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Business-to-business Relationship Management in a Non-profit Organization

Case: Amcham Finland

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Bachelor thesis

2013

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University of Applied Sciences

Abstract

23.10.2013

DP for Multilingual Management Assistants

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Title of report Business-to-business Relationship Management in a Non-profit Organization Case: Amcham Finland	**Number of report pages** 49
Supervisor Olli Laintila	

As businesses change their general outlook from relying on transactional marketing and treating customers as passive targets towards the idea of seeking co-creation value with customers and emphasizing relationship marketing, the value of customer relationship management constantly increases. Consequently business-to-business relationship management has more and more importance in today's business world.

Amcham Finland is a non-profit and non-governmental business association founded in 2005. It offers a wide variety of programs and events to its members, as well as providing a networking platform and critical business information. Its mission is to promote the businesses of its members. Since the organization's aim is to serve its members, there is a need for constant development and the improvement of efficiency regarding its customer relationship management operations.

The objective of this thesis is to analyze how business-to-business processes are handled in a non-profit environment, specifically that of the case organization, to evaluate these processes, and to propose possible recommendations and developmental ideas.

The gathering of theoretical and empirical material for the thesis was conducted in spring 2013. The actual writing of this thesis took place in fall 2013. The research was qualitative in nature. The theories used were based on scholarly texts and relevant articles. The empirical studies included material provided by the case organization (brochures, scorecard, survey, etc.), as well as six interviews with the Amcham's staff members who are most involved in customer relationship management.

The results show that Amcham's business-to-business relationship management is, in general, handled quite well. However, a few developmental ideas were given, such as having standardized personnel training and increasing the number of company visits.

Keywords
Business-to-business relationship management, CRM, non-profit environment, case studies

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1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the thesis, objectives of the research, as well as research's limitations and structure.

1.1 Background

American Chamber of Commerce in Finland (Amcham Finland) is a non profit and non-gorevnmental organization founded in 2005. The association aims to provide its members with business guidance and networking opportunity. Amcham's mission is to promote business of its members. The chamber bring the value to its members through wide offering of various programs and events. Amcham Finland consists of 300 member companies of which 58 percent are different size Finnish companies. Association finances itself mainly through membership dues, sponsorship agreements and event participation fees.

Business-to-business relationship management has become a point of interest of many researchers during the recent years. This is due to the shifting from the marketing based on transactions and "pushing" products to consumers towards co-creation of value together with consumer and relationship marketing, which can be obeserved in business life today. At Amcham's the CRM management is especially important, since the association is founded by its members, financed mostly from the membership dues and has its strategy solely oriented on serving the members.

The idea for the thesis arouse, when the researcher was performing her work placement at Amcham's Helsinki office. Because of the high importance of CRM to the association and the constant need of improving efficiency of membership management, the topic seemed not only interesting and up-to-date, but also prospectively useful for the case organization.

1.2 The objective of the research

The objective of the study is to investigate the processes of a non-profit business-to-business relationship management. The thesis' aim is to describe, how the relationships are managed in the case organization, evaluate the existing processes and give recommendations for possible further development.

The researcher aims that this thesis will be beneficial for the case organization, bringing a good point for reviewing current CRM practicies and policies, and that it may suggest development ideas, which help to improve the CRM processes increasing their efficiency.

1.3 Limitations of the research

The following analyzes concentrate on one type of business-to-business relationship only: the relationship of Amcham with its members. Consequently the wide spectrum of other business relationships maintained by case organization, such as relationships with the suppliers, non-member business partners or representatives of the public world are not being analyzed in this thesis.

1.4 Structure of the research

The research process was conducted in three phases. First included gathering, reading and selecting relelant theories on customer relationship management and operations of non-profit organizations. During the second phase the available empirical material was gathered and the interviews were planned, conducted and transcribed for the thesis purposes. The third phase included analyse of the gather empirical matherial against the theories, as well as the resercher's reflexions on the thesis writing and learning process.

2 Customer relationship management (CRM)

This chapter introduces relevant theories concerning customer relationship management in business-to-business environment. It provides actual CRM definition, describes benefits and risks of relationship marketing, as well as chosen CRM frameworks. In addition it provides a closer look on Payne's CRM framework.

2.1 CRM definition

During recent years organizations and businesses are shifting from product or brand based marketing into new approach, where customer is taking the central place. (Reinartz at al., 2004, 293). Because customers are seen as assets the importance of customer relationship management is growing steadily (Mithas at al., 2005, p.201). Therefore CRM has become a part of the strategy of many organizations (Bull, 2003, 592). The definition of CRM, however, varies depending on the source.

Payne and Frow (2005, 168) define three levels of perspectives, when looking at CRM. The most narrow one, tactically defined CRM, can be seen as an implementation of a specific technology - a tool consisting of customer database with all the relevant information allowing company to trace consumers' actions.

In the second level of perspective, CRM is defined as an implementation of various, integrated and customer oriented technologies (Payne & Frow, 2005, 168).
This approach is supported by Bull (2003, 592-593), who defines CRM as an information system, which enables the organization to achieve deeper customer focus, but at the same time author underlines the need of aligning the system with business factors and organizational strategy.

The last perspective proposed by Payne and Frow (2005, 168) is a holistic, oriented on value creation view on managing customer relationship. This perspective is shared by Parvatiyar and Jagdish (2001, 4), who define CRM as follows:

> *"Customer Relationship Management is a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining, and partnering with selective customers to create superior*

value for the company and the customer. It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organization to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value."

