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## **Strategy Implementation Solution for a Medium Sized Company**

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<p>This master's thesis provides a practical and usable strategy implementation solution for an International SME. Further, this research based thesis ensures the case company has an understanding of Business Unit level concerns the company is likely to face in the process of its growth in the European Union. This strategy implementation solution allows the case company to effectively build its Strategic Business Unit for the European Union by providing the company with a framework to understand and manage the risks and complexities of conducting business in the European Union.</p> <p>At the time the strategy implementation solution was being formulated the case company was in the process of setting up an office to build operations in the European Union. This was the first Strategic Business Unit the company was building for this purpose and the concerns highlighted at the time led to the solution being targeted at the Business Unit level. This solution aids the company by clarifying what is strategic and what is tactical, the need to continuously manage the risks and complexities to ensure they are being effectively managed and the need to coordinate various concerns across the company focused around the Strategic Business Unit for the European Union.</p> <p>This thesis used the realist research paradigm as the research strategy and case study as the research method. The theoretical framework was derived from military strategic thought. The solution was focused at the Strategic Business Unit level and based on a framework used at the same level in the military for a similar purpose. This solution was customised for the business sector. Further, this thesis used innovative web tools like social media to ensure the accuracy of the variables within the framework and the value of the solution. This allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject area and a more exact solution for the case company.</p> <p>The thesis was started on 07.01.2008, when I arrived at the case company offices' and is due for completion by end of March 2010.</p> <p>The strategy implementation solution for the Medium Sized Company has been accepted by the case company to provide greater insight into current operations. Other companies in the SME sector have also accepted the value the customised framework can add.</p>	
<b>Key words</b> International SME's, SBU, Risks, Complexities, Strategy, Tactics, C4I Framework, Strategy implementation, Strategy execution.	

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Appendix 1: Linked In Strategy Execution forum conversation with Robin Speculand  
(Not included)

Appendix 2: Primary Source data gathered from the case company  
(Not included)

Appendix 3: Web Analytics report for the SME's and Strategy website  
(Not included)

Appendix 4: Email conversation with Ellen Charlebois  
(Not included)

Appendix 5: Feedback form from the case company  
(Not included)

# 1 Introduction

Strategy implementation is an area in business strategic thought that has traditionally suffered from a lack of interest (Atkinson 2006, 1441). Commonly businesses expect business thought to deliver the up to date trends within business practice and the focus of business thought has been on matters other than strategy implementation. This has created a situation where there is a need for clarifications at various levels of decision making within a company.

In this thesis an effort has been made to accurately identify the tacit concerns of an International SME, research these concerns and provide the International SME with a solution that will allow it to successfully grow in its target region. The overall **objective** of this research is to ensure the executive management of the case company have an accurate understanding of how to successfully compete in their target region of the European Union (EU) via the Strategic Business Unit being built for this purpose.

The case company is an International SME who has been in business for 11 years. The case company has decided to work with the end clients directly and the Strategic Business Unit for the EU is the first step in this direction. This is the first SBU the company is building outside its HQ office.

## 1.1 Area of research

The research area to be targeted by this thesis is the notion of strategy implementation. This will highlight which levels of management deal with what kinds of concerns. For instance, it will highlight why it is important to separate strategy implementation from strategy execution. This is to be achieved by comparing military strategic thought to contemporary business strategic thought. Highlight the areas of clarification that emerge and cross apply a relevant framework by customising it for the sector in general and company in particular.

## **1.2 The relevance of the research**

The case company's executive management have already decided to expand the company into the EU. They have formulated a vision for the company in the EU. They are now in the process of realising this vision. In other words, they are now implementing their strategy of expanding into the EU. This is the first SBU the company is building and therefore there is a need to understand how to identify uncertainties and complexities, how to manage the uncertainties, converted into risks, and the complexities. To complicate matters the company is also building new capacity at the same time in the new SBU. Separating strategy implementation from strategy execution helps the executive management to understand what matters senior managers should be dealing with and what matters they should be delegating to operational managers, what risks are strategic, what risks are operational, what the complexities involved in the process of expansion are and who is to manage them. Further, these risks and complexities can be dynamically managed, where once a risk and or a complexity is no longer of strategic importance it can then be delegated to the operational level to be managed. This helps the executive management to ensure the vision is being realised as intended and systems and structures are in place to ensure friction is minimised. The solution itself provides the company with an exact understanding of which person should deal with what aspect, when and how. Therefore this thesis helps the case company to lower its risk of failure and ensures the executive management has a more accurate understanding of how to expand successfully.

## **1.3 Research questions**

The research question to be answered is 'How can the case company use the C4I framework to implement its international business strategy in the EU?'

This precise question is to be answered by dealing with other questions which once answered allow for the research question to be answered.

These questions being:

- What is the SME sector?
- What is the difference between the SME sector and the International SME sector?
- What is the current state of international business strategy in the SME sector?
- What is the C4I Framework?
- What will the customised framework for the International SME sector look like?
- How can International SME's use the C4I framework?

These sub questions allow for the relevant theory necessary to answer the question to be generated and applied to the target sector before the actual question itself is answered. This en-

sure that risk of failure of the solution is minimised and the quality of the solution is of the highest grade. **The solution for case company is confidential and has not been included in this version.**

#### **1.4 Research strategy and methods**

The research strategy dictates the framework used to gather data and the overall structure of the research. Here the realist paradigm is used. The research method used is case study, which allows the use of multitude of different sources. The data used is qualitative. The primary data was gathered during my time spent with the case company at their HQ offices.

The primary data gathered shows who I was interacting with in the company, how often these interactions was taking place and reflects on the access to the senior management that allowed me to tap into their tacit concerns. Here informal unstructured in depth interviews were used to gain an understanding of what the company was trying to achieve and how. Background courses were then taken to understand the prevalent concerns management have in a company. Further, research was then conducted to understand the strategy implementation phase of strategy. Combined this allowed the relevant theory to be generated and applied in a way to answer all the supporting sub questions and finally the research question itself.

#### **1.5 Expected outcomes of the research**

The primary outcome is to answer the research question of how the case company can use the C4I framework to implement its international business strategy in the EU. Other outcomes this thesis will provide are:

- Separation of SME's from International SME
- Separation of strategy implementation from strategy execution
- Customised C4I framework for strategy implementation in the International SME sector
- An understanding of how to apply the C4I framework in the SME sector broadly
- How to use social media to conduct research to the standard acceptable by a university

## 1.6 Key terminology

This section provides a list of the key terms used in the thesis. This section helps the reader to familiarise him/herself with the terminology used in the rest of the thesis. They are presented in order of association, i.e. Clausewitz is a military strategist therefore appears under strategy.

**Strategy:** refers to a plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal. The word is of military origin, deriving from the Greek word *strategos*, which roughly translates as general. In military usage strategy is distinct from tactics and the four levels of warfare are: political goals or grand strategy, strategy, operations, and tactics. (Wikipedia, 15/03/10)

**Clausewitz:** introduced systematic philosophical contemplation into Western military thinking, with powerful implications not only for historical and analytical writing but for practical policy, military instruction, and operational planning. (Wikipedia, 15/03/10)

**Friction:** variation between the intention and the outcome

**International business strategy:** At this level business strategy looks at how a company can compete successfully in a particular market (de Wit and Meyer 2004, 71)

**Joint Ventures:** A legal entity formed between two or more parties to undertake an economic activity together and sharing the risk in formation (Wikipedia, 15/03/10)

**Strategic Business Unit:** business unit within the overall corporate identity which is distinguishable from other business units because it serves a defined external market where management can conduct strategic planning in relation to products and markets (Wikipedia, 15/03/10)

**Via Group's Holistic Leadership Model:** A management consultancy's decision making model to analyse various management levels within a company

**LSE: Large Scale Enterprise:** Enterprise's with over 250 people

**SME:** Small and Medium Sized Business's: With less than 250 employees



**International SME's:** Companies that target the international markets for their inception

**Framework: paradigm:** a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices together form a way of viewing reality. (Dictionary.com) Eshun (2009) highlights how frameworks can have an impact on mental models, which in turn can have an impact on behaviour. They can help to change perceptions, cultural values and can help to encourage new ways of behaving.

**Implicit frameworks** - (Epstein 2008): Frameworks we as individuals build and use in our own way of conducting an act.

**Explicit frameworks** - (Epstein 2008): Frameworks we as a group are trained to use for a common purpose

**C4I Framework:** An explicit framework used by the military at the strategy level

**SECI frame work of knowledge creation:** Socialisation, Externalisation, Combination and Integration (Nonaka 2009, website: Cyberartsweb.org)

**Uncertainties:** Unpredictability (Dictionary.com)

**Risks:** The probability of an event occurring

**Complexities:** derived from **complex:** composed of many different parts. (Dictionary.com)

## 2 The SME sector

“SMEs are a major source of entrepreneurial skills and creativity and contribute to economic and social cohesion. They hold the key to innovation and are also emerging as global players, by participating in worldwide production and supply chains. ,... .”(Reener, Vetter, & Scheiding 2008, 8)

This statement by the Deputy Director- General for Enterprise and Industry, European Commission SME envoy reflects on the growing importance of SME's to the EU economy. It also highlights how SME's add value by providing large scale companies of the future. Their life cycle dictates that they grow from a small company to a medium company to a large scale company. According to the EU SME's are companies with 250 people or less and have a turnover of no more than 40 million Euros. In 2005 the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry in the UK) reported that 99.9% of business enterprises in the UK were SME's, with a total of 51% of total turnover. (Wynn 2009, 79) This shows the importance of the SME to the economy. Businesses from this sector form the basis of the other 1% of businesses classed as LSE's by the DTI. Here implicit is the notion that the SME sector has a significant influence on the LSE sector by way of evolution, where as SME's evolve into LSE's organisations they bring with them their business culture, their business practices and bring change overall. A good example here would be Easy Jet, a regional low cost airline that has evolved into a LSE which primarily uses the internet to communicate with its customers. Its corporate culture has been built on how it operated as a SME and its current offering to its customers is based on the business model it built as a SME.

### 2.1 SME's and business solutions

The SME sector business solutions tend to be based on the experiences of the LSE sector. However, LSE experiences are not replicable for the SME sector, where the common experience is to learn from the LSE sector and then attempt to down size it for the SME sector. For instance, a common perception is that because the LSE sector does business in a particular way therefore it is appropriate for the SME sector to imitate their practices to make them more successful. This, however, does not take into account the differing set of concerns the SME sector has and the creative problem solving expertise they build along their way up to the LSE sector. In other words, by focusing on the LSE sector and using their methods of

business as templates for the SME sector they may be crowding out what allows the SME's to become worthy replacements for the LSE's in the future and to build new innovative business models. There is also a growing recognition that the SME sector in itself should be treated as sector in its own right (Reener, Vetter & Scheiding 2008, 28) and therefore should be the subject of investigation and research.

This growing recognition of the greater need for the SME sector to be treated as a sector worthy of research is based on the understanding that the SME sector has a different set of experiences, a different set of problems, such as financial constraints, human resource issues and the emergent nature of their planning. Therefore their solutions are different. (Bell, Crick and Young 2004, 28) For instance, majority of the SME's in the UK have no systems and structures to conduct research, both market research and product research, however they do provide the majority of the commercial innovations in the UK (What can small business do for Europe? 2006, 17) Another example, of how different the sector is to their LSE counter parts is that the majority of learning that goes on is informal. (Ibid, 10) These examples show how different the SME's can be to their LSE counterparts, why it should be researched in its own right and highlights the need to better understand a category in which majority of the worlds businesses fall into.

## **2.2 SME's and International SME's**

The SME sector can be segmented into SME's and born International SME's, here the differentiating factor is how the SME's evolve. In the born International SME's the company grows as an international company and gains firsthand experience of doing international business from day one. (Bell, Crick and Young 2004, 29) The standard SME tends to evolve from being a domestic player to gradually building an international presence. This difference in evolution helps each to gain an in depth understanding of how they build their businesses, one from inception will have a global market in mind and this will be reflected in their HR policies, their marketing, their alliances, their core values, how they leverage technology, etc. For instance, born global companies regardless of sector are more likely to be using ICT technologies to a greater degree than their standard counterparts. The other, Standard SME, will build its presence locally and then gradually target other markets and this has been the traditional pattern of growing SME's. This is confirmed by McKinsey & Co. . As per McKinsey born international companies tend to be ones that target the international markets from their inception and do not follow the standard experience of building their presence locally and then gradually enter the global economy. (Bell, Crick and Young 2004, 29)

Overall, the SME sector is where the majority of the worlds businesses operate. They are different to their LSE counterparts. The SME sector has traditionally provided the LSE sector with new and innovative members who bring their creativity and new business models along with ensuring the survival of the economy. There is a greater need to understand SME's as a sector and this need is gradually being researched and concerns of SME's being highlighted. For instance, research is starting to highlight how the SME sector can be segmented between standard SME's and born International SME's. The more research this sector manages to involves itself in the more likely its concerns are to be understood and the more precise the solutions. For example, by participating in this thesis Case company Information Technology will benefit by gaining a more accurate understanding of some of their concerns.

