audience in rational or moral level since these are the best options in communication that happens between non-profit organisations. Using rational appeal means that the message should tell the target audience how it would itself benefit from working together with the case organisation. The message should imply that cooperation with EKOenergy would be beneficial and that the cooperation would offer value to the target audience. Using moral appeal in a message means that the message should appeal on audience's sense on what is "right" (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 441.)

The target organisations that the case organisation wants to communicate with, all manage their own environmental labels and standards. All these organisations have will to develop their labels and most of these organisation revise their label criteria on regular basis. When these organisations develop their criteria they are likely very willing to receive consultation from experts of different industries and fields. Many of these organisations are likely willing to hear more about the renewable electricity industry and EKOenergy can offer them that expertise. With the help of EKOenergy, other organisations can develop their own label criteria to make them more comprehensive.

To appeal to the target audience on a moral level, the message should concentrate on the importance of using renewable and sustainable electricity. There are many environmental labels that are used in the European market but many of these labels are given to prod-

ucts and services that are produced by using fossil fuels. Using fossil fuels is harmful for the environment and the case organisation should put focus on this issue in its communication.

### **5.3.2 Message structure and arguments**

As already mentioned previously, the message to the target audience should start from an introduction. The target audience should become aware of what the case organisation does. In addition to the introduction the message should also imply already at the beginning, that the case organisation wants to build relationships with other environmental organisations and work together. At this phase of the communication the focus should be on building awareness.

After building awareness, the message should focus on the next objective. The next objective is that the other organisations would acknowledge the importance of sustainable electricity use. At this point the case organisation should start presenting its argumentations and use the previously mentioned moral and rational appeals to influence on the target audience. It is better to start from rational arguments that have a positive tone since these arguments will be effective on drawing attention. After going through rational arguments that have positive tone, the message should move on to stronger arguments and to arguments that handle more difficult issues.

When creating a message the case organisation should present two-sided arguments. Two-sided arguments mean arguments that mention both strengths and weaknesses of the message source (Armstrong & Kotler 2012, 442). It makes the message source more credible when it is open about its shortcomings.

### **5.3.3 Message format**

The same message can be carried in different formats. It can be carried through different personal channels but also through websites and brochures. The case organisation already has its own website that is high in quality and available in different languages. On its website EKOenergy has a lot of information about itself in electronic form and a lot of brochures. Because communication that happens between organisations relies more on personal relationships the main format of communicating the message will be through email and other personal communication methods.

The message to the target audience will be mainly carried out by the individual employees and volunteers working for the EKOenergy. The communication will mainly happen by

using email but also through phone conversations. Some of the target organisations have representation in Finland which means that face-to-face meetings are a possibility.

When the message is carried, it is important that it is done in a professional manner. In terms of emails this means that the emails must be written professionally. The case organisation already has a lot of experience in contacting other organisations through emails, meaning that this is not a new issue for the case company. Many new volunteers enter the case organisation every year and with each new volunteer the organisation should go through the email etiquette and make sure that everyone in the organisation understands the importance of writing professional email messages.

When delivering a message cultural differences and language barriers must be considered. Ideally all new target organisations should be contacted by employees that represent the same nationality, for example French employees and volunteers should be in charge of contacting organisations that are based in France. In all cases this is not of course possible but it is not impossible since the case organisation has a lot of volunteers from different countries.

#### **5.4 Marketing communication tools**

Marketing communication tools or promotion tools are the tools that case organisations must use to fulfil their objectives and reach their long-term goals. These are the tools to use when the case organisation wants to share its message to its target audience and to become known amongst the audience members. Using the tools should help the case organisation to build relationships with the members of its target audience.

Marketing communication mix means the selection of communication tools that can be used to communicate a message. When a non-profit organisation wants to share its message to other non-profit organisations, it should use the same marketing communication tools that are used in business-to-business marketing. Out of all the traditional marketing communication tools personal selling and public relations are the most suitable tools to be used by the case organisation. Personal selling is the most effective tool when an organisation wants to communicate with a specific target organisation. Public relations is a great tool when an organisation wants to build awareness among a bigger audience and when it aims to build a positive image.