The scope of various approaches to customer relationship management is illustrated at the Figure 1. For the purpose of this study, the broad, holistic approach of CRM is adopted.

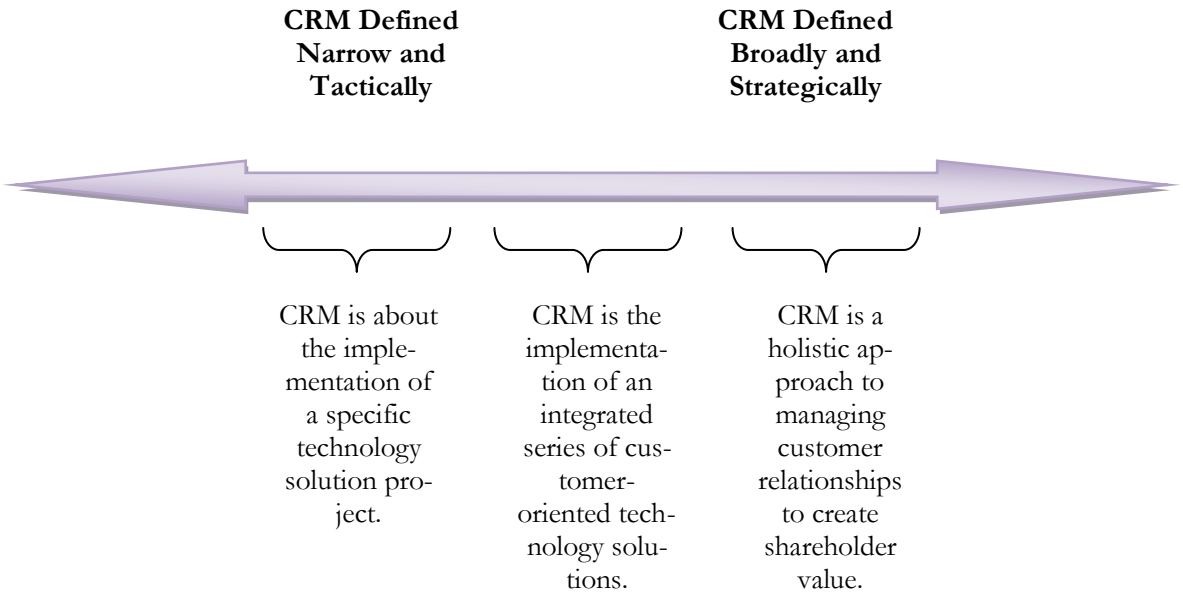

Figure 1. CRM definition continuum (adapted from Payne & Frow, 2005, 168)

2.2 Importance of building customer relationships

During recent years there has been a significant move from transactional marketing to the relationship marketing. In transactional marketing the customer is seen as passive "target", whose behavior and actions could be influenced through suitable communication channels. Customer is then more an object of marketing activities than partner. In relationship marketing, on the other hand, consumer is seen as an active partner, who can decide, whether to engage to relationship or not. In order to achieve success, organizations should notice personal motivations of their customers, negotiate with them and build relationships. (Varey, 2002, 21-22)

The benefits that organizations will obtain from the relationship differ depending on the relationship type and on the customer in question. Therefore the benefits of the relationship may differ significantly. (Hougaard & Bjerre, 2003, 288)

The benefits of well applied customer relationship management can be significant. Through CRM system organization can follow its consumers' actions and gather valuable customer knowledge, which allows for accurate response to the customer's needs. (Mithas at al., 2005, 202)

In addition customer relationship management helps to understand consumer behavior. It can in consequence lead to implementation of more efficient communication and interaction and therefore to improvement of retention rates.
(Chen at al., 2003, 676)

Well managed and integrated CRM allows company to improve its image, customer retention rate, and therefore share of customers, as well as market share (Gummesson, 2004, 144). In addition it enables company to achieve higher customer satisfaction through improvement of service quality and in consequence improvement to customer loyalty. (Rauyruen & Miller, 2007, 28)

Increase in customer retention results in a decrease of marketing costs. Moreover, when suppliers and customers become partners, they start to co-produce and co-develop products and services. (Gummesson, 2004, 146)

McDonald and Woodburn (2007, 15-16) point out that the relationship between two business partners is present beyond product and service adaptation, operational delivery or underlying strategy. It exists above standard interactions; it is a binder that keeps companies close and a medium through which the action takes place. This point of view is illustrated in the Figure.2.

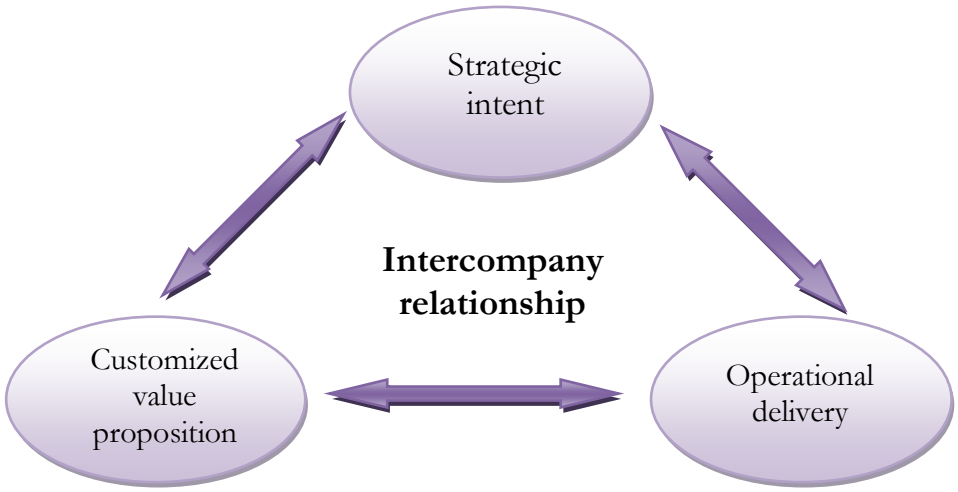

Figure 2. Relationship as a medium (adapted from McDonald &Woodburn, 2007, 16)