### 3 What is the current state of international business strategy in the SME sector?

International business strategy here is taken to mean the Business Unit level strategy of a company expanding internationally. In other words, this thesis deals primarily with the implementation concerns at the SBU level. At this level business strategy looks at how a company can compete successfully in a particular market (de Wit and Meyer 2004, 71).

The following quotes highlight the complex nature of strategy and the problems that can arise when trying to understand the overall the notion of strategy:

“Another issue influencing the study of strategy implementation is the perspective one has on strategy. Is strategy first formulated and then implemented, or vice versa? If one believes that strategies are explicit (Mintzberg, 1978), implementation means carrying out the pre-determined strategic plans. If, on the other hand, one holds the emergent view on strategy, one does not believe that strategy is first created and then implemented, but that strategy emerges and evolves without interventions by the strategic planners, or in spite of them.” (Aaltonen and Ikavalko 2002, 415)

“In order to formulate suitable strategies, they must consider all aspects of dynamic environments and situations which they encounter. Generally speaking, there are two approaches to consider in competitive decision-making – the science and the art. It seems easier to apply the scientific approach in strategic decision-making, but research literature tends to indicate that to make the strategies more effective, application of the art approach may be the essential one.” (Wann-Yih Wu, Chih Hsjung Chou and Ya-Jung Wu 2004, 396)

In **military strategic thought** the distinction between the various phases of strategy and the strategy and tactics interplay has been studied and researched for centuries, where authorities like Clausewitz and Corbett are regarded for their observations of war. **Clausewitz**, for instance, **highlights** : The **distinct differences between the policy level, the military level and the execution level**; The **interrelationship between strategy and tactics** (Clausewitz 1911, 143); And, **how well these two levels streamlined lead to victory**, including continuous feedback from tactics to strategy.(Clausewitz 1911, 166) He **also highlights** how strategy makes the **senior manager's course easier, more certain and ensures his/her understanding would be as close as possible to the objective truth**. (Clausewitz 1911, 118)

Figure 1. below highlights the breakdown of the Leadership Model as highlighted by Clausewitz. It shows the breakdown into the Policy level, the Military Level and the Execu-

tion Level. The pyramid reflects on the importance of the decisions at each level. For instance, the closer to the top of the pyramid the higher up the Leadership Model the decision. For example, here the Visionary level would be higher up the Leadership model than the Strategy Execution level. This helps to establish how Clausewitz viewed the decision making model used by the Prussian State during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

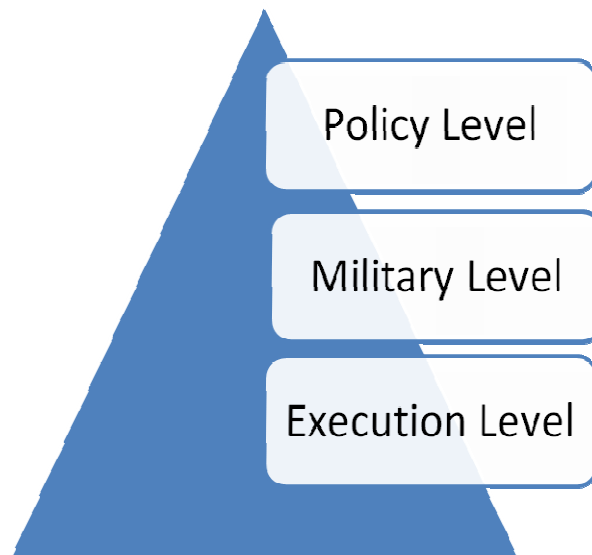


Figure 1. Clausewitz's Leadership model

Therefore **strategy** generally tends to have **three distinct phases**: Strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy execution. Here **strategy formulation** refers to the phase **before** a decision is taken to expand into a particular market and tends to deal with the vision for instance. **Strategy implementation** is taken to be the concerns in a particular market at the **SBU level** and **strategy execution** refers to the concerns at the **operational** to the **individual** levels where the line managers are given targets at the functional level, for instance. (See below for further details) This process has been broken down to highlight some of the concerns within each phase, however, as a whole the strategy process is difficult to breakdown into phases. This thesis takes the overall view that **strategy** is **emergent and non linear**, especially in the SME sector, and the **interplay of the three phases together** ensures the success or failure of the company to crystallize its **vision into reality**. Moreover, **strategy** is treated as an art and not a science where **intuition, feelings and other holistic faculties** of human beings are **used to formulate** a judgment based on less information than desirable (Kazmi 2008, 1567).

Furthermore, because the artistic process is not understood by main stream society therefore in the context of business strategy instead making the effort to understand the artist's mindset this thesis places **emphasis on encouraging the artist to use frameworks** which better allow for **the vision to be externalised**. Here externalisation refers to the process of making explicit the tacit and highlighting issues the senior management have to contend with before they start the execution phase. For instance, in the SME sector to ensure **the Owner / Manager**, who may be classed as **the artist**, has taken a broad range of considerations into account, would help build a more accurate understanding of the concerns that need to be dealt with and help the staff to build a common base of understanding from which to execute the strategy. This helps to minimise friction. **Friction** as per Clausewitz is the **variation between the intention and the outcome**. (Clausewitz 1911, 80) This variation **can be minimised before the execution** of the strategy by **ensuring risks and complexities are dealt with**. For instance, uncertainties are identified, converted into risk and minimised by factoring them into the execution. Therefore, by attempting to understand the uncertainties the Owner/ Manager of a SME can discuss the vision for the company with his/ her senior managers ensuring they all have the same understanding of what they are trying to achieve and their highlighted areas of responsibility are discussed around a set of variables that allow them to externalise and cross pollinate their concerns on regular basis in a consistent way before committing resources to the execution phase. (This is further explained later in the thesis)

The notion of externalisation and cross pollination has been taken from the **SECI frame work of knowledge creation**, where the **externalisation** stage refers to where **the individual becomes a member of the group** (Nonaka 2009, website: Cyberartsweb.org) and **cross pollination** refers to the **combination stage where communication and diffusion of the externalised knowledge takes place**. (Ibid, website: Cyberartsweb.org ) **In context the externalisation process** refers to the process where **the Owner/ Manager**, who is the artist, **has to make explicit his/ her vision** and **the senior management have to ensure** they understand **accurately** what the vision is. The **cross pollination**, combination, process allows them to **discuss the relevant matters centred around the made explicit vision** as they have understood it, helps them to **make contributions** and **allows them to highlight their concerns**. The **C4I framework is used at these two stages to ensure the tacit to explicit process and the cross pollination process is focused around the variables in this frame work**. This allows all parties concerned to have a **degree of certainty**, knowing what the prime **focus** of the **interaction** will be, what **areas** will be **discussed** and **how they can add value** to the process by attempting to **communicate** these matters in **greater depth** than

otherwise, knowing the **framework they are using will allow them to more effectively conduct business.**

The three distinct phases of strategy highlighted above are broken down and explained in greater details below:

### 3.1 Strategy formulation

**Mintzberg** highlights how **in SME's** the strategy planning process is **top down**, it is **informal** and is **focused around the CEO**. However, he also highlights how over the life cycle of the business this process tends to become more formal. He further highlights how **this lack of formality and the emergent nature of strategy does not necessarily equate to a lack of a clear strategic vision.** (Bell, Crick and Young 2004, 23) This combined with the personal nature of the relationships, the lack of resources and treating strategy formulation more of an art than a science shows how the strategy formulation experience is different. This different experience of **strategy formulation in the SME** sector also highlights **a disadvantage that is seldom mentioned** in that **to understand the company's strategy the Owner/Managers mindset would need to be understood**, however this **cannot be done** in the conventional way simply because of **the lack of interest in the SME sector** (see above). This lack of support at the strategy formulation phase further encourages the Owner/Manager to be inward looking and reinforces a greater degree of subjectivity than otherwise, hence creating further problems with externalising the vision and communicating it to the senior management.

Overall, in terms of **strategy formulation in the SME sector** the **Owner/ Managers** are likely to be the **centre of strategy formulation with an informal planning process and an in depth tacit understanding of what they would like for the company.** (Harrington and Kendall 2006, 1387) Further, the **strategy formulation phase is difficult to understand** simply because there **are no systems and structures commonly used to formulate strategy** and the **greater emphasis on the artistic school of decision making further complicates matters for others to understand what is being communicated and how to realise the vision accurately.**



### 3.2 Strategy implementation

“... - effective implementation of an average strategy, beats mediocre implementation of a great strategy every time.” (Sterling 2003, 27)

**“Thus it is suggested that there is a lack of agreed theoretical frameworks such that the current state-of-play resembles a somewhat incoherent knowledge base, with some consensus (as above) but many important gaps remaining to be filled-in.”** (Atkinson 2006, 1444)

Combined the **two statements highlight** how the **lack of emphasis on strategy implementation** can have a **negative impact** on how the strategy of a company is implemented. The first highlights the need to place a greater emphasis on the implementation as it highlights the common tendency of more emphasis on the formulation phase. They also **highlight** how the **Implementation level and Execution level** are considered to be **one and the same**. There is **also a lack of research and interest** in the implementation phase where there are no industry standards of any frameworks. The **balanced score card framework is a performance management/operational level framework** that companies tend to **use at implementation level** (Ibid, 1142), for example. Quotes below highlight the current state:

“The noteworthy statement “. . . great strategy, shame about the implementation . . . ” (Okumus and Roper, 1998, p. 218) captures the essence of the problem that strategy implementation suffers from a general lack of academic attention (Alexander, 1985; Edgar and Taylor, 1996; Noble, 1999; Aaltonen and Ika<sup>o</sup>valko, 2002; Otley, 2003). Indeed, Okumus and Roper (1998, p. 219) go on to observe that “. . . despite the importance of the strategic execution process, far more research has been carried out into strategy formulation rather than into strategy implementation . . . .”, while Alexander concludes that literature is dominated by a focus on long range planning and strategy “content” rather than the actual implementation of strategies, on which “. . . little is written or researched . . . ” (Alexander, 1985, p. 91). Reasons put forward for this apparent dearth of research effort include that the field of strategy implementation is considered to be less “glamorous” as a subject area, and that researchers often underestimate the difficulties involved in investigating such a topic – especially as it is thought to be fundamentally lacking in conceptual models (Alexander, 1985; Goold, 1991; Aaltonen and Ika<sup>o</sup>valko, 2002).” (Atkinson 2006, 1441)

“Thus there would appear to be a significant “gap” in the knowledge base at a time when the commercial environment is exhibiting significant changes. The transformation from the industrial to the information age is signalled by increasingly sophisticated customers and management practices, escalating globalisation, more prevalent and subtle product differentiation, and an emphasis on intellectual capital and enhanced employee empowerment (Johnson and Kaplan, 1987; Eccles, 1991; Kaplan and Norton, 1992; Hope and Hope, 1997; Huckstein and Duboff, 1999; Brander Brown and Atkinson, 2001). In this new world order successful strategy implementation becomes ever more important. Simultaneously, new performance measurement frameworks are evolving to fill the gap between operational budgeting and strategic planning.” (Atkinson 2006, 1442)

Given the **lack of consensus** and **limited research** in strategy implementation it is **therefore appropriate to look to other sectors**, such as the military, which are **considered to be similar to business** (Clausewitz 1911, 121) and apply lessons from their research and understanding. For instance, **the military as a sector** has **greater depth of research on strategy** to fall upon and has **tried and tested systems and structures** which can be customised for the business sector.

The primary purpose of theory here therefore is to **clarify concepts and ideas** which have been **mixed together**. Strategy and tactics tend to be two such notions, which are intrinsically differing activities yet tend to be mixed with one another. **A clearer understanding emerges of each once their natures are better understood**. (Clausewitz 1911, 94)

Clausewitz highlights the difference between strategy and tactics, where “**strategy** is the theory of the **use of combats for the object of war** and **tactics** is the theory of the **use of the military force in combat**” (Ibid, 86) **Via Group's**, a consultancy, **Holistic Leadership Model** (Class handouts 11/09/09), see **figure 2**, helps to **highlight this separation between strategy and tactics in the business world**, where level 1 and 2 focus on the Individual and Operational levels of the business and Levels 3 and 4 focus on the Strategy and Visionary levels, respectively.



Figure 2. Via Group Holistic Leadership Model, highlighting the various levels of decision making.

This model highlights how at the **tactical side** highlighted by **Clausewitz** falls into **Levels 1 and 2**. The **strategy side** as defined by **Clausewitz** falls into **Level 3** and vision and leadership concerns fall into Level 4, respectively. In context, **Level 4** is where the **policy level** concerns are dealt with, such as whether or not to use the military as an instrument for war and **Level 3** is where the **military level** concerns are dealt with, such as **how combats are to be coordinated, controlled, commanded and what the intelligence has to say about the target theatre**. This **military level of strategy** is, therefore, **between the policy level strategy and the operational/executional level strategy**.