### 5.4.1 Personal selling

To form new relationships with its target audience the case organisation will have to use the personal selling techniques. The organisation is not trying to sell anything tangible to its target, but it is trying to have an impact on the audience and create new relationships with the target audience. Also the main objective of the communication is to persuade the target audience. In practice the personal selling in EKOenergy will be done by both the paid workers and the volunteers. The target audience members are the other international environmental organisations that manage their own environmental labels and standards. The chapter 4 of this thesis offers an outlook on these organisation and lists some potential organisations that the organisation should contact in the near future.

The sales process starts from identifying the target audience which in this case was already done in the chapter 4. In general this step includes making research of the target audience and making a decision about which audience members to target with the sales activities. This task included making research online about organisations that exist in the market and which organisations fulfil the requirements. The idea was to find organisations that manage their own environmental label and that their label is used in European market. Additional criteria was that the chosen organisations would grant their labels to services or products that require some use of electricity in their production. The organisations that were chosen on the list presented in chapter 4, include organisations that grant labels for companies in tourism industry and to buildings. The list is a suggestion of which organisations to contact first and which have some potential to be interested in learning more about EKOenergy.

After choosing the organisations to target with the sales efforts, the sales personnel needs to learn more about the chosen target. The chapter 4 offers some general information about the organisations in the target audience, but before approaching an organisation the sales person making an approach should learn all possible about the target. Making research beforehand makes the actual sales easier, since the seller can use the gained information as a tool to create better arguments and it can give an idea on how to appeal the target effectively. Before making an approach, the seller needs to know all the basic information about the target organisation: location, people behind it and industry it operates in. Additionally the seller should find out about the mission and the values of the target audience. By knowing this, the seller will have a better picture about what the organisation aims for and if it is potentially interested in doing some work together with the case organisation. Understanding the values also helps to modify the organisations message in a way that it appeals to the target. The message can be then modified to emphasise the

values that are important for the targeted organisation. EKOenergy should gain information about how the target organisation sees environmental issues and if it already has some official stance on sustainable energy. This also includes taking a look at the environmental labels that the target organisation manages and looking into the labels current criteria.

What is important is that the sales person has all the basic facts of the target organisation before making the first approach since it helps the person to make the decisions on which type of tactics to use and how to form the first message to the target. The sales person can also make a positive impression on the target, by showing that they already have collected information about them and show them that they have real interest towards them. The information also includes learning about the structure about the target organisation and finding out whom to first contact in the organisation. Finally before being in touch with an organisation a sales person should read what are the latest news regarding the target organisation by visiting their webpage and social media sites. This can offer information about what is currently important to the target organisation or if there has been any changes in the organisation lately.

In the case of EKOenergy most of its target audience members are located around the world in different countries. Because of this having a meeting in person is unlikely in early stages of the relation building process. This means that in the beginning, the target audience must be contacted via email or phone. Some of the audience members have also representation in Finland, which allows meeting in person during the sales process. In the beginning it is best to make the first approach through email since it is the most convenient contact method when the message receivers are located in different countries than the sender.

When approaching a person by using email it is important to do it professionally. The text needs to look professional and there are no room for errors. The language and grammar should be correct. This shows to the receiver of the message, that the message has been prepared carefully and that the sender is a real professional. Carelessly written message would give an impression to the receiver that the sender has not put much effort on the message and that they are not taking the communication seriously. In cases like this, the message will often be ignored by the receiver. Especially when an organisation contacts foreign target organisations, it must put special attention on the language. The language has to be clear and easy to understand. An email should only include common English words and complete sentences. The writer should leave out words that have multiple meanings and slang impression (Castleberry et al. 2009, 142-143.)