Understanding the needs of customers allows the company to evaluate the business opportunities and manage the business development.
(McDonald & Woodburn, 2007, 16)

2.3 CRM frameworks

From among many different frameworks available in the literature, two were chosen to demonstrate various approaches to customer relationship management. CRM is a wide and complex topic and therefore there are many ways and perspectives to look at it. In this subchapter Gummesson's 30 Rs Framework and Payne's Strategic CRM Framework are introduced.

2.3.1 Gummesson's 30 Rs Framework

The basic concept of Gummesson's framework is naming 30 various relationships that company can enter into. The aim is to recognize these relationships and to identify the relationships, which are crucial to company's marketing activities. (Varey, 2002, 65)

Gummesson (2004, 139) suggests that in today's world the organizations do not compete with other organizations, but instead the networks compete with other networks.

Instead of creating marketing mix, Gummesson proposes (2004, 146) a creation of relationship portfolio. According to him this portfolio of elements, which are marketing activities, will benefit the organization more than the separate parts of the portfolio would. Not all of the relationships can be applied to every organization; therefore the portfolio should have a unique character suiting the organization in question. Choosing the right components, as well as their deep integration are consequently vital in achieving success.

30 Rs are divided into four groups: *Classical* market relationships, *Special* market relationships, *Mega* relationships, and *Nano* relationships. (Hougaard & Bjerre, 2003, 69)

Classical market relationships are the ones based only on the core components. Gummesson includes here: classic dyad (relationship between buyer and seller), classic triad (relation between customer, supplier and competitor), and classic multidimensional network (distribution channel of products and services).
(Hougaard & Bjerre, 2003, 77)

Special market relationships include a variety of relations standing beyond the tight definition of classical market relationships. This group consists of 14 relationships, which examples can be: service encounter, electronic relationship, green relationship or even criminal network. (Hougaard & Bjerre, 2003, 78-80)

Mega relationships are closely connected to society, as well as to personal and cultural environment. This group of 6 relationships also includes cooperation between organizations within the marketing system. Examples here can be: personal and social networks, mega alliances (like The European Union) or mass media relationship.
(Hougaard & Bjerre, 2003, 81-82)

Nano relationships are internal relationships connected to attracting and allocating resources. 30 Rs framework allocates 7 relationships within this group. There are, for example: the relationship between the internal customers and suppliers, internal marketing, or owner and financier relationship. (Hougaard & Bjerre, 2003, 82-83)

Concerning a 30 Rs framework, Gummesson (2004, 146) suggests including four important elements in the marketing plan and in company's general business plan.
The first step is to select the relationship portfolio. This should be done together with marketing planning, since portfolio should include all important for the organization relationships. Relationships have to be then defined to cope with the situation of the particular company. It is also a good possibility to search for relationships, which are not taken care of well and which could be potentially beneficial to the company.
Next the company should set goals for ROR (return on relationships) and plan their measurements. This includes not only marketing short-term goals but also a long-term strategic planning. Thirdly organization has to put attention on monitoring the implementation and outcome in comparison to earlier set goals. It is important to remember here that the implementation may need changes while in process if the received feedback suggests so. The last step is to assess the consequences of the relationship for the organization and its procedures (Gummesson, 2004, 146).

2.3.2 Payne's Strategic Framework

The basic assumption of this framework is that CRM is cross-functional activity, which should be supported by the whole company. The author defines five processes crucial for CRM and suggests that they should be integrated to all company's operations (Payne, 2005, 29).

According to Payne (2005, 29) these five crucial processes are:

- The strategy development process
- The value creation process
- The multi-channel integration process
- The information management process
- The performance assessment process

The simplified model of integration of these processes is illustrated in the Figure 3.

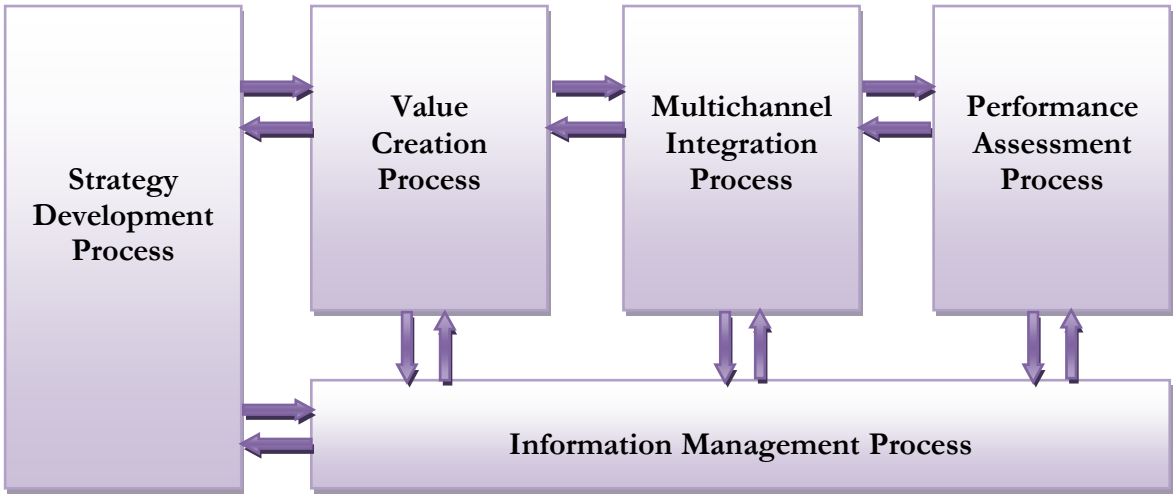

Figure 3. Framework for CRM (adapted from Payne & Frow, 2005, 171)