The **policy level** is where a **decision is made to use the military** to gain a set **objective**. (Clausewitz 1911, 25) Here Clausewitz highlights how the **military is a means to attain a particular objective set by the state**. The **military strategy** is where the **military** as a profession takes **ownership** and **decides how to implement the mandate** provided to it by the state. The identified **uncertainties** are **then converted into risk** and these **risks are then minimised and managed** in ways that deliver the scope. The **complexities** are, also, **understood and managed** to **ensure negative side effects are managed positively before** turning to the **operational level** and **executing the relevant tactics to deliver the scope**. This process ensures there is a **continuous two way system**, where **new uncertainties and complexities** are **factored in as they emerge and dealt with at appropriate levels** depending on their **importance**.

In other words, **main stream business thought** currently **does not distinguish between the Implementation level and the Execution level** (Robin Speculand Comment, Linked In forum October/ November, 2009, Appendix 1). For instance, in the context of risk and complexities at the SBU level. **SBU level of risks are different to that of the operational level**, where **senior managers** tend to make decisions that involve a **higher degree of risk** and **operational managers** tend to **execute** knowing that these risks have been considered and factored in. For example, **portfolio risks are different to program levels risks, which in turn are different to project level risks**. The **levels of risk senior management** have to deal will help them to identify the risks by **converting uncertainty into risk**, (Wickham 2008, 202) deal with **the variation between the actual risks and perception of risks** (Ibid p.203) and **how to lower the risks by understanding their target market more accurately**. **Therefore** by attempting to **distinguish between the implementation risks and operational risks** the management of a company can help to identify uncertainties, convert them into risks, attempt to understand them and try to negate their impact and **lower the degree of friction in realising the initial vision before they commit resources to the operational phase**.

Further, **in an International SME complexity** can generally can be **beyond comprehension** and may **stem from causes that cannot be eliminated** therefore the **scale of complexity tends to be high** (Klaas 2008, 241). **25 - 35% of costs** have been **identified as complexity driven** (Ibid, 239), it can **fossilise in the organisation** (Ibid, 242) and **managing complexity requires complications are identified and eliminated if they do not add value**. (Ibid, 242). The scale of complexity managers have to deal with is proportional to their level of responsibility. Here **complexity** is seen as the **by product of everyday managerial decisions** (Ibid, 239) and are **a side effect of the number of challenges a company has to contend with** (Ibid, 240). **Adding complexity** is seen as **acceptable** as long as the **added value is proportional**. (Ibid, 240) However, once diminishing returns start to set in **complexity management** starts to become a **significant concern** given the **impact on fixed costs**. (Ibid, 238) For Instance, the **scale of complexity SBU managers** have to deal with is **different** to the scale of complexity **operations managers** have to contend with. Therefore by **separating the two helps each level of management to more effectively identify the hidden linkages between costs, activities and the decisions that produce them** (Ibid, 242). Where the **complications add no value** they can be **managed** in a way that **fixed cost are reduced** (Ibid, 242) without having a proportional impact on the company's competitive-

ness. The **common way** in which to **deal with complexity** in a company is **a mix of the two basic approaches of simplification and reconfiguration** (Ibid, 240-241)

The **Holistic Leadership Model** helps to **identify** what **levels of risks and complexities** are to be dealt with **at what level**. The **interactions at level 4 and level 3** will deal with the **uncertainties and complexities highlighted between the visionary and senior management** and the **interactions between 3 and 2** will **highlight the operational level risks and complexities**, which have to be **vertically incorporated** into the overall vision **before operations levels decisions** are made. For instance, **senior managers and the Owner/Manager** may **decide** that **expansion into a particular market** may be the future, however **operational managers** may **highlight** that their functions **do not have the capacity to realise the vision as intended profitably**, given the complexities that may be **generated** and **highlight factors** that may **not have occurred in the level 4 and 3 interaction**. The **greater the interaction** the **greater the number of uncertainties and complexities** the **management** can **identify, convert and manage** and thereby **lower the friction** between the initial vision and the actual outcome.

Overall, **strategy implementation** currently is considered to be the same as **strategy execution in current main stream business thought**, whereas **military strategic thought** states otherwise. Further, the **differing levels of risks and complexities at SBU level and operational level** justify the need to **separate strategy implementation from strategy execution**. This separation helps to **clarify the difference between strategy and tactics** and allows **various levels of management to interact with a greater understanding of what to expect from their interactions**. For instance, the level 4 and level 3 interactions will expect to deal with a particular level of risk and complexity as a matter of design and ensure level 2 risks and complexities have been externalised and cross pollinated before the execution phase starts. In the context of International SME's **by separating the strategy implementation from strategy execution** allows each level of management to **understand more comprehensively the kind of risks and complexities that need to be dealt with** and **allows for a more accurate understanding** of how to realise the **vision** of the Owner/ Manager.

### 3.3 Strategy execution

The **strategy execution** phase of strategy tends to **deal more with operational matters** such as **budgets, forecasts, variation analysis, operations management, quality management** and other systems, structures and functions that **ensure operational risks are identified, minimised** and the impact of the risks do not hinder realising the vision. There is **significant research in this area** (Atkinson 2006, 1447) in relation to strategy implementation. This level of the strategy process appears to be well understood, researched and executed, where they are **numerous frameworks from TQM to the ISO's** which **ensure that the objectives set are achieved and the company attains the set targets**. Here the **frameworks commonly used by the LSE sector are used by the SME's where they are expected to scale up onto them**. This is understood to **give them credibility** in their target markets and **ensures** they have **recognised quality management systems in place**.

Overall, the **depth of research** in this phase of the strategy process **shows** how well it is **understood** and **how it helps companies to gain recognition** among its peers in other parts of the world. For instance, a Six Sigma black belt would mean the same in any part of the world and this helps with understanding the systems and structures used. For instance, if a company is trying to communicate their systems and structures and mention Six Sigma their audience would understand the quality management systems and structures in place.

## 4 What is a C4I Framework?

Epstein highlights how using frameworks (Models) is a standard experience. He suggests where they are no formal frameworks implicit frameworks are used. These implicit frameworks tend to be person specific and their logical sequences are unknown. (Epstein 2008, 1) In other words, we all use frameworks of some kind, where we do not use formal frameworks we use our own frameworks not realising the variables we use and they may be different to every one's else's. These implicit frameworks therefore have the potential of lacking consistency, make communication in a social environment more difficult and increase the complexity of the interaction.

Explicit frameworks tend to allow assumptions to be considered in detail and the impact of each variable can be the areas of focus. (Ibid, 2) For instance, 'if this than that' dialogues can be built, where the nature of the subject area can be better understood. Explicit frameworks allow all members to externalise their understanding of the variables in the framework and by cross pollinating their understandings build a common base of their understandings. This allows for a dialogue to be built in a disciplined and constructive way. (Ibid, 2)

Further, Eshun (2009) highlights how frameworks can have an impact on mental models, which in turn can have an impact on behaviour. They can help to change perceptions, cultural values and can help to encourage new ways of behaving. (Eshun 2009, 164)

**Frameworks** therefore help to build an understanding of how a company can **consistently convert uncertainty into risk and identify and manage complexity** before it attempts to minimise their impact along with allowing International SME's a framework to **help to externalise and cross pollinate the tacit understanding of the Owner/ Managers, senior management and operational management at the SBU level. C4I frameworks are commonly used by NATO to implement their military strategy.** Department of Defence uses C4I systems as the nervous system of the military (National Research Council 1999, 27) and they are used **to help commanders to make more informed decisions** ensuring the **execution** of those decisions are more **accurate.** (Ibid, 28)

C4I stands for Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence. (C4I.org, web article). Command refers to the authority a commander has by virtue of his rank or assignment. Control refers to the regulations that need to be considered. Communications refers to the means of sending messages and receiving messages. Computers refers to the ability to electronically compute information. And Intelligence refers to information about an enemy. These general definitions have been taken from a standard dictionary, (Dictionary.com) and highlight the general the use of the words in common practice.

The C4I framework **provides** the **military level commander** with an **explicit framework** to help consider the necessary assumptions focused around the variables highlighted. **This ensures each variable has been considered and matters relating to each variable are discussed, accurately understood and communicated** to the relevant people. For instance, by **continuously** using the C4I **framework** a military level commander will **build a process of thought** that will ensure he/she focuses on the variables of the framework as matter of routine. This allows commander to **build a mental mode of thought** where **all** his **interactions** will be **based around the variables in the framework**. These **interactions** will **highlight** the **uncertainties** that he/she has to deal with, which to **convert into risk, how the risks** are to be managed. **Which risks are strategic, which are tactical and allow complexities to be indentified and managed** in a similar way. This **framework helps to narrow the focus** of the commander onto **a set of core variables that ensure all the relevant information** and has **been considered** and **all relevant issues** related to them have been **discussed** with the **relevant people**.



## 5 Customised C4I framework for strategy implementation in the International SME sector

The customised C4I framework can aid the senior management of an International SME to identify the uncertainties of the target market in structured, consistent way and help to identify the complexities that are likely to be generated. By having a framework to help identify and understand risks and complexities at the SBU level can assist a company to build internal capacities to effectively manage them. Where they as a matter of routine convert uncertainty into risk and try to understand how complexities can be managed and incorporated into operational level concerns before they commit resources. For instance, the proposed C4I framework allows the senior management to gain an understanding of the leaderships concerns, collaboration variable allows for the alliances needed to be considered as a matter of course, communication highlights the image and identity perceptions issues that may help with realising the vision, the computing variable allows them consider the ICT concerns and how the processing power of computing can be leveraged. And, finally the intelligence ensures all relevant background information, both internal and external, is taken into account along with the operational concerns of managers at the SBU Level.

The C4I framework variables to be used are those that are more relevant to the International SME sector. This framework will allow International SME's to better understand the implementation phase of their strategy. In other words, it will allow senior managers to understand how to implement their international business strategy by converting uncertainty into risk and attempt to understand and manage the complexities that exist and will be generated. It ensures the overall vision of the Owner/ Manager is communicated effectively and the related tacit concerns are externalised, cross pollinated and understood accurately by the senior managers. And, finally, it engrains the strategy tactics interplay vital to success to be part of everyday business management. The variables of the C4I framework here are: Command, Collaboration, Communications, Computing and Intelligence. The Command variable refers to the leadership, the control of the process and the coordination of various aspects. The Collaboration variable refers to the alliances, partnerships and working relationships the company has to build in order to implement the set vision. The Communications variable refers to all the communications from the corporate level to internal and external communications used to build the company image and ensure their identity is maintained. The Computing variable refers

to the **ICT technologies** available that can be used to **ensure the data gathering, the data analysis, the conversion into information, the utilisation of information as an asset, its storage, its access, life cycle and impact on the company as a whole is taken into account**. The final variable **Intelligence** looks at the **market research capacity** of the company. The various strategies, methods and tools used **to gather data and information externally** about the target market and **internally about the capacity of the company before operational execution takes place**. This helps senior management to gain a more accurate comprehension of the state of affairs and ensures they have a more accurate understanding of how to realise the vision. In a **sector where strategy is accepted to be emergent, non linear and an art the need to identify uncertainties and complexities is higher**. This is in a sector where the **Owner/ Managers** tend to have **in depth tacit understanding of their vision**, which may **not necessarily be externalised and cross pollinated with the senior managers accurately** (See above). This **framework** customised for the purpose **helps** to ensure **the senior management nurture their mind sets** to help **build their capacities** to **identify these uncertainties and complexities using a common base**, are able to **consistently** convert them into risk and **understand** how to minimise the impact of these **risks and complexities** before they start to **deal with operational concerns**.

## 5.1 Command

International SME's tend to have an informal decision making process which is emergent in nature. The informal nature of the **Command** variable in the International SME sector allows greater access of the decision maker to the front line of the company. In terms of **coordination**, the senior management have to ensure **their activities are being coordinated both vertically and horizontally**. Vertically, by ensuring the company is growing internally and their identity is being maintained. For instance, it is a common experience in companies to change various aspects of their business hoping this would help them grow more sustainably ignoring what has worked for them in the past. This variable allows the senior management to consciously consider the impact of their decision on these kinds of matters. Horizontally, the senior management have to ensure that business units are complementing each other's activities. For instance, the activities generate the synergy effect, where  $1+1 = 3$  or more and not less than 2. In other words, all the business units are working towards achieving the over-all vision of the company's executive management.

The **Control** variable ensures the activities of the company are **regulated** to how the senior management wish them to be. **Types of regulations** can be the **legal considerations** they may need to take into account. For instance, the decision makers are aware of how to ensure the company's activities in the new target market are regulated. This combined with the other sub variables in the Command variable ensures that the senior management of the SME have consciously discussed and thought about these matters before going on to the performance management stage where the budgets, targets, and other operational level matters are considered.