It is important that the first email is attention grasping and informative. The message should grasp the attention and the interest of the reader already in the beginning. This is important since many people only read the beginning of an email before deleting it (Castleberry et al. 2009, 141). The email message should present its main points already in the first sentences. It should present what the case organisation is and why it is contacting the target organisation. The message should not be too aggressive but it should be clear and suggest that the case organisation is interested in doing some cooperation. After presenting the motive of the message, the email should introduce the case organisation more in detail and give an explanation on why it would want start a relationship with the target organisation. The message should end with a polite wish that the case organisation would reply to the message, in case they are interested to discuss more about the matter. The sender can also suggest that they can be in touch with them via telephone or some other communication tool. To ensure that the receiver really reads the whole message, the email should not be too long and have too many attachments (Castleberry et al. 2009, 141). If the case organisation does not receive a reply from the target organisation in a decent amount of time the case organisation should also make a follow-up call. If the case organisation does receive a reply, it should respond to it as soon as possible (Castleberry et al. 2009, 141.)

Using telephone is another option to use when the case organisation wants to reach the target audience. This is viable option if the targeted organisation has already received email but they have not yet replied. When contacting new organisations by using telephone, it is important to plan before-hand what to say during the discussions and to be polite (Castleberry et al. 2009, 139.) The caller should encourage two-way communication and listen actively. The receiver of the call must be given a chance to bring up their own thoughts and let them make questions. The caller should then make notes during the discussion about all the important issues that are being handled. Taking notes is crucially important if the parties agree on some actions to undertake in the future.

It may be difficult for an organisation to decide whom to reach out to first when contacting a target organisation for the first time. When contacting a small organisation this is easier since there are only a few available options to choose from, but when contacting a bigger organisation it is more complicated. It may not be the best choice to head straight to the top of the organisation and contact first the management. It is often better to start from a lower level of the organisation since they are more likely to have time to listen to the offering. This person who has been the first contact can then forward the message to higher level of the organisation, if the organisation is potentially interested in the case organisa-

tion. When the case organisation is unsure about whom to contact in a target organisation it is a safe choice to contact someone in assistant position and ask them whom to contact. When contacting a large organisation, a good option is also to contact organisations switchboard.

Soon after making the first approach, the case organisation should explain to the target organisation its offering. This way the target has an understanding of why it has been contacted by the case organisation and what is the motive of the communication. The case organisation needs to have a clear offering that seems attractive and beneficial to the target organisation. What EKOenergy wants, is to cooperate with target organisation and promote ecologically labelled electricity. The case organisation has to clearly explain that it would want the target organisation to consider of making revisions on their ecological label criteria. The case organisations motive is that the target organisation would recommend the use of ecologically labelled electricity in its label criteria in the future. What the case organisation can offer to the target organisation, is knowledge and expertise in the field of sustainable electricity.

After the case organisation has presented its offering to the target organisation it will take a long time before the parties can reach a possible agreement. The parties must build mutual trust and get acquainted with each other. They must exchange information and ideas in order to understand each other's needs and aspirations. As the case organisation gains new information about the target, it is easier for it to adapt its offering and make it more attractive. As new information about the target organisation arises, the case organisation can adapt its communication to fit the needs and preferences of the target.

Before the parties can reach an agreement, the case organisation must argue, why the target organisation should make cooperation with the case organisation. EKOenergy must provide good arguments, on why the target organisation should make changes to its ecological label criteria and why it should start recommending the use of ecologically labelled electricity. To reach an agreement the case organisation must be able to provide convincing arguments. The target organisation may also bring up some objections. The case organisation must be able to overcome the objections and handle them successfully. An objection that may arise is that the target organisation may feel that doing cooperation might not be beneficial for it. Because of this the case organisation should consider of all the things that it could offer to its target organisation. The case organisation should be able to offer something that brings value to the target organisation. The case organisation can offer its target audience its expertise but it can also think of some additional things that it could offer.

#### **5.4.2 Public relations**

The case organisation should use public relations to gain positive publicity and to create a positive image. This marketing communication tool is often used to gain positive attention from media and to get exposure. Public relation is a great tool when an organisation wants to build awareness among a bigger audience. This makes it a good tool for EKOenergy since it wants to build awareness about itself among many different organisations.

Public relations can be done by using many different tools such as written materials, news and special events. Having a website and having lot written material are also considered as public relations activities. The case organisation already has a good-quality webpage and lot of written material available to readers such as brochures and reports. This means that the case organisation is already active in using public relations as a tool.