The strategy development process should be achieved on two levels: developing the business strategy for the entire organization and developing customer strategy, which is typically created by the marketing department. Formulating customer strategy requires analysis and evaluation of existing customer base and potential customers, as well as customer segmentation. (Payne & Frow, 2005, 170)

The value creation process consists of three core elements: setting the value that company can provide to customer, setting the value that customers can provide to the company and efficient management of exchange of these values by co-creation and co-production. The value creation process transforms the strategy into the programs and offerings that deliver value to the customers and obtain the value for the company. (Payne & Frow, 2005, 170-171)

The multichannel integration transforms the business strategy and value creation process into activities of value-added meaning to customers. The main task of multichannel integration process is choosing suitable channels to reach and interact with chosen customers in the way, which deliver a unique customer experience. Moreover the integration of various channels is extremely important to ensure that the customer receives always the same experience and the same message. (Payne & Frow, 2005, 172-173)

The information management process allows the company for gathering and storing information and therefore eases the use of the consumer information to the company. Well integrated information management system is a useful tool in creating customer knowledge, as well as in planning and developing customer offerings. It is important, however, that the data system provides also means of measuring business activities (Payne & Frow, 2005, 173).

The performance assessment process allows the measurement to determine whether CRM strategic goals were implemented at the satisfactory level and the aimed value reached the customers. In addition the performance management process is the basis for development processes in order to improve the services and offering for the future (Payne & Frow, 2005, 173-174).

2.3.3 Frameworks' comparison

Two presented above CRM frameworks are different in approach to the problem, but at the same time they share some common elements.

Gummesson's 30 Rs framework takes into account various types of relationships in the organizational life time. This is important fact due to complex environment, in which the organizations exist. The CRM is understood not as maintaining and developing particular relationships, but as the whole complex set of different relationships, which are often not neutral to each other.

Gummesson's approach is especially valuable, when thinking of non-profit organizations, which often have to deal with multiple different stakeholders, such as customers, sponsors, government officials, other non-profit organization etc.

30 Rs framework has also some disadvantages. The four steps of CRM planning do not include value and integrated communication planning, which are often underlined in the CRM literature as elements of great importance. Moreover the framework is not easy to use, when analyzing only one type of relationship, which is often the case of key account managers.

Payne's strategic framework, on the other hand, provides a clear and easy to follow structure of CRM planning for businesses. The processes are organized into logical structure, where every element has to be fulfilled in order to achieve success in CRM.

In this framework the integration and cross functionality of the processes is stressed, which forces the enterprise to involve various department and activities into common goal of efficient delivery of value through CRM.

Disadvantage of Payne's framework for this study is the fact that the analyses were mainly performed on the base of information from bigger companies and enterprises and therefore there is a need of adapting the framework into non-profit environment.

Despite some differences, both frameworks share some common elements, such like the need of making CRM a part of business strategy or the importance of continuous measurement of CRM performance.

Elements of both frameworks were beneficial in evaluating the case organization, although the structure of following theoretical studies and empirical analyzes are mostly based on Payne's five main processes. This is because of two reasons. Firstly this thesis concentrates on member relations only and thus is aiming to analyze only one type of relationship. Secondly the basic processes named by the author are commonly described and researched in the literature on the topic and therefore they seem to be more universal and standardized elements of CRM, which allows the use of research made by many authors and consequently to create a more universal and holistic view of the topic.

Payne's framework was developed primarily for business and therefore needed some adaptation to be used for analysis of the case organization accordingly to the findings on non-profit environment's specifics. For this reason two changes were made. Firstly multichannel integration was replaced with integrated communication analyses and secondly a short analyze of human resource factor was added.

2.4 Strategy development

Although most of the companies define their business and customer strategy, Payne (2005, 41-42) underlines that a lack of separate CRM strategy can be often observed. Companies often concentrate on implementing a specific CRM technology, instead on creating a holistic and well integrated CRM strategy.

According to Bruhn (2003, 104-105) relationship strategies should create a framework of activities to be undertaken in order to achieve set goals. They should originate from corporate strategies and take into account strategic business planning.

In order to be effective, relationship strategy should set the directions that allow achieving planned goals for relationship marketing, define the market and customer's segments, set applications and methods, as well as control instruments, stress the outcomes from the implementation of the strategy originating from methods, company and personnel, as well as verify, whether the set goals were achieved.
(Bruhn, 2003, 105)

According to Bruhn (2003, 107) there are several types of relationship strategy:

- Customer acquisition strategy (acquire new customers through direct marketing)
- Customer retention strategy (improving the retention rate of current customers)
- Customer recovery strategy (recovery of lost customers)

Defining the CRM strategy has a crucial role in the relationship management process. Having clear objectives and purpose is necessary to correctly define CRM programs and activities. Moreover it allows the comparison of the results with the objectives. (Parvatiyar & Jagdish, 2001, 10)

An important part of CRM strategy is customer segmentation. Bruhn (2003, 91) suggests that this process should follow three steps:

- Segment building (customer segments are built based on a chosen criteria)
- Segment description (segments are described and criteria of dealing with customers are set)

- Segment processing (planning and implementation of activities for the particular segments)

According to Parvatiyar and Jagdish (2001, 10) careful selection of the customers for various programs and offerings and individualization of these offerings to the customers increases the marketing effectiveness of the company.