## 5.2 Collaboration

The **Collaboration** variable highlights the **various relationships** the company may need to consider. These relationships range from **working relationships** with companies on a project by project basis **to strategic alliances**. Here by having working relationships each member benefits by having access to the skills and expertise of the other based on a need basis. Each company would work with the other if their in house capacity was insufficient to deliver the customer requirements. For example, if a company took on a project where some aspects would need additional capacity added to the company, here instead of adding this addition capacity they may simply have a working relationship with another company that may be willing to take on the extra work on a demand basis. Strategic alliances on the other hand are partnerships built by the companies to co produce a product or service where each member commits to providing skills, expertise and resources for the specific purpose. These alliances vary depending on the needs of the companies but usually show a deep understanding between them centred on a product. Further, the need for collaborative efforts in the SME sector tends to be higher for reasons ranging from financial constraints to lack of in house capacity to take on large Projects/Contracts.

## 5.3 Communications

The **Communications** variable **ensures** that the company **communicates with its various publics effectively** highlighting who they are and what they are about. "The nature and role of communications are rarely the focus of research or discussion because they are taken to be self explanatory (e.g. Tourish and Hargie, 2004b)." (Kalla 2005, 303) This highlights the common **concern** of why **communications can be over looked at the SBU level** and how by having this variable as part of a framework ensures the Senior Managers of a company are **aware of its importance**. In other words, because:

“Communication is viewed as a complex, multi-issued, and dynamic process in which global managers exchange meaning.”(p.317 Corporate Communication Challenges).” “All business activity involves communicating. Within global businesses, activities such as leading, motivating, negotiating, decision making, problem solving, and exchanging information and ideas are all based on the ability of managers and employees from one culture to communicate successfully with colleagues, clients and suppliers from other cultures. Communicating effectively challenges managers even when working domestically with a culturally homogeneous workforce (Adler, 2002).” (Ibid, 320)

In the case of **International SME's** this becomes a **significant concern** given **their international exposure** and the **greater degree of complexity** they have to deal with. Here the **different cultures** they are exposed to on **daily basis** ensure the **communications** understanding of the company is **stretched**. This is true for the **corporate level, internal and external communications** of the company. Here the corporate level is where the company deals with the board range of stakeholders ranging from the all external publics to identity issues to image perception via the brand image. The Internal Communications refers to the communication within the company and the external communications refers to the target market publics of the company. There are **various models of communication** which are used by companies to build their systems and structures around. The three most common are: The **Western Model; Intercultural Communications Model; And, the Dialogical Communications Model**. The Western communications models treats communications as a linear process of transmitting a message from the sender to the receiver where the main parts of the process are: message, channel and receiver. (Ibid, 320) The Intercultural Models factors in the cultural context of the communication. For instance, a typical process would be sender, message, channel, noise, receiver, feedback and cultural context (Jandt, 1998). (Ibid, 320) And the final model is dialogical communications model (Yoshikawa, 1987) where the interchange of communications is considered to create meaning “It depicts the symbolic representation of a search for ways of understanding interpersonal, intercultural, and international relationships within which people of diverse cultures can reflect on their cultural differences as well as their similarities.” (Ibid, 321)

By being exposed to these models of communications the company can then **decide which to use, when to use and to what effect**. For instance, an International SME may decide in one region **where there is a large degree of diversity, such as the EU**, a particular **model** may be **appropriate in one part and not in another**. For example, the Latin side of the European Union is different in many ways to their Northern European counterparts. The Italians, French and Spanish have a different business culture to their Northern European

counterparts such as the Germans, Dutch and Danes. This is also reflected in their communications and how and when various communications models are deemed appropriate. For example, in the UK the traditional Western model of communications may be appropriate given various formalities. **This diversity** would need to be **factored into** any SBU **communications** understanding **if** their **target market** is the **European Union**. The communications variable overall highlights the need to look at the communications channels, models and public at the SBU Level to ensure these concerns are understood and factored in before the performance management targets are set and managers are asked to meet them.

## 5.4 Computing

The **Computing** variable refers to the **power and speed of the information processing** and how this has an impact on a company. This **combined with access to ICT** technologies **allows a company to benefit disproportionately from streamlining its operations and building sustainable competitive advantages based on knowledge creation, information management and leveraging information to a greater degree than otherwise would be possible**. This is particularly **true in the case of service based medium sized companies** than product based companies in the US. (Iansiti, Favaloro, Utzschneider, and Richards 2005, 11) Computing allows a company to increase its capacity to gather data, convert it into information, add value to it and convert it into knowledge. For example, a SME can use a database to gather data and store it, convert it into information based on the context and add value to it by analysing it and converting it into knowledge in near real time. This has an impact on the information life cycle and the accuracy of information at the disposal of the decision makers is improved. This helps with the decision making by allowing senior managers to have an accurate understanding of the developments in the market place and how their smaller size can be used to gain a competitive advantage, for example.

A **recent study** by HBS (Ibid) looked into if IT added value to medium sized companies, here they defined medium sized companies as companies that employed between 250 – 500. Overall they found that **IT helped Medium sized companies to grow more profitably and improved their prospects for further growth**. They suggested that the growth of the company dictated the investment in IT and hence the leading factor for the investment being the company's need to grow which entailed greater computing power.

## 5.5 Intelligence

**Intelligence** is commonly taken to mean **superiority of understanding** (Oxford English Dictionary). In context therefore it **delivers a superior position of understanding**. In the **business context** intelligence is treated to be the same as **market research in this thesis**. Here market research allows for an **understanding** of the **target market**, for instance, and the **accuracy** of this comprehension then has an **impact on the decision making within a company and relates to the information that managers use to reduce uncertainty and complexity**. For instance, at the SBU Level, to have a sound **understanding of the target market** would allow senior managers to **decide when to enter, how to enter, what to offer, how to offer, what will work and why it should work externally and staff motivation and any related concerns internally**. This allows them to **understand more accurately the friction the managers are likely to come across and any major interferences at this stage**. For example, in the case of a company entering the EU market, the senior managers understanding will be improved if in the strategy implementation process they **understood how the different markets within the EU operated**. Unlike the US the **EU is not a homogeneous market** and if senior managers are used to dealing with the US market then **market research can highlight these differences** which may be of importance when deciding on a product range for the new target market for instance. In terms of the SME sector in particular market research is often a neglected aspect of conducting business, as highlighted earlier majority of the SME's in the UK have no systems and structures to conduct research, both market research and product research, however they do provide the majority of the commercial innovations in the UK (What can small business do for Europe? 2006,17) This highlights the **current state of affairs where in a major economy the majority of the business have no systems or structures to understand their target market in a formal manner..**

Further, **market research** helps to **ensure their resources are more accurately directed**. This **encourages the International SME to understand the risks and their impact before they commit resources to the execution of the strategy**. Market Research can be **divided market into: External and Internal**. Where **External deals with external environment in general and target markets in particular**. The **internal side of market research** deals internally **within the company and attempts understand what is going on within an organisation**. For instance, staff satisfaction may be a concern, but not highlighted because no systems and structures exist to tap into this concern. Here by understanding staff the company can help them build their skills and expertise and ensure the company benefits at the same

time. Further, the concerns that cause friction during the execution stage can be understood in a more formal manner and can be dealt with as a matter of routine. (Schraeder, Matuszek, Morrison & Self 2008, 187)

Overall, the market research 'I' can **help a company to build an in depth understanding of their target markets and lower the business risk of entering new markets, introducing new product ranges, understand the complexities being generated,** making sure the company is internally capable of **delivering the set vision and understanding how the company is progressing in various ways.** For example, front line staff feedback is vital to the decision making process and internal market research provides this link in a growing company where managers have an understanding how the company is progressing.

## 6                    **How International SME's can use the C4I paradigm to implement international business strategy?**

International business strategy deals with how a company can compete successfully in a target market. This target market can be as broad as a region like the EU and the US or as narrow as a single country. In the context of International SME's a company is likely to be targeting and **operating in multiple international markets at the same time. This creates a degree of complexity** which can **further complicate the strategy process** in a company **where the Owner/ Manager has an in depth tacit understanding of the vision and has no explicit frameworks to help externalise and cross pollinate it with his/ her Senior Managers.** The **lack of explicit frameworks generates a greater degree of friction and can have an impact on the implementation and the execution of the strategy.** This **potential for friction** combined with **the high degree of complexity** International SME's face **creates greater uncertainties** and can **have an impact on the risk of failure.** For instance, to illustrate this a hypothetical company who fits the profile of an International SME is discussed below. This **helps to highlight the likely uncertainties and complexities the case company will have to deal with.** This helps to **ensure the solution for the company will deliver the required results.** In other words, by using a hypothetical company before the actual case company I can **verify that the framework delivers the results as intended** and **any new concerns that emerge can be dealt with before the solution for the case company is delivered** to the company. This also **allows for various matters to be discussed in depth** and **provides greater clarification.**

If a company is based in Singapore, Zooters Ltd, with a research and development centre in India and a manufacturing base in China with SBU's for the Japanese and US markets. Zooters Ltd international exposure alone dictates that the level of complexity it faces would be higher than otherwise. If the **Owner/ Manager decides to expand into the EU.** This would **need to be externalised and communicated** to the **senior management** who then **communicate this vision to the operational level managers.** This **process creates further complications because in the SME sector strategy is emergent, non linear, more of an art than a science and the distinction between strategy and tactics can be blurred.** (See above) To **simplify this process without losing the creative nature** of the SME the customised **C4I framework is used** as the explicit framework. This customised framework for the International SME sector **will allow the Owner/ Manager to continue as an artist** who can use an explicit framework customised for his/ her sector to **deliver a more accurate**



realisation of the initial vision. This helps the **Owner/ Manager** to carry on being an artist and allows the senior managers to better understand the vision and add value to the interaction by trying to identify the uncertainties and the complexities in realising the vision may experience and generate along with creating clarity between **Strategy and Tactics**. In the case of Zooters Ltd this would mean the **Owner/ Manager** discussing the vision with his/ her senior managers, level 4 and level 3 interactions. Here the **Owner/ Manager** externalises the vision by interacting with the senior managers. A greater degree of externalisation is encouraged by ensuring all the variables in the explicit framework are discussed to a sufficient depth for them to understand the vision accurately. Once this vision has been externalised the senior managers then add value to the interaction by ensuring they, along with the **Owner/ Manager**, cross pollinate their understandings. This helps to build a common base of understanding for all members to the interaction, ensuring they all can attempt to identify uncertainties that need to be converted into risk, identify the complexities and ensure the senior managers have an in depth understanding of how to manage them at the SBU level. The next level of interaction allows for the senior managers to interact with their operational managers, level 3 and level 2 interactions, to factor in the operational risks and complexities that are likely to result from realising the vision. Thereby increasing the effectiveness of the communications and the staff motivation by building a more inclusive process with an explicit framework. This helps to lower the sources of conflict and resistance, which are considered to be leading reasons for why strategies fail. (Schraeder, Matuszek, Morrison, Self, 2008, 187).

Overall by **dividing the interaction into different levels**, i.e. level 4 and level 3 and level 3 and level 2, ensures the company gains a better understanding of what is strategic and what is tactical, allows for a more accurate understanding of the vision and a common base of understanding for all members to the interactions. This also allows **Zooters Ltd** to externalise the vision, cross pollinates it, identify the relevant uncertainties, understand the complexities and clarify the differences between strategy and tactics. Hence, reducing friction, formalising the strategy process to a greater degree, ensuring the company growth is sustainable and the risk of failure being lowered by allowing the company to more effectively compete in the target market. In other words, by consistently using this explicit framework at level 3 **Zooters Ltd** builds in house capacities to identify the various risk, complexities and helps to separate the strategic from the tactical on a regular basis as part of daily management of the company.

The **management perspectives** to be used here are to **highlight** the kind of **uncertainties and complexities** that are **likely to arise in the process of this expansion** are: **Cultural Management, Financial Management, Marketing Management and Human Resource Management**. Each of the management perspective will have a **strategic impact and an operational impact**. The interaction between **level 4 and 3** will look at **each management perspective from its strategic aspect** and the **level 3 and 2 interaction** will look at the **management perspective from its tactical aspect**. This **allows** for the **variation between the strategic and tactical** to be **understood more accurately** and therefore a **clearer understanding of what is to be dealt with at what level and by who** emerges. This centred around the **explicit framework** allows an **emergent non-linear artistic in nature strategic process** to be **more accurately understood and lowers the friction factor**. In other words, **the risk of failure is reduced** and the **complexities to be managed are more accurately understood**. For example, in the case of financial management one aspect to be considered could be the impact of exchange rate push through (ERPT) on the goods and services on offer in the new target market and another aspect would be SWAPS and forward contracts that would need to be entered into. The former is more a strategic concern and the latter more an operational concern, where the former deals with the impact changes in the exchange rates can have on profitability and its knock on impact on marketing concerns, for instance, and the latter deals more with the day to day financial interactions that need to be managed. Here at the level 4 and level 3 interactions the ERPT is more likely to be discussed and considered using the C4I framework and the level 3 and level 2 is more likely to deal with how the payments are going to be received and made and how to reduce the complexity and uncertainty using various financial tools based around the C4I framework. This helps to clarify what is strategic and what is tactical, helps to build a mindset based around an explicit framework for this purpose, ensures the vision is accurately understood, friction is minimised, uncertainties and complexities are more accurately understood.