The webpage that the case organisation already has presents a vast amount of information about EKOenergy and its electricity label. The webpage is well-structured and it is easy to find information from the page. The page seems very professional and it looks very clear and simple. There are several different language versions of the page which serves the needs of the target audience. Also the brochures that are found on the page are available in different languages. The brochure about the EKOenergy criteria for example can be found in 21 different languages (EKOenergy g). Having information in several different languages makes it possible to serve a vast amount of target audience members in their preferred languages.

#### **5.5 Managing marketing communications**

To implement a marketing communication plan successfully, all the processes must be overseen by the management of the organisation. The management should follow, how the personnel has adopted the new guidelines and how the guidelines work in practice. If problems arise when the plan is implemented the management must take action. If some of the guidelines do not work in practice as they should, the management can always make changes to the plan and do some revisions to it.

The case organisation is targeting many different organisations and all these organisations have their own characteristics and preferences. This means that the marketing communication efforts must be adapted based on what the target organisation prefers. Some of the guidelines given in this marketing communication plan may not work well with some of the target organisations. Because of this the case organisation always take a

different type of approach to reach the target organisation and maybe ignore some of the guidelines and tools that were presented earlier in this marketing communication plan. Since all organisations are different, there are more than just one right way to communicate with the target organisations.

The case organisation must be open to all the feedback it might receive from its target audience. Especially if the feedback is negative, the feedback must be taken seriously and taken to account. Getting feedback is a good thing since it can be used by the case organisation to improve its marketing communication tools and make them more efficient. Also the feedback coming from the staff is important. The trainees and volunteers that work in the case organisation are the ones to communicate with the target audience. Since they are the link between the case organisation and the target organisation, they are the ones have the best knowledge of how the communication works in practice. They should be encouraged to speak up and to make suggestions on how to improve the communication processes.

The best way to measure if a marketing communication plan has been successful is to look back to the marketing communication objectives and see if they were reached. If the organisation does not reach its targets as planned, the marketing communication plan must be revised and changes can be made.

## **6 Project evaluation**

This chapter summarises how the project took place and evaluates the outcome of this project. It describes if the project tasks were fulfilled and if the objective was met. Each of the project tasks will be evaluated separately. The task of this chapter is to see if the project was successful and if some things could have been done differently.

### **6.1 Project summary**

The project started by gathering information about marketing theory by reading literature about business-to-business marketing and marketing communication. Some of the other literature that was used in this project was literature about partnerships, selling and social marketing. After gathering information and gaining knowledge about the needed topics, the theoretical framework was created. The theoretical framework was later used to create the marketing communication plan. There are lot of literature about marketing communication and business-to-business marketing and there was lot of possible theories to apply for this marketing communication plan. There is not much available literature about marketing communication for non-profit organisations which meant that the theories that were applied for this project, were theories that are used in business-to-business marketing communication.

The second project task was identifying the target audience. This task included doing online research about different environmental organisations that could be potential co-operators of EKOenergy in the future. The list of organisations presented in the chapter 4 offers an outlook on some of the organisations that the case organisation is recommended to contact in the future. The list presents general information about the organisations and also tells if these organisations already have some stance on the use of sustainable and renewable energy use.

What was found out is that there are quite a few organisations in the target audience that do not put any focus on the importance of clean and sustainable electricity in their ecological label criteria. Many organisations do not even mention the issue on any of the material they have on their web pages. In addition these organisations there are of course many organisations in the target audience that acknowledge the importance of the sustainable electricity use.

The third project task was putting together a marketing communication plan that would give guidelines to the case organisation on how to use marketing communication in practice. This plan would be based on the theoretical framework that was created earlier. The

plan focuses on those theories and marketing communication tools that are most suitable to be used by a non-profit organisation that is reaching other similar organisations. The main focus was put on personal selling since it was the most suitable tool to be used by the case organisation.