2.5 The value creation

Value is the sum of all benefits that a party gains from the relationship. The benefits can be as well tangible as intangible (for example a brand or an image of the seller). Value for the customer is often not a single product, but a portfolio of promises based on value, which meet the customer expectations. (Payne, 2005, 105)

Value proposition determinates the way, how the supplier satisfies the customer's needs across different activities (for example: product purchasing, using, servicing, etc.) Value proposition should be individualized and determinate for each customer separately, as the customers' needs differ. Moreover it is important that a company determinates a system of delivering value across the channels. (Payne, 2005, 123-128)

It is also important to evaluate that the value receive by customers fulfill their expectation, and therefore it is necessary for a company to perform value assessments regularly. (Payne & Frow, 2005, 172)

The value that a company receives can be seen through customer profitability and customer retention (Payne & Frow, 2005, 172). The customer retention has a significant role to the company as acquiring new customers is often a costly and time consuming process. In addition long lasting relationships often create a mutual understanding and collaboration between the partners (Payne, 2005, 146).

Cooperation and collaboration with customers may be very beneficial to both the organization and the customers. Involving customers into planning process ensures their greater involvement and achievement of the common goals. However, it is important

to define, to which degree the customer will be involved in planning process, as not all of the customers are willing to participate in setting common objectives and some individualization is required. (Parvatiyar & Jagdish, 2001, 15)

2.6 Integrated communication

Communication with business partners is a very important element of CRM. Communication ensures the flow of information between organizations and deepens their relationship. Moreover successful communication enhances trust between the parties and allows for efficient collaboration and cooperation. (Parvatiyar & Jagdish, 2001, 14)

McDonald and Woodburn (2007, 265-266) stress the importance of communication planning. The authors suggest starting communication planning from defining clear objectives and desired outcome of the message. The effective communication should be able to reach the recipient, be processed and understood by the recipient and create the awaited response.

Quality relationship should be processed timely, frequently, openly and accurately (Richard at al., 2007, 931). Continuous contact between the supplier and customers enhance improvement of the quality of their relationship and allows them for effective co-production and co-development. (Gummesson, 2004, 146)

While making decisions concerning communication channels, it is important to take few criteria into consideration. These are the medium, style, timing and weight of the message. In addition the needs of recipients have to be taken into account, such as number of the recipients, language (marketing, logistics, etc), culture, accessibility, etc. (Macdonald & Woodburn, 2007, 267). The core elements of the communication planning process are illustrated in the Figure 4.

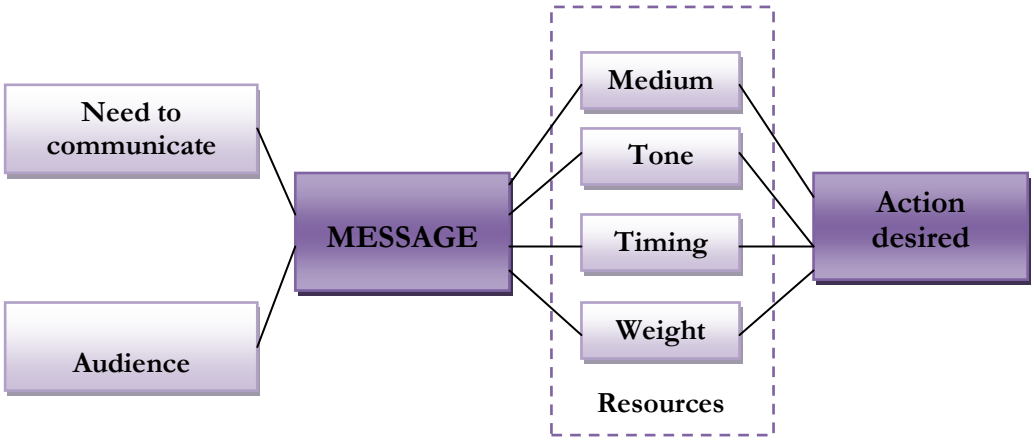

Figure 4. Planning communication (adapted from McDonald & Woodburn, 2007, 267)

Payne and Frow (2004, 535) underline the importance of consistency of communication across "touch points" in order to create a coherent customer experience. Parvatiyar and Jagdish (2001, 14) point out that to create successful customer communication there is also a need to establish company's internal communication first. This concerns especially the communication between those, who play important or direct role in relationship management process.

2.7 CRM system

CRM system can be described as information system that enables company to gather and store information and therefore allows for improvement in customer focus. (Bull, 2003, 592)

The knowledge of customer behavior is dynamic, prone to rapid changes, often originates from multiple sources and may have contextual meaning. Adapting a CRM system may help the company gather and utilize this knowledge and allow the efficient and accurate response to customer needs. This knowledge is of high quality, because it is based rather on the customer actual behavior and experience than demographics or other stable factors (Mithas et al., 2005, 202-203).