Further, this **helps to externalise various aspects of the vision in the level 4 and 3 interaction** and **allows the senior managers to add value by cross pollinating** them and thereby **building a common base of understanding**. This allows for a greater understanding of the vision from **various management perspectives** and helps the Owner/ Manager to carry on being the artist. The **level 3 and level 2 interaction** in similar fashion helps to externalise concerns that may not otherwise be highlighted and **allows the senior managers** to gain an **understanding of what is going on in the company** and the **direction the company is taking based around the variables in the framework**. This **kind of interaction**

also **provides operational managers an opportunity to highlight areas of concern and makes them feel part of the process.** By **cross pollinating** with the **operational managers** the **senior managers build a common base of understanding** of how **the company is to progress and provides the linkage between strategy and tactics.** Thereby **ensuring the strategy tactics interplay** becomes a **normal experience** and the **variation between the two are explicitly understood.** This **lowers the risk of failure** and an accurate realisation of the artistic vision of the Owner/ Manager through flawless implementation and execution of it.

Dealing with each management perspective focused around the C4I framework in turn.

## 6.1 Cultural management perspective

The command variable also incorporates the control and coordination variables as sub variables. In the context of Zooters Ltd expansion into the EU this explicit variable encourages the interactions i.e. level 4 and 3 and level 3 and 2, to focus their attention on matters related to it. Dealing with the **level 4 and 3 interaction first.** The cultural management perspective would encourage them to consider the various **leadership/ management styles** and which are **relevant to their target market.** For example, Germans may prefer a different management style to their British counter parts. This has an impact on how the local staff respond to their managers and how they are able to motivate them to achieve their targets. This variation between the differing cultural aspects highlights the complexities of arranging the structure of the SBU for the EU. For instance, given this variation in styles would it be more appropriate to break down the SBU into regional offices where each regional office covers a target region and the HQ office coordinates their activities. This would help to ensure the control measures are dealt with locally to make sure regulations are being met. This variable at this level highlights the kind of uncertainties and complexities that are externalised and cross pollinated between the Owner/ Managers interaction with the senior managers. The **level 3 and level 2 interaction** around this variable would **ensure the operational managers understand why a particular course of action is appropriate and helps to externalise their tacit concerns and cross pollinates it with the senior managers.** For example, in this case if the level 4 and 3 interactions have built a common understanding that a number of regional offices in the target region would be better and their activities would be coordinated by the HQ office in Singapore, the operational managers may highlight how inefficient this may be and cause problems for their functions in that they would have to deal with multiple offices, which may

cause problems with how many staff they have to dedicate to ensuring all matters are dealt with appropriately. This concern can then be vertically integrated into how the regional offices are organised.

The next variable is the **Collaboration** variable. Using the Cultural Management perspective the level 4 and level 3 interactions would look at the potential of working with other companies in various ways. For instance, the Owner/ Manager may like Zooters Ltd to be part of an ecosystem of companies where their products would be of value and allow them to build a presence in the EU. Therefore building collaborative initiatives with other companies to supply larger companies may be part of this vision. However, the level 4 and level 3 interaction may highlight how the differing **working cultures** may lead to **greater complexities** than can be managed at this stage. They may decide to look for ecosystems where their working cultures are more similar, this in the context of the **EU** may mean **looking for regions and sectors where they believe their working cultures would be similar** and therefore **reducing the complexities of the interactions and reduce the risk of failure of the collaboration**. When this interaction occurs between level 3 and 2 other issues may be considered like languages used even when there is one company language. For instance, **operational experience** may show that even though Zooters Ltd **company language** is **English** each **regional centre tends to use their local language** for their day to day interactions and their **local version of English** tends to be different, which then **creates complications** when dealing with someone from another region. This **helps senior managers to understand what concerns to look for** in potential Collaborations and how to ensure win win relationships are fostered.

The **Communications** variable allows the level 4 and level 3 interactions to discuss how to build their communication capacity in the EU centred around the management perspective of culture. This may include looking at the **appropriate communications models** to use for **internal communications**. For instance, parts of the EU may prefer the Western Communications model, where there is a sender, receiver and the message. This **may not be appropriate for all the EU regions**, given **how different the cultures are**. The interaction here would allow them to consider **how to build a mix of communications models** to ensure all their **internal communications** for the Business Unit has some **consistency for internal marketing purposes**. The level 3 and level 2 interactions would highlight the experiences of the operational managers and allows senior managers to understand what has been working and how the company culture is growing and the direction it is taking. This allows the operational managers to highlight their thoughts focused around this variable helping to build

**greater sense of ownership** and **allows for plurality of thought to be incorporated**. Any concerns that are **considered to be of value** can then be **vertically integrated into the vision** and helps the senior managers gain a better understanding of the kind of complexities there are likely to be experienced and are able to identify a larger number of uncertainties.

The **Computing** variable allows the level 4 and level 3 interaction to focus how cultural management has an impact on how they build their competitive advantage based around technology in the EU. For instance, they may discover the variation in how people use technology is different across the EU. For instance, in the UK there is a tendency not use technology as much as say in the Nordic region, where the vast areas the countries cover encourage people to use technology to a greater degree. This may then have an impact on how technology is viewed in the work place. They may also have to look at how the various regions within the EU use the same technology but in different ways. For instance, mobile phone usage may be higher in the Nordic Region than the UK, but in the UK the phone users may use the phone to listen to music more than voice calls. This variation in behaviour can then be seen using the cultural perspective to see if it's a common cultural trait and how it is different across the target region. The level 3 and level 2 interactions can then highlight how their existing functions are using technology, the direction they are taking and how to ensure the 4 and 3 interaction factors this in.

The **Intelligence** variable would allow the level 4 and level 3 interaction **to consider the market research they have conducted**. This focused around the perspective of culture would **allow them to understand what other companies are doing, how they have managed this kind of market entry, what has worked for them and the impact this has had on their corporate cultures, externally**. **Internally**, this variable would allow them to look at how their **company culture is developing** and the **direction it is taking** and how it **fits the vision and how to build it in the target market**. For instance, because there is little social welfare coverage in most of the host countries of their existing markets this is reflected in the employees benefits. This package may be of limited attraction in the EU given the members states tend to offer these benefits funded by taxation. How they build a compensation package then has implications for their perspective employees and the impact on the internal identity. For instance, they may be building an internal brand where they are considered to be a sensitive and caring employer and their package may reflect this. However, the new package would have to reflect this in the local markets according to local standards. The level 3 and level 2 interactions would then highlight the operational managers' views on the variation in the packages and how they may have an impact on the current staff see and feel about what

parts of the package are being discussed. For instance, a concern may be if a staff member has to spend time in the EU his/ her package would change to local standards. When he/ she returns the package would revert back to the original package, however this may mean loss of benefits by no contributions for the duration while he/ she away. This helps to highlight the kind of complexities and uncertainties that may arise and allow these matters to be factored in early on in the process. It further allows the senior management to incorporate what kind of risks they are willing to take, which risks they are not and the kind of complexities that are likely to arise. Here by going through this process the Owner/ Manager has increased his understanding of the kind of uncertainties involved in the process and the kind of uncertainties and complexities that are likely to emerge. The senior managers have a more accurate understanding of the vision by going through the cross pollination phase and have a better understanding of the complexities from a tactical point of view and are able to build a communications channel with their operational managers, where these complexities are highlighted and incorporated into the strategy as they emerge. This helps to build the tactics strategy interplay which once streamlined leads to victory and allows the Senior Managers course more certain and therefore more successful as highlighted by Clausewitz.

## 6.2 Financial management perspective

Using the first variable of the framework, **Command**. The level 4 and level 3 interactions would look at how the financial aspects are to be managed, **controlled** and **coordinated**. For instance, their current bank may have a presence in the UK and not in any other country, however given the relationship with them they would like to keep their business with them. This raises the complexities factor. How are these matters to be coordinated? For example, if the HQ office is to coordinate the various offices activities in the target region, how is this to be organised with the flows of cash. How are the local managers to build the financial side of their offices? What kind of local financial privileges are they to have? Can they enter into financial transactions locally? These kinds of concerns would highlight the kind of uncertainties and complexities that are likely to arise. The level 3 and level 2 interactions would highlight how the budgets have been working and what kind of variation analysis has been used to what effect. The various experiences operational managers have in their local markets and what kind of experiences are normal and how the lessons these experiences can be used in the target region.

The **Collaboration** variable helps to ensure the level 4 and level 3 interaction looks at the potential of working with other companies in the target region or in the HQ country that may have a presence in the target region. This interest will be focused around the financial management perspective. The kind of **collaborations may range from cost sharing of offices to sharing staff** for various purposes. For instance, it is common to outsource or employ local sales companies to build momentum and gain access to local companies. The level 3 and level 2 interactions may highlight the **operational complexities of using outside skills and expertise** and the high cost of integration. These kinds of complexities and uncertainties then allow the level 3 Managers to understand how to more effectively realise the vision.

The **communications** variable will **ensure** matters such as the **accounting standards and financial reporting matters are considered at the level 4 and 3 interaction**. For instance, Zooters Ltd currently follows the International Financial Reporting Standards. This may be common in the UK and but other EU countries may follow their own standards or may not have migrated onto these standards yet. This creates further complexities and identifies areas of uncertainties that need to be converted into risks. By having different financial communications methods can easily cause confusion and show a profit where there is a loss. **The level 3 and 2 interaction can remind them of the need for consistent accounting methods and the complexities of changing or using other standards.**

The **computing** variable would allow the level 4 and level 3 interactions to look at the financial management perspective using the technology factor. For instance, this interaction may highlight how complexities can be lowered by working with their current bank and using their local branch in the UK for major transactions and other online payment players for smaller transactions. Companies like Paypal could be used to pay for travel expenses directly from the HQ office or their current bank can issue the company corporate credit cards with extended limits to cover expenses, for instance. This **helps to lower financial risk of operating in a new region** where Zooters has not built a local presence yet. The level 3 and 2 interaction may highlight operational manager's knowledge of how the current staff feel about these issues. This **helps senior managers understand the risks that are likely to emerge and how to manage them along with understanding the complexities that are to be generated.**

The **intelligence** variable would allow the level 4 and level 3 to understand the financial climate in the target region. They may decide the local markets are too over heated to enter immediately and prefer to wait till matters have stabilised. The **market research** would also help them **understand what the normal experience is from a financial management perspective**. How companies in the region conduct cross border transactions, what sources of payments they use and other similar concerns. The level 3 and 2 interactions would then help to highlight the internal methods that are being currently used. This ensures they understand what is going on in the company at the moment and helps them ensure the management of the direction is in line with the overall vision.

In terms of **externalisation and cross pollination**. Here by using the C4I framework the cultural and financial management perspectives. The level 4 and level 3 interactions have ensured the vision is more accurately understood by having to look at it from the various management perspectives using the explicit framework. This **helps to externalise a greater depth of the vision and the cross pollination allows senior managers to identify relevant uncertainties and complexities from a strategic view point**. This ensures all members at this level have a common understanding of what the vision is and their part in realising it. It **helps the senior managers to accept the vision and gain an in depth understanding of what the artist is trying to achieve via their skills and expertise**. The level 3 and level 2 interactions ensure that tactical concerns are factored in and any operational matters that may be seen as limiting factors can be dealt with before resources are committed to realising the vision. The Management perspectives used help to highlight the kind of uncertainties that may exist, the kind of complexities that may arise and need to be managed. The greater clarity between strategy and tactics helps the senior managers to understand what is strategic and what is tactical and how they can be managed. It also **helps to develop a mental process of how to think about what matters and whose responsibility they should be**. This **increases the flow of communication between the various levels based around the explicit frameworks ensures the communications are focused around variables that help to realize the vision**.



### 6.3 Marketing management perspective

Some of the **key concerns** they would use in the **externalisation and cross pollination** process are: The **kind of account management capacity** to build, **Innovating the product** for the local market, **distribution** of the products and **how to price** them in the EU region. The **command** variable would ensure the level 4 and level 3 interactions focuses on **how the marketing is managed, how it is to be coordinated and how it is to be controlled** within the **target region**. For instance, who will be responsible for what and where he/ she will be based and how will the activities be coordinated and how will they ensure all regulations are adhered to. **For example, local laws may not allow for some kinds of marketing activities to take place while other regions may see the same activities as normal.** The level 3 and 2 interactions would then ensure operational complexities and risks are considered and are factored in. For Instance, if the account management is to have a regional focus there may be problems with accounts from international customers. In terms of product innovation if the product is to be customised for a local market within the EU the changes in distribution channels that may be needed and other such matters.