## **6.2 Evaluation**

Overall the project reached its final objective which was creating a marketing communication plan. All the three project tasks were fulfilled as planned which were creating the theoretical framework, identifying the target audience and creating a marketing communication plan. The project did take a lot longer than expected since the project already started in Spring 2015 and it was finalised year later. Although the project proceeded slowly due to causes not related to the project itself, the main objectives of the project were met.

The most difficult task of the project was finding information about the target audience. There is a great amount of organisations that could be part of the target audience. There are many organisations operating in Europe that grant labels for services and products for their ecological and sustainable excellence. Since it was not possible to list all the organisations in this thesis, the amount of organisations listed as the target was limited. Eventually the list was limited so, that it presents twelve organisations that are the best candidates to target first and then ten other organisations that could also be potential cooperating partners of EKOenergy in the future. The list could have included more organisations but unfortunately there are many organisations that do not share much information on their webpages which makes evaluating them challenging. There are also some organisations that do not share any information online in English. The list could have also been more analytical but the only way to gain more specific information about these organisations would have been to contact each of them personally. To save time this was not done and all the information search was done by using internet sources.

The marketing communication plan was created by using the theories presented in the theoretical framework. The plan offers guidelines that the case organisation can use later in practice. It recommends how to communicate with the target audience and how to use different marketing communication tools efficiently. The plan mainly concentrates on personal selling as a tool. Perhaps the plan could include more practical and specific guidelines but overall all the directions given can be useful for the case organisation in some way.

## **7 Discussion**

Forming a new relationship between organisations is a long and a time consuming process which demands resources and motivation. Marketing communication is a tool that an organisation can use to help it create new relationships. The marketing communication plan that was created during this project, offers guidelines on how to use marketing communication as a tool to start new relationships with the target audience. It takes lot of resources to do marketing communication but it can be beneficial since the outcome of it can be relationship with an organisation that also brings value to the case organisation itself in the future.

This project-based thesis gives some guidelines, that can be applied in practice and that can be used by non-profit organisations and other organisations. It describes in detail, what issues should be considered when planning marketing communication and how to use marketing communication tools in practice.

### **7.1 Recommendations for the case organisation**

The plan offers many guidelines for the case organisation to use in its marketing communication. The case organisation may not implement the plan fully but it can take some of the given guidelines and instructions into consideration.

As this thesis suggests, the most effective marketing communication tools in business-to-business marketing are personal selling and public relations. These are the most suitable tools for non-profit organisations and especially for the case organisation since these are great tools to create long-lasting beneficial relationships. The organisation has skills to do these activities and it already has experience in managing relationships with different stakeholders.

It is recommended for the case organisation to contact the target audience members listed in this thesis as soon as possible. The organisations listed are all potential partners of the case organisation. They all have similar values as the case organisation and it would be beneficial for EKOenergy to reach out to these organisations in the near future. Building a relationship with a target organisation is a long process and the case organisation must be patient. It takes time to get results but the relationship may lead to an agreement between the case organisation and its target. If a target organisation agrees to make revisions to its label criteria as suggested by EKOenergy, it means that the marketing

communication activities have been successful. Achieving an agreement like this would bring value to the case organisation and make its own ecological label stronger.

## **7.2 Key findings**

The project objective of this thesis was to create a marketing communication plan for a non-profit organisation. The target organisation is not seeking to make profit but this plan applies theory that is more commonly used by profit-seeking organisations. Although the case organisation is not seeking to make profit, it can use the same tools as companies. Marketing is not only about making profit and that is why it can be used by non-profit organisations too. The case organisation wants to communicate with its target audience the same way as companies want to communicate with their potential customers. This thesis showcases how non-profit organisations can benefit from doing marketing communication and how many marketing theories are applicable to be used by non-profit organisations. Personal selling is often seen as a tool to sell products and services. In this thesis it was suggested to be used as a tool to develop relationships between non-profit organisations.

Doing marketing communication is not necessarily a complex issue. As this thesis shows, components of marketing communication planning are quite simple and clear. A successful plan includes analysing the current situation, defining objectives, forming a message, choosing right communication tools and evaluating processes. Having a clear marketing communication plan helps the organisation to improve its communication processes. It will also support the organisation's overall marketing processes and help the organisation to achieve its main goals.

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