CRM applications allow companies to customize and individualize their offerings to fulfill the best expectations of their customers. This leads to perception the quality of services and products as high and therefore to increase in customer satisfaction and consequently also in customer loyalty. (Mithas et al., 2005, 203)

As importance of CRM is growing, more and more companies invest into CRM systems. (Bull, 2003, 592) Organizations see CRM systems as the technologies, which improve customer management and add value to their customer relationships (Richard et al., 2007, 936). Many companies, however, fail to adopt the system properly and do not benefit enough from CRM technology. This fact originates from lack of understanding that CRM is more than a technology and that formulation of appropriate strategy and integration of business processes is necessary to achieve success in CRM. (Bull, 2003, 599-600)

Richard et al. (2007, 936-937) conclude that companies that adopt a CRM system often concentrate too much on entering data and standardizing their practices, forgetting that relationships are built by people, not systems and therefore CRM technology cannot replace human interactions. Authors suggest that the key to the success of CRM system implementation lies in integration of CRM processes across the company, as well as in wide understanding of the customer's needs, having face-to-face interactions and appropriate, clear communication.

2.8 Performance measurement

Performance measurement is an important part of CRM processes. It fulfills the function of informing, diagnosing and tracking of CRM progress. (McDonald & Woodburn, 2007, 269) Performance measurement is crucial to evaluate the sustainability of the processes and how the company's offerings are meeting customers' needs. It enables company to correct its relationship management, marketing objectives and qualities of the offerings (Parvatiyar & Jagdish, 2001, 16).

McDonald and Woodburn (2007, 270) suggest few main purposes of performance measurement in CRM. These are:

- Making the right decisions
- Aligning implementation with strategy
- Improving efficiency and productivity
- Gaining visibility
- Learning and improvement

Kaplan and Norton (1992) in Parvatiyar and Jagdish (2001, 16) suggest a balance scorecard as a measurement tool that combines variety of meters created accordingly to each CRM program and based on the objectives of this program.

Typical meters for CRM performance measurement are surveys on customer satisfaction and well as measures on customer loyalty and retention. (Richard et al., 2007, 939) However Chen and Popovich (2003, 678) suggest that constant gathering and utilizing knowledge about customers decrease the need for some of the traditional marketing metrics tools, such as surveys.

It is important to estimate the right amount of information, which should be measured. There is always a risk of measuring too little or too much and therefore having not sufficient information and making wrong decisions or become lost in overload of information and missing the really crucial ones. (McDonald & Woodburn, 2007, 269)

Gummesson (2004, 146) points out that some values, even though often considered as "non-measurable", are crucial aspects of the return on relationship and should be taken into account. These are, for example, culture, vision and management.

2.9 Human resources in CRM

People are an integral element of CMR (Abott, 2003, 334). Adequate management and personnel training has an important role in creating the right organizational atmosphere for relationship marketing. According to Parvatiyar and Jagdish (2001, 15) special training for the personnel, how to interact with customers and fulfill the expectation of the relationship is crucial for the idea of CRM.

The value of management and personnel in CRM shouldn't be underestimated. When changing its business model to customer oriented, organization has to make information and knowledge sharing a part of its culture. Top management involvement into CRM processes is necessary for achieving success, especially, when it comes to innovation and ensuring company's promises concerning delivery and benefits.
(Chen & Popovitch, 2003, 684)

Employees carry the capital of knowledge and established relationships. (Gummesson, 2004, 142) Therefore, management's important task is also to support the employees in their skills development by education and training programs, as well as enhance their commitment and motivation. (Chen & Popovich, 2003, 685)

3 Characteristics of non-profit environment

This chapter describes the specific characteristics of non-profit environment and non-profit management.

Non-profit organizations are often more conscious about their financial resources than companies in business sector (Drucker, 1989, 89). Typically the revenue of non-profit organizations come from state funding, self-generated resources, various contributions, commercial activity and private funding. In order to keep their independence from the resource providers, NPOs (Non-profit Organization) should seek for diverse sources of revenue (Macedo & Pinho, 2006, 538).

Having smaller resources brings up the need of constant concern about them, but also allows the non-profit organizations to focus on mission rather than financial results. The clear mission is base of all activities that a NPO may undertake; it defines organizational goals and strategy directions. (Drucker, 1989, 89)

Effective non-profit organizations define their goals as changes that should happen in the external environment and measure their success by recording these changes. (Drucker, 1989, 89)

Wiggill (2011, 227) underlines the importance of effective communication with various group of stakeholders. The two-way communication is not only an opportunity, but also a necessity for non-profit organizations if they aim to learn about stakeholders needs and build long-term relationships. However it is crucial to have a formalized feedback system to communicate feedback from stakeholders between non-profit organization's representatives and other staff members. (Wiggill, 2011, 233-234)

The integrity of the organizational communication is especially crucial in case of NPOs. Sending different messages to various stakeholders could put in jeopardy the legitimacy of the organization or even the whole non-profit sector.
(Herman & Renz, 1998, 35)

Non-profit organizations usually have multiple different stakeholders, such as donors, authorities, community they operate in, etc. (Wiggill, 2011, 226). It is not necessary for one person to be responsible for the entire communication with all stakeholders of the organization. The good practice is to "assign" particular stakeholders to particular staff members or board members. (Wiggill, 2011, 233)

Effectiveness of the non-profit organizations is difficult to be measured as the whole. It depends strongly on the effectiveness experienced by different stakeholders and it's based on their impressions. (Herman & Renz, 1998, 31)

The NPOs, that create their stakeholder relationship management is systematic and integrated way, are being often evaluate as more effective (Balser & McClusky, 2005, 296). The organizational effectiveness cannot be, however, seen only as organizational consistency. Staying close with organizational mission, values and culture and selecting the organizations to cooperate with are also critical elements of NPO's effectiveness. (Balser & McClusky, 2004, 310)

People are an important part of NPO's success and employees' knowledge and skills have critical value to organizations (Kong, 2008, 285). Non-profit sector employees are often more motivated and more productive than the ones working in the business sector (Drucker, 1989, 88). In addition the directors of NPOs often show personal commitment to the mission of the organization (Drucker, 1989, 91).