The **collaboration** variable will allow the interaction to focus on what marketing aspects will have to be outsourced or in house capacity built in the target region. Here the level 4 and level 3 interactions would help externalise the vision from this aspect and helps the Senior Managers to build a common understanding around what aspects of the managing the marketing perspective would be best outsourced and which aspects would should be organically grown within the SBU. The level 3 and level 2 interactions would highlight the operational concerns focused around this variable for this perspective. For instance, operational managers may highlight how they would prefer organic growth of this capacity given the complications they have had in the past with buying in expertise and not being able to integrate them into the company or how the managing of marketing assets with third parties has an impact on the brand capital. The **communications** variable will allow the interactions between level 4 and level 3 to externalise the vision focused around it. The cross pollination would build a common understanding of how to communicate their marketing within the target market and internally within the company. The level 3 and 2 interactions would highlight the operational risks and complexities involved in realizing the vision from this perspective. For instance, the complexities of communicating in multitude of different languages in the target market would create additional costs that their budgets may not allow for. The loss of the message in translation may be another concern, for instance.

The **Intelligence** variable would ensure market research focused around this perspective has been considered. The level 4 and 3 interactions would ensure vision is externalised and cross pollinated in line with the trends highlighted by market research. For instance, if market research is showing there is a growing general demand for a particular product range this is considered during this phase. For example, a product range with a declining demand would be highlighted at this stage, along with the legal regulations that need to be considered for each region within the target market. The level 3 and 2 interactions would highlight the increase in complexities that having multiple regulations to contend with may generate and the knock on impact on budgets and quality assurance standards.

#### 6.4 Human resources management perspective

The **command** variable would ensure level 4 and 3 interactions consider matters such as how the staff will be managed, what type of management style will be used and what kind of staff will be targeted. The **control variable** would ensure **the local legal regulations** of employing and managing staff are **considered** and the **coordination** sub variable would **ensure all talent development and retention concerns are considered**. This helps to externalise the vision and build a common understanding of these matters. The level 3 and 2 would highlight the operational level concerns of how the new SBU staff will be integrated into the overall company. For instance, the need to build good working relationships may mean ensuring the new staff spend time in other regions to ensure they understand the kind of other people who work for the company and build a sense of company identity. This helps to ensure the current company values and culture is fostered in the new Business Unit. Here budgetary concerns and time allocations for these activities would be a concern. The uncertainties and complexities that are identified can then be factored into the overall vision.

The **collaboration** variable will allow the **level 4 and 3** interactions to externalise the vision and build a common understanding of **how they are to work with third parties to recruit and retain staff in the target market**. For instance, are they to work with local recruitment agencies to help target new staff. What kind of relationship are they looking for? Would they consider third parties to take over the whole management process till they build in house skills and expertise? Would Zooters Ltd want to fully outsource this aspect of their local operations or only a degree of it? The impact of these concerns on the vision. The **level 3 and level 2** interactions would **highlight the operational complexities and highlight uncertainties of having to work with third parties and discussing internal company processes and sys-**

**tems.** The **communications** variable at the level 4 and level 3 interactions would ensure the vision is externalised and cross pollinated focused around how the communications with the staff for the new Business unit are to take place. Would new communications models be considered? Would the existing ones be customised for it? These kinds of concerns would ensure the senior management have an in depth understanding of how to realise the vision and build communications with the new talent in the Business unit. The level 3 and level 2 interactions would highlight the operational complexities and uncertainties of dealing with people with a range of different languages and cultures.

The **computing** variable at the level 4 and level 3 interaction would ensure that **technology/people trade off is considered** and the vision is externalised and cross pollinated around this focus. For instance, new translation technologies may mean a lower ratio of linguist is needed in the Business Unit. However, the level 3 and level 2 interactions may highlight the preference for direct human interaction and limitations of whole sale migration in the favour of technology. The **Intelligence** variable at the level 4 and level 3 interactions would ensure the vision is externalised and cross pollinated considering the market research focused around the Human Capital issues in the target region. For instance, there may be skills shortage in a particular region or there may be clusters of skills and expertise in particular sectors in particular regions that would help to build an understanding of whether or not to focus on building the regional offices based on comparative advantage or not, for instance. The level 3 and 2 interactions would highlight the operational level uncertainties and complexities of working with people from a Business Unit with such great diversity.

The explicit frameworks in the case of Zooters Ltd has shown **how having a set variables can develop a common understanding by ensuring the vision is externalised more accurately, a deeper common understanding of the vision is possible, a clearer understanding of what is expected from the interactions at the various levels becomes routine and the strategy and tactics interplay becomes part of the process.** This helps to ensure in a sector where the Owner/ Managers formulates the vision using a multitude of sources, both formal, informal and external he/she can externalise it more accurately. The personalised nature of formulating the vision for the company encourages a greater degree of subjectivity. The implicit frameworks used by the Owner/ manager may be different to those used by the Senior Managers thereby increasing the chances of misunderstandings because of the gaps between their implicit mental models. **By using the C4I framework the Zooters Ltd experience has shown how the normally emergent in nature strategy can be given**

some degree of deliberate direction without having to make any significant changes. The only major change is the conversion from using a multitude of implicit models to one standard explicit model. The various levels of interaction highlighted already take place, the explicit framework changes the expectations for them. For instance, Zooters Ltd already has a flow of communications between the Owner/ Manager, Senior Managers and the Operational Managers. **The explicit framework changes the expectations from the interactions and helps to formalise the process. This helps to clarify the various levels between vision, strategy and tactics. It helps to externalise the intuitive and the tacit without crowding out the innovative and creative nature of these faculties, allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the various concerns involved and helps to build mental models which then have an impact on behaviour in social entities (Eshun 2009, 164).** This also has an impact on the uncertainties and complexities that are identified, how are they to be dealt with, what can be converted into risk and then managed and what risk is not acceptable. What kinds of complexities exist and how best to manage them. For instance, all companies have to consider the kind of management perspectives highlighted above, regardless of if they have an in house capacity to deal with these concerns. **By ensuring each variables considers the strategic and tactical implications the strategy and tactics clarification interplay is engrained in the strategy process. This clarification ensures the separation between implementation and execution is better understood and the levels of risk and complexities are appropriately associated.** For instance, a strategy level risk after some analysis may be moved to a tactical level given how the company has grown and the directions the company is taking. **This can be done on a continuous basis once an explicit framework is used.** Further, this **helps each level of management to focus on their level of responsibility and ensures a more accurate realisation of the initial vision.** Furthermore, **by continuously managing risk and complexities, they can be dynamically managed where when a risk becomes of tactical concern it can be downgraded to the tactical level and if it becomes of strategic concern it can be up upgraded to the strategic level as a matter of routine.** This ensures crisis management of these risks and complexities does not become the norm and allows for greater deliberation of how to deal with them before they become a concern.

Overall, the conversion from using an implicit framework to an explicit framework has allowed the level 3 management for the EU business unit at Zooters Ltd to gain an accurate understanding of the vision, add value to the interaction, build a common understanding, maximise the understandings of the various uncertainties and complexities, ensure the strategy/ tactics interplay vital to success is present and their decision making delivers the results as accurately as possible. This part has also helped to build an understanding of how the framework can be used as a solution and some additional factors have emerged that allow the solution to be of greater use than other wise. For instance, the notion that a company can dynamically manage the risks and complexities emerged by using the C4I framework in the case of Zooters Ltd. This **helps to lower the risk of failure of the solution** for Case company and **ensures the quality of the solution improves**.

## 7 Research strategy and methods

This section highlights how the research for thesis was conducted. It highlights the underline philosophy used and the kind of methods used to gather information, analyse it and build an accurate understanding of the tacit concerns of the senior management of the case company. For instance, it highlights how data was gathered at the company HQ offices how background courses helped to indentify the kinds of concerns management tend to deal with on a daily basis and how further research helped to formulate the solution.

### 7.1 Research strategy

The scientific research paradigm used in this thesis has been “Realism”, which is commonly thought to be implicit in much of the qualitative methods (Healy & Perry 2000, 118). The criteria for judging the quality of research using this school of thought are: Ontological appropriateness and contingent validity in the ontology. Multiple perceptions of participants and of peer researchers, in epistemology. Methodological trustworthiness, analytical generalisation and construct validity, in the methodology element of the realism paradigm (Ibid, 121). The research problems highlighted in the paper deal with complex social science phenomena involving reflective people and deal with open “Fuzzy boundary” systems involving generative mechanisms rather than direct cause and effect. The trust worthiness of the research can be audited. Here realism research was value aware, rather than value free or value laden, and it relied on the multiple perceptions centred around a single reality and it was primarily theory building, given its complexity. (Ibid, 123)

In other words, the realist paradigm encourages its researchers to discover the real world knowing they will never be able to fully comprehend it. This allows the researcher the freedom to understand the real world as it exists knowing that he/ she does not need to fully understand everything all of the time. In other words, the **researcher attempts to understand certain issues in sufficient depth to ensure his/her purpose has been achieved**. Connelly shows how realism allows for the persons (society) and the person (individual) within the persons to be understood as a matter of intention. (Connelly 2004, 72) For instance, in this thesis the **researcher was aware that he may not be able to fully comprehend the aim and objectives of the senior management of the case company**. By having spent time with the company **he attempted to tap into the tacit concerns to a sufficient degree that the external reality could be used to help understand what they were trying to achieve**.

Popper highlights a third world, in ontological terms, which consists of abstract things that are born of people's minds but, exists independently of anyone person. He, further, distinguishes the third world from the very objective world one, for example positivism, and the very subjective world two, for example, constructivism. (Healy & Perry 2000, 120) Realism encourages qualitative research methods to be used whilst allowing for quantitative methods to be incorporated in the same study. In other words, realism allowed for a broad range of methods to allow the researcher to accurately understand the research area and places emphasis more on investigating a phenomenon as opposed to proving/ testing it. (Ibid p.120)

## 7.2 Research methods

The dominate method used in this paper was qualitative. Secondary sources have been used to gain an understanding of the external reality within the SME sector and consist mainly of academic articles focused on the subject area such as those published by Emerald and Sage along with background courses such as cultural management, international financial management, international marketing, communication process and internet modelling and marketing strategies. Primary source data was gathered to gain an understanding and a comprehension of the inner reality of the case company. Further, collectively this helps to ensure that a multitude of sources were used to build an accurate picture of the situation. The overall method used to investigate the subject area was Case Study.

As per Yin (1994) a **case study** relies on **multiple sources of evidence**, with data needing to converge in a triangulatory fashion and is an all encompassing method. It can be used on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence and need not always include direct, detailed observations as a source of evidence. The **research design** of a Case Study is the **logic that links the data to be collected to the initial question of a study**. The design is a logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research question and to its conclusions. The research design, in other words, is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relationships among variables under investigation. Though the Case Study method has a perception that it lacks rigour and is considered to be sloppy work in nature for the purposes of this research project the case study method is deemed to be the most appropriate because of its flexible all encompassing nature.

This was a holistic embedded case study. Ten characteristics have been highlighted by Remenyi, Money, Price and Bannister (Miller 2008, 46-47) of a high quality case study, these being:

- a) Seeks to provide meaning in context;
- b) Has a clear cut focus;
- c) Shows both an in depth understanding of central issues being explored and broad understanding of related issues and context;
- d) Has a thoroughly articulated protocol; (code of correct conduct)
- e) Draws on multiple sources of evidence;
- f) Should be evidenced by means of triangulation;
- g) Is a story;
- h) Must be reasonably bounded;
- i) Can draw on qualitative and or quantitative tools, for tools for evidence collection and or analysis, but cannot be exclusively quantitative in nature, and
- j) Should not require the researcher to become too immersed with the object of the research. (Ibid, 46-47)

Dealing with each aspect highlighted above and how they were used in building this thesis as a case study. This thesis to provided a clear cut focus of strategy implementation concerns of International SME's and provides the sector with a strategy implementation framework customised for the international SME sector in specific. In other words, it provided meaning, how to understand international business strategy implementation concerns, in the context of International SME's. The multitude of sources ranged from published articles in the subject areas of international business strategy, SME's and International SME's, to gathering primary data by working within the case company for 8 months. This ensured the concept of triangulation was been used. The scope of the paper was its bounds and it limited the thesis to dealing with a strategy implementation framework for the case company. It told a story by highlighting the current situation in the SME sector, provided a solution that the target company can use, applied the framework to the sector in general to lower the risk of failure and attempted to highlight some concerns in the process. A strict protocol was used to gathering information from various sources. The limited nature of the time spent with the company has ensured that the researcher was not too immersed with the company and the external reality research has ensured that there is balance between the two. The thesis predominately used qualitative



tools. This was out of necessity to gain an accurate understanding of the situations and not because of any bias towards one form or another.