The leadership in non-profit organization is often visionary, which allows the organization to build in a set of values with social and economical implications (Sarros & Cooper, 2011. 301). However there is often a lack of strong hierarchy because neither the CEO, nor the board is perceived as supervisors, but rather as colleagues connected with the same goals (Drucker, 1989, 91).

4 Research methods and data collection

This chapter describes qualitative research in general, methods and the process of data collection applied in this thesis, as well as the role of the researcher in this process.

The theoretical part of this thesis was compiled based on books and articles related to the topic and the empirical part was based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data of the empirical part includes researcher's own observations and six interviews with Amcham's staff members. Secondary data include company's communication material (emails, invitations, flyers, Amcham brochure), scorecard of 2012, results of member survey, as well as material available on the company's webpage.

4.1 The role of the researcher

The researcher had the advantage of both, insider and outsider, point of view on the organization. Completing her internship at Amcham gave her possibility to observe the processes from inside, as well as to understand organizational values and culture. On the other hand the internship ended nearly a year before writing this thesis, which brought an advantage of researching the organization from the outsider point of view and allowed for greater objectivity.

The thesis was written during late spring and early autumn of 2013. The research was mostly qualitative, with only exception of member's satisfaction survey, which represents the quantitative research methods. Qualitative methods were chosen for this study, because of their ability to describe how the processes happen and therefore greater suitability to answer the research question of the thesis.

4.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is used to understand the complexity of the phenomena, which cannot be described only by numbers. It is often used to study the processes, and the answer the question *How* the things works. (Mason, 2002, 1)

The qualitative research allow for analyses of complex problems, is based on methods and data which are not standardized and therefore flexible to the context of the research, and emphasize the holistic aspect of a problem. (Mason, 2002, 3-4)

Qualitative methods are especially developed to study a particular topic in depths, such as a particular process in particular organization. In addition allow for exploratory research, when there is little written on the topic in question. (Myers, 2009, 9)

4.3 Secondary data

Secondary data is information gathered by others for the purpose different than purpose of the research in question. Secondary data is widely used in the research work because it is cost and time efficient and brings a good base for further research. The disadvantage of this data is the fact that it was collected for another research with different purpose and may not fit the exact need of the research in question. For the purpose of this study several types of secondary data were collected.

The theoretical part of the thesis is based solely on information included in books and journal articles. The search was made through library, databases and web searching engines. Search of the most suitable material was based on key concepts and objective of the thesis. Books and journal articles are sources of high validity, since they are written either by experienced business executives or by researches of acknowledged institutions. Always more than one source was used to describe a particular topic in order to bring up different aspects of the issue and get a possible holistic overview.

Company's communication material used in this study includes Amcham's brochure, flyers, emails and invitations, as well as the material available on the company's webpage. Marketing communication material is a good source of information, when it comes to evaluation of the image, tone of communication, goals and consistency. However it has to be noticed that marketing communication material is widely available, has a commercial purpose and therefore should be analyzed carefully with a critical approach.

The scorecard measures company's performance in a particular moment of time. The scorecard used for analyzes in the study represents goals, objectives and results achieved by the company in 2012. The scorecard is a very reliable source of information because it measures concrete data and the realization of company's strategic goals. Moreover a scorecard is created only for internal purpose and can be considered as a source rather objective.

Conducting a survey allows for recording multiple responses in relatively short time and therefore is a good source of evaluation of member satisfaction. A member survey is quantitative data source in this study. Research was conducted for Amcham by TNS in 2009. The response rate was 26%, which is relatively low, but still acceptable. Because of these two facts the results of the survey cannot be the only base to evaluate member satisfaction. Since there was no acceptance for conducting researcher's own survey, a new survey was not performed and the results of the 2009 survey were analyzed with awareness of limitations and using critical approach.

4.4 Primary data

Primary data is information collected by the researchers themselves for the purpose of their particular study. The advantage of this type of data is its suitability for the research in questions. The drawbacks are the need of collection of data, which can be time and resource consuming, as well as dependence of the researcher on the good will of the respondents. Primary data used in this study is gathered with observation and interview.

Observations were made during researcher's five months internship in winter 2011 in various situations and contexts, such as participations in Amcham's events and meetings or production of communication materials. Observations made for this study are valuable for two reasons: they were made over a sufficient period of time and there was a wide variety of situations and contexts to be observed and analyzed.

The interviews are the most important part of the research as they carry first hand information from people engaged into various aspects of CRM in the case company.

Because of their crucial role, all interviews were conducted as the last stage of the empirical research. There were six interviews carried out during this research. Interviews' length was half an hour to one hour in average. The semi-structure interview form was chosen in order to give the conversations form and direction, but to allow at the same time additional questions and free discussion on the topic. The construction of the interviews was not unified, but instead the questions were prepared individually for each conversation with regard to interviewee's field of expertise.

5 Member relationship management at Amcham Finland

This chapter Amcham Finland as an organization and presents the existing portfolio of programs and activities offered to Amcham's members. It also presents findings of the empirical research: member relationship processes and practices existing in the case association.

5.1 Presentation of Amcham Finland

The American Chamber of Commerce (Amcham) is a worldwide present concept. There are currently 115 Amchams around the globe. However many of them cooperate with each other and create a network of partnerships, each Amcham develops its own programs and offerings and is independent financially. (Amcham Finland, 2013)

The idea to create an Amcham in Finland arouse in 2004, when a civil servant at US Embassy in Helsinki noticed that there are existing issues that could be solved by bringing the concept of Amcham to Finland. The officers at US Embassy started then the planning process, as well as search for the companies interested in joining the association. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

Amcham Finland was officially established in 2005 by 50 founding members in cooperation with US Embassy in Helsinki. In 2010 the association was merged with Finnish-American Chamber of Commerce strengthening Amcham's position both nationally and internationally (Amcham Finland, 2013).

Today Amcham Finland consists of 20 members, of which 58 % are Finnish companies and 42 % are foreign enterprises (mainly American). Chamber's members operate in various sphere of business and their sizes vary from the small start-ups to big international corporations (Amcham Finland, 2013).

Amcham Finland is a part of an international network of similar organizations and cooperates with Amcham EU and Amcham US on policy and best practices. The cham-

ber cooperates also with American Department of State and Department of Commerce as well as the US Embassy in Helsinki (Wood, 25.4.2013).

Amcham's mission is to promote business of its members, which means that association aims to be a facilitator fostering the businesses of its members. It's about creating a platform, where the members can meet each other and get guidance and tools to conduct their business more efficiently (Helenius, 22.4.2013).

As Amcham has launched cooperation with other countries and it differs from the original bilateral Finnish-American chamber, the need for redefining the brand of the association has appeared. Working on redefining chamber's brand is currently in process. Three core values were lately defined as a part of new Amcham brand: proactive and futuristic, member driven and agile (Chari, 24.4.2013).

Amcham is a non-profit and non-governmental independent business association. The organization does not receive any external findings and funds its activities solely from membership fees, event participation fees and sponsorship agreements. The membership fees constitute at the moment 80 % of Amcham's revenue (Amcham Finland, 2013).

5.2 Programs offered

ROI Finland is a program addressed to country managers managing current investments in Finland. It is a platform of sharing best practices. In addition the program enables dialogue with decision makers in Finland and therefore gives the participants the opportunity to shape their business environment (Amcham, 2013).

ROI program has its own advisory board, consisting of 6 country managers representing different industries. This allows the members for deeper engagement into program. The program consists of face-to-face events held once a quarter, a resource centre, and ROI Finland labs. The aim of the resource centers it to equip the country managers with all the necessary information about the country. ROI labs are specific workshops developed together with Greater Helsinki Promotion. The aim of the workshops is to

elaborate the real investment cases together with the interested country managers (Oksanen, 25.4.2013).

Besides its value to the members, ROI program aims to bring meaning to Finnish society and economy by allowing for deepening the engagement of foreign companies and the scale of investment of these companies in Finland (Oksanen, 25.4.2013).

Women's Network is Amcham's longest running program. It is a discussion forum, which undertakes topics currently important to women in business life. In addition program's regular events provide participants with good networking opportunities (Amcham, 2013).

Executive Forum is addressed to C-level executives interested in discussion on leadership and important issues of today's leaders. Program's events are open to upper management of Amcham member companies and take a form of luncheons with guest speaker followed by a debate (Amcham, 2013).

Defense Industry Dialogue is a point of meeting for American defense industry companies. Program offers participation in briefings, meeting and dinners with experts in the field, participate in debate and find business partners (Amcham, 2013).

Launchpad USA is a series of events, offering information on various practical aspects of starting and managing business operations in US. The objective of the program is to help the companies in entering and becoming successful in the US market (Amcham, 2013).

OSAC Finland (The Overseas Security Advisory Council) is a forum for discussion on security related issues in Finland and Northern Europe. In addition the forum offers the tools to copy with the challenges and security threats and enables partnerships for dealing with these threats (Amcham, 2013).

Legal Committee works as Amcham's legal advisory board and host events on various topics affecting membership, such as intellectual property rights, establishing business operations or international taxation (Amcham, 2013).

Policy Committee aims to influence their business environment, so it becomes more dynamic. Committee members identify affecting their issues and come up with joint improvement suggestion, which are then being discussed with the decision-makers (Amcham, 2013). Participation in Amcham committees' works gives the participating companies the ability to influence the policy position made by the chamber, to network within and outside the industry that companies belong to as well as better understanding of Amcham's operations. The topics of the committees' works come mostly from the members. The current issues are also raised by the Amcham EU.
(Wood, 25.4.2013)

In addition to the regular Amcham programs there is a possibility for the members to introduce their own initiatives based on their current needs. For example a pharma group meets regularly to discuss and advocate the changes in Finnish law concerning pharmaceutical business. (Wood, 25.4.2013)

5.3 CRM strategy

Amcham's member strategy is constantly keeping the business relevance to its members. Chamber follows market trends and fits its offerings accordingly to the needs and current issues of its members. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

Member needs differ also through the time. The expectations of the companies during the first year or two differ to its expectations after several years of membership. In order to realize the needs of its members through the time Amcham creates a member life cycle for its companies. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

Recruitment strategy is based on the positive word of mouth and media visibility. Amcham's aim is to exceed in its operation and be appreciated and valued in the business environment highly enough to attract potential members by its good fame. How-

ever the chamber provides also active recruitment, for example by inviting foreign companies to participate in the ROI