### **7.3 Data collection**

The time with the case company was spent working on their expansion into the EU. This gave me an in depth understanding of what the senior management were trying to achieve and how they were trying to go about achieving their strategy. The data I was allowed to use for this thesis, due to commercial sensitivities, consisted of the weekly updates I sent to the senior management on how the company had progressed, the various issues arose and suggestions on how I was to progress in the following weeks. The quarterly reports I wrote for the senior management analysed the company's expansion into the target markets and provided the company's senior management a number of options on how to progress and any other material I felt would be relevant such as market research reports, marketing assets, etc. The primary sources allowed to be used reflect the informal in-depth understanding I developed of the case company. The senior management were available to meet me on a regular basis to answer any queries and help understand any matters. These meetings were informal in nature and were unstructured. The closest term available in research methods to describe the meetings would be in depth informal unstructured interviews. Where I would instigate the meeting which could take any shape and go any in any direction related to the company's affairs. This allowed the senior management to highlight concerns that otherwise may not have been expressed and ensured I was able to take the interviews in any direction. This allowed me to understand the tacit concerns of the senior management and the written material allowed to use for this thesis reflects on who I was interacting with, what the frequency was and the kind of work of I was involved in at what level of the company.

## 7.4 Data gathered

The data gathered during my time with the company to understand how it was trying to expand its presence in the EU consisted of: Weekly email updates sent to Level 4 and Level 3 members and two quarterly reports sent to Level 4 members. This data is commercially sensitive and not available in any public version of the thesis.

The emails were sent at the end of each week or at the earliest possible date after. They represented my work during the week, which was based on objectives agreed before I arrived at the HQ offices and confirmed once I started work there. Any new concerns that emerged during this time were incorporated as soon as possible and the relevant members of staff were updated during the weekly update. The emails reflect how the company's expansion into a target market was occurring on a weekly basis and matters that were emerging in the process. For instance, if a concern arose that was having an impact on the brand of the company this was dealt with and incorporated for the remainder of the process.

The emails also show what the company was doing, how it was trying to do it and the implications of what it was trying to do. For instance, this was the first time the case company was systematically dealing with the end clients for their services in their own right in the EU. This entailed understanding how to build in house capacity for this purpose and the emails reflect the kind of concerns that needed to be dealt with. This information helps to understand how the company was trying to expand and reflect on the tacit concerns of level 4 and level 3 members of the company. In turn the emails helped me to understand what management perspectives to use between the interactions and gave me an in depth insight into the workings of the company.

**Two quarterly reports** were written for the company. They provide an analysis of the activities during each quarter. The second quarterly report builds on the first and ensures an overall understanding of my activities was provided. The second quarterly report also has a Marketing and Communications Strategy to help give an understanding of what may be involved and how to go about growing in the target market using an external example.

Overall, the weekly emails and the quarterly reports showed how the company made an effort to grow into the new target region. Further, this helped the thesis to formulate a more accurate solution and gave a clear understanding of what the actual experience is. Here the realist research strategy allowed for a sufficient degree of understanding of what the company was trying to achieve to be combined with the external reality, in this case background courses and academic research, to build a broader understanding. This helped to establish an **accurate understanding of the tacit concerns** of the company and **ensured the solutions met the expectations of the company**. The **case company** has **confirmed** in their feedback to the university how **I gained a clear understanding of the requirements** (See Appendix 5).

The **other data** used for this thesis was primarily from established secondary sources such as academic journals, background courses where I interacted with professionals from industry and any other relevant source deemed to be credible such as Linked In. The emails were saved as a pdf file, which ensured that no changes could be made to the content. This helped with the credibility of the source as they were presented without any alterations. Only a portion of them have been included given the large number (See Appendix 2). The thesis tutor has had access to all the emails and recommended only including the necessary ones. Further, the emails were dated and the recipients were highlighted in every email. These emails are considered to be commercially sensitive and therefore only appear in the appendix and not in any public version of the paper. The quarterly reports have been treated in a similar fashion along with any other primary source deemed to be commercially sensitive.

## 7.5 Validity

Here validity is divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity refers the extent to which the method is appropriate for the problem investigated. (Cronemyr 2007, 33)

The 6 Techniques highlighted to ensure internal validity is sound are:

- 1) Triangulation;
- 2) Member checks;
- 3) Long term objectives;
- 4) Peer examination;
- 5) Participatory modes of research; and

6) Researchers biases. (Ibid, 34)

These validity and reliability tests have been taken from a recent Phd using similar qualitative sources as valid data for the thesis. Here they have been customised for the purposes of this thesis without losing the credibility they add to the thesis. For instance, here **6 techniques** used for **internal validity** are **reduced to 4** in number **given the differing natures** of the **thesis's**. This thesis made extensive use of secondary sources and the primary source data used were for the specific case study. The overall strategies used were different and therefore the need to use some techniques has been greater than others. For example, the Cronemyr thesis is an Action Research based thesis whereas this is a Realism based thesis. Given that Action Research places greater emphasis on constructivism and therefore is of the second world the testing needs therefore are different to the realist paradigm. In the context of this thesis therefore the internal validity will use the following 4 techniques:

- 1) Triangulation,
- 2) Participatory modes of research;
- 3) Peer examination,
- 4) And, researchers biases.

Triangulation refers to multitude use of sources. The use of primary source data, which shed light on the case company. Secondary sources, which highlighted sector level concerns, and background courses, which highlight industry standards, in this thesis highlighted the triangulation of sources used. The **participatory aspect** were the **use of social media** where **industry professional were approached and their views incorporated**.

The last two peer examination and researchers biases were combined by making some non confidential aspects of the thesis available on the internet, with particular reference to a **professional networking site, Linked In**, where comments can be taken and some matters discussed before answering the overall questions. This allowed for **maximum exposure to peer groups** who work in **industry** and **academia** across the world. The **peer group examination** was **intended to highlight any unconscious biases** not highlighted elsewhere. The site made available can be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/smesandstrategy/> and web analytics report highlighting the site usage for the first month, 20<sup>th</sup> August to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2009, can be found in Appendix 3. This report provides evidence of the geographical breadth of exposure the site gained over the month and the sources of the exposure. For Instance, page 3 highlights the Traffic source overview. Here the traffic to the site can be analysed longitudi-

nally over the period of the month, where the campaign starts on 20<sup>th</sup> August and on 24<sup>th</sup> August the hit rates rises to over 200 for the day. This page also highlights the Top traffic sources, where Linked In provides 410 visits out of a total of 553 visits. These figures reflect the breadth and depth of interest in the site where an average of 2.15 minutes were spent on the site. (Analytics Report 2009, 4) The break down by country highlights the interest shown by country and the Map overlay section highlights interest by geography, where the US showed the most interest with 213 visits, the UK second with 135 visits, and India with 48 visits. (Analytics Report 2009, 4)

External validity refers to the extent the results of a study can be applied to other similar situations. (Wikipedia, quoted 13/03/10) By customising a strategy implementation framework for the international SME sector as a whole first, then applying it to both the sector and the case company in particular the results of this thesis can be used by other companies. For example, any International SME company can use the C4I framework for its strategy implementation framework. This helps with the external validity of the paper.

## 7.6 Reliability

In terms of the techniques highlighted for reliability. By using **Cronemyr's thesis** to refer to in terms of sources used for data gathering the **similar studies technique** has been **used**. In terms of general usability by providing a framework for Strategy Implementation for the senior management of an International SME's at the SBU level this thesis highlighted greater clarification of the strategy process, proposed a solution and applied it to the sector in general and a case in a particular. This allows senior managers to identify and manage risks and complexities more effectively.

Reliability deals with the extent to which the results are consistent with reality and the following three techniques were used by this thesis:

- 1) Investigators position;
- 2) Triangulation; and
- 3) Audit trail. (Ibid, p.36)

The results are expected to be consistent with reality because all reasonable measures have been taken to ensure they reflect the actual situation on the ground. For instance, two of the most prominent publishers were consulted who publish the latest article in this field, Emerald publications and Sage publications, between them majority of the articles in the Academic Business Research field can be found. This ensured all reasonable efforts were made to consult the latest reliable research in the target subject area had been conducted. Given **business research** tends to be a **reflection of business experience** therefore a **logical inference** has been made that **the academic research in this field is reflective of business practice** and thereby **providing in depth analysis of the current situation** in the sector.

Further, the background courses ensured the normal experience across industry was understood and the industry professional exposure ensured the standard industry wide experience can be related to and understood. Furthermore, by working for the case company for eight months I gained a firsthand experience of what the **actual situation** on the ground was for the company. This ensured the **external reality was certified by the experience of the company** to **establish what is real and how the research from secondary sources can be used with certification from primary source data to provide an accurate picture of the situation** in the sector and in the company. Hence, an accurate solution for both the sector and the company.

In terms of the three techniques of Reliability:

- 1) Investigators position
- 2) Triangulation
- 3) Audit trail (Ibid, p.36)

The investigators position was to customise a framework which the company could use to implement their international business strategy. This gap was highlighted while I was working with the company, confirmed by academic literature and other background courses taken. Triangulation was used by the use of various kinds of different sources. An audit trail exists in that all primary source data have been included in Appendix 2, which will not be available in any public version and all secondary sources have been highlighted in the Bibliography.

Overall the primary source data was credible because it provided a valuable insight into what the company was trying to achieve during my time with them. They can be criticized for being a subjective interpretation of what was going on. The subjectivity of the interpretation of these sources was limited by doing background courses which have helped to gain an understanding

of what the standard management concerns industry wide are. They also highlight how important it was to gain an understanding of what the company was trying to do, how it was going about to achieving its aims and to tap into the tacit concerns of the senior management, which would otherwise not have been highlighted. The **tacit concerns** being **highlighted** helped to build a greater degree of understanding of what and how the company was trying to do in its target markets. **This experience highlighted the common experience in the SME sector where the decision making processes are informal and tend to be more emergent than by design.** Therefore, to highlight these industry standard practices it was **important to rely on a source that may be considered to less than fully objective**, simply because it highlighted the standard behaviour in the SME sector. In other words, this **source indirectly helped to understand what the senior managers would like to achieve with the vision** for the company in context of their expansion into the EU. The **kind of primary source data used here has also been used by other thesis** (Cronemyr 2008, 38) such as the Cronemyr paper referred to above.

In terms of secondary sources, respected sources of publication were continuously used to ensure that the latest research was used. The secondary sources were divided into journals and text books, the journals highlight the latest research in the subject areas, text books that highlighted the established schools of thought. For instance, Porter's Five forces, Mintzberg's emergent nature of strategy, and Clausewitz's On War have been consulted along with more recent work on the notion of the balance score cards and concerns about when and where to use them. The use of primary source data and secondary sources, in their respective sections of the paper, allowed for an accurate understanding to emerge from the process and this had a positive impact on the solution for the company.

## 9 Analysis

This research based project has used a research strategy that has allowed it to continually ensure its solution is exact and as accurate as possible by allowing all relevant sources to be used and ensured the case company's tacit concerns are satisfied. The structure of the thesis has ensured a good in depth understanding of the normal experience is highlighted and all relevant concerns are touched on in a way that do not hinder the purpose of the thesis. This helps to ensure a holistic understanding of the sector as a whole emerges. This, further, helps to clarify how the SME sector is evolving. For instance, the distinction between the SME sector and International SME sector. The Structure of the thesis ensured the scope was strictly adhered to and the solution formulated benefited both the theory being generated and the case company. For instance, the structure of the paper ensured the commercially sensitive information not disclosed to the public has not hindered the overall flow of the paper and helps the company and university. The case study method gave the paper the flexibility to work with any resource deemed appropriate. For instance, a draft section of the thesis was uploaded onto the internet to gain peer appreciation. This helped to understand the overall sentiment of the subject of the paper from fellow professionals, who have an interest from the theory being generated. Further, this helped to make the process more inclusive and ensured external reality views were incorporated without harming the commercial confidentiality of the case company. In other words, by companies who are from the target segment confirming the use the framework customised for SME sector helps to certify the need for it and helps to ensure the paper is solving a problem that is common across the sector and therefore also for the case company. (Email conversation with Senior Partner at a US Consultancy, Appendix 4)

In short, the research strategy and methods combined have allowed the research to generate theory that has demand and interest. For instance, the draft section uploaded onto the internet allowed interested parties to express their views and where appropriate these views were incorporated along the way. In some instances, they confirmed the clarifications needed such as the strategy implementation and execution being one and the same. This gap although highlighted by secondary sources such as the Atkin's article was also confirmed by a Strategy Execution consultancy CEO from Singapore (Appendix 1).



The **nature of the thesis** has been to highlight from a **multiple perceptions how the complex nature of the strategy process can be understood and applied to a real life case company**. For instance, various management perspectives were used to show how the artistic non linear emergent in nature strategy formulation experience common in the SME sector could be more effectively understood, a greater use of the tacit knowledge of the Senior Management is used for the benefit of the company, how friction is minimised, how strategy can be separated from tactics and how risks and complexities can be more effectively managed. This helps business theory by justifying the need for separating strategy implementation and strategy execution concepts and helps the case company by providing them with a solution that can be used at the SBU level to ensure they can effectively compete in their target market.

The **sub questions allowed various concepts that have been mixed up to be separated, clarified and allowed for the normal experience across the target sector to be highlighted**. For instance, this section of the paper ensures the SME sector is looked into and all relevant definitions and concerns are highlighted. For example, what kind of a business is classified as a SME along with dealing with why it is important to separate standard SME's from International SME's. It also helps to establish why it is important to separate strategy implementation from strategy execution and the impact this has on how the strategy and tactics interplay is managed. This then has an impact on how well the uncertainties and complexities are identified and managed. The need for a single explicit framework is highlighted and is then customised for the International SME sector. Which then **helps to build an in house capacity at SBU level to more accurately externalise the vision and ensures a greater use is made of the tacit knowledge of the senior managers of the company and senior management and line management interaction is engrained** in the management systems of the company. This is in addition to the greater clarity between what is strategic and what is tactical and how various uncertainties and complexities can be identified and managed. This also allows for existing assets to be utilised to greater degree without the need for additional financial investments and helps to lower the risk of failure.

The **single explicit framework at level 3 ensures the interactions between the levels 4, 3 and 2 are clarified**. It helps **each level to understand more comprehensively what to expect from the interaction that occur on an ongoing basis**. For instance, **even if a company has not divided itself into the various levels** highlighted by the Via Group Holistic Leadership Model they **will still experience the same interactions**. For example, all International SME's will have an Owner/ Manager, they will have senior managers, middle managers and front line staff. Combined they will have the Via Group's Holistic Leadership

Model in its generic form if not in its explicit form, i.e. they will be a visionary, they will be some people in the company will be more responsible than others for various purposes and they will be staff who deal only with very specific aspects of the company.

By ensuring a **customised framework** is available **ensures the various levels have some understanding of what to expect from their interactions.** This **helps to lower the dependence on the holistic faculties that are dominate in the SME sector** and **allows the tacit understanding of various perspectives to be highlighted and utilized for the benefit of the company.** For instance, in the case of Zooters Ltd and confirmed by Case company Information Technology the Owner/ Managers have a more accurate understanding of how to think about various aspects of their company's position in the market place. For instance, by understanding what the command concerns are they can approach the interaction knowing what the issues are and allow them to focus on building deeper dialogues with their senior managers. This helps the Senior Managers to ensure they understand as accurately as possible what the initial vision is and what kind of uncertainties exist, what uncertainties they can convert into risk, how the risks can be managed, what risks are strategic and what are tactical and how to continuously manage them to ensure any new developments are appropriately managed. This helps Senior Managers deal with risk and complexities more effectively and helps them to nurture their capacity to deal with them for the benefit of the company on an ongoing basis. This **allows the company to understand the notion of risks and complexities from a non financial perspective.** **Modern Economic Psychology**, for instance, **highlights how risk influences the thought of those involved in the strategy of the company.** (Wickham 2008, 201) Here the **emotional response to risk** is being referred to (Ibid, 203). This then **has implications on the perception of risk and how it is managed.** For instance, in the case of an International SME expanding into a new market it is common to have a limited understanding of their target region, this lack of knowledge of the target region has an impact on the perception of dealing with the region. These perceptions may be different to the actual situation and the variation may be a cause of friction that can be minimized by using a framework which help to identify the relevant uncertainties and convert them into risks. This **allows the uncertainties to risk converters to understand the risk and the perceptions that they may generate.** For instance, if the level 4 and level 3 interactions have highlighted uncertainties and they have decided to convert only a small portion of the these uncertainties into risk they will also understand the nature of the risk more effectively and therefore be able to deal with the perceptions of the risk. If then during the level 3 and Level 2 interactions the risk is being discussed has any misperceptions they can be dealt with and all parties will know who will be the managers of the risk. It **may be that the risk is**

thought to be a tactical risk when it is a strategic risk and the perception of the risk may make something more (or less) of it than what it actually is. (Ibid, 203) This also holds true for complexities, how they are identified and managed.

The **framework** also **helps as tool that can be used for decision making**. By allowing the participants to focus on the variables it allows them to use the notion of heuristics for their interactions knowing the variables they will be focusing around concerns they need to focus on. Here the **notion of heuristics** refers to the **simplification of the decision making process**, where the **decisions making is quicker and demands less effort**. (Ibid, 205) This helps to **ensure the companies that use customized frameworks for their strategy implementation have a more accurate understanding of what uncertainties they normally face and the kind of uncertainties they are willing to accept**. Identify the relevant risks and complexities and manage them in more effective manner than is currently the case. For Instance, the **separation between strategy implementation and strategy execution allows for a customised framework to be used to identify uncertainties and complexities as matter of routine and allows them to be effectively managed**. The current performance measurement frameworks tend not to allow their users to focus on the risk and complexities that likely to emerge from realizing the vision. For Instance, the **balance score card does not consider the notion of risk explicitly**. (Ibid, 206) Therefore in the context of heuristics the C4I framework allows the decision makers in the company to identify the relevant uncertainties and complexities, understand the major concerns, who is responsible for dealing with them and at what level they are to be managed. This ensures there is a greater degree of clarity and a greater degree of accountability is ingrained in the systems and structures of the company. This **when combined with the concerns of explicit and implicit models we use during social interactions provides a solution that allows level 3 to perform more effectively based around their core responsibilities of dealing with risks and complexities**. Further, by providing senior managers with more accurate situational awareness it allows them to use their judgment to make more effective decisions by combining uncertain data, human behaviour and negative side effects of the decisions. (Gomport, Davis, Johnson & Long 2008, 28)

The **Zooters Ltd** experience **helps to provide an understanding of how the framework can add value in practical terms**. It shows how a theoretical company based in Singapore may **make more effective use of its tacit assets and ensures it can compete more effectively in its target market**. This helps International SME's to understand how they can benefit from dealing with strategy implementation as a distinct concept to strategy execution

and the **kinds of uncertainties and complexities they are likely to face**. For example, by using various management perspectives the common uncertainties and complexities were highlighted. **These are common across the sector have been confirmed by the background courses**. They show why it is important to look at various aspects from their **strategic and their tactical sides and the need to separate them**. This allows a company to build the strategy tactics interplay that is vital to ensure the vision is realized as accurately as possible. Thereby **ensuring the systems and structures in place deliver the required realization of the vision and allows the Owner/ managers the understanding of what is working and what should be changed**. In other words **allows the artist a greater degree of understanding of how his/ her vision is being realized and is able to make relevant changes at an earlier stage to ensure the degree of accuracy increases**. This helps to ensure the in depth tacit understanding of the owner/ managers is used to the best possible advantage of the company and his/ her understanding of how to go about achieving what he/ she wants for the company in more effective ways.

The **case company** has **certified** the framework can **add value** to a company in a real life case and builds on the Zooters Ltd experience. (See feedback form for the university, Appendix 5) The framework also **helps the interactions between the various levels**, i.e. executive management, business units level management and line management, to **interact more effectively and gain greater clarity of what the vision is, how to go about realising it, who is responsible for what, how dynamic those responsibilities are and how the overall management process is aligned to deliver flawless realisation of the vision**. For instance, the new Business Unit for the EU. By using the C4I framework the company can understand the kind of uncertainties and risk they are likely to come across, identify which uncertainties they would like to convert into risk and identify the complexities that are likely to emerge from the process and how to manage them for the benefit of the company. The **C4I framework also helps the case company to understand what set of variables to use at what level for what purpose**. For instance, the C4I Framework when used between level's 4 and 3 it will help to externalise the vision more accurately and help the owner/ manager to understand the concerns of the Senior Managers as a matter of design. This **helps with ensuring the tacit knowledge of the management are used more effectively and allow the company to benefit from its tacit assets**. Further, this allows for a more organised approach to be taken in a sector where the non linear decision making is common, strategy is emergent in nature and the artistic influences allow for innovation to flourish. In other words, it **allows for greater organisation in an organised chaos environment without crowding out the positive aspects of the chaos**. For instance, the case company by using this framework for-

malises the strategy process and allows for the company to scale up based on systems and structures that deliver the results. This helps to lower the uncertainty associated with growth and the impact growth may have on the existing systems and structures. **This solution allows the case company to build in house skills and expertise in managing strategy and tactics, identifying uncertainties, identifying complexities, how to manage them to ensure it understands how they change in importance, for instance, a risk may be down-graded to operational level if considered to tactical or kept at the strategy level if considered to be of higher importance. This then allows the company to clarify what is to be dealt with at what level and whose will be responsible for it.** In other words, by providing the case company with a clarification between strategy and tactics it helps them to ensure they can manage the strategy tactics interplay to build a sustainable competitive advantage in their target market of the EU. **The solution has been accepted by the case company to be of value. This framework has been accepted by other SME's, who feel it does add value to their experience. This certifies how this framework helps to deal with concerns common among the sector and therefore supports the tacit concerns of the Senior Management highlighted by the time spent with the company.** This also helps the case company understand these are common concerns in the sector and they are representative sample of the sector as whole and therefore their concerns will generally be found across the sector as well.

## 10 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to provide a practical and usable strategy implementation solution for the case company. This has been achieved to the company's satisfaction. The sub questions below have all been answered.

- What is the SME sector?
- What is the difference between the SME sector and the International SME sector?
- What is the current state of business strategy in the SME sector?
- What is the C4I Framework?
- What will the customised framework for the International SME sector look like?
- How can International SME's use the C4I framework?

They provided a step by step approach to constructing the strategy implementation solution for the case company. This ensured the solution was accurate to the needs of the company and helped to clarify various notions that helped to **provide greater clarity** of how to deal with the **complex notion of strategy**. Together the sub questions helped to ensure the quality of the solution was the highest grade possible and the risk of failure of the solution was minimal.

The cross application of applying military strategic thought to business strategy allowed me to use tried and tested frameworks, which have consistently delivered results for the military, to an area of business where there are no current industry wide frameworks. This allowed me to add to business theory by customising the dominate strategy implementation framework used by NATO forces for International SME's. Further, this **helps business theory by highlighting an area where more research can be conducted and provides future researchers with some direction of how to go about conducting research and what kinds of areas to focus on.**

In terms of practical application. The **initial application** to a theoretical company, Zooters Ltd, allowed various concerns to be explained from a multitude of perspectives. Given the **inherent complex nature of strategy this helped to show how a single decision could have an impact on matters not directly related to it.** This then **helped to justify the need to focus on complexities the decisions make and the types of uncertainties senior**

**managers are likely to face.** Further, by being able to break down the differences between what is strategic and what is tactical allows senior managers to build a management framework to allow effective management of strategy and tactics. This helps to clarify any ambiguity that the general nature of the application did not explain and certifies the importance of various variables of the framework.

## 11 Reflections

This research based thesis allowed me the flexibility to choose an area of personal interest, i.e. how to cross apply lessons from military strategy to business strategy. The focus on the SME sector was intentional given my professional background. My professional experience has dominantly been gained in the SME sector and therefore I already had a tacit understanding of the concerns and sensitivities common in it.

The size of the project, i.e. the 30 credits, allowed me to focus on the subject area in depth and justified the time and effort made during the process. For instance, I spent 8 months with the case company working on their expansion into the EU. I also spent 12 months doing research at the British library, where I had access to the originals texts of Corbett, the first edition translations of Clausewitz's work, both dating back to 1911. These editions helped to gain an understanding of the mindset of the time and how these matters were viewed by the authors themselves.

Given the nature of the research the **thesis** was treated as an **agile project**, where **non linear and the creative faculties were commonly used**. For instance, a draft section was uploaded onto the internet and viral marketing used to gain an understanding of the common sentiment about the subject area. This was done not knowing what the outcome would be and whether or not it would be positive. The outcome was positive and numerous people from the target sectors highlighted their opinions and views. This gave an understanding of where the gaps in the research were. For example, Clausewitz highlights the different levels of military strategy and execution of the strategy. This clarifies the separation between strategy and tactics and how the two combined lead to victory. The need for these clarifications was confirmed by researching business theory.

The thesis helped to develop an in-depth understanding of how to conduct business research, the kinds of up to date sources available, i.e. **social media, where real time information exchanges and the open nature of the conversations can speed up processes and provide greater depth**. This reflects on how my competency to conduct research has improved proportionally.

### Note:

I am available on Linked In to take any questions and comments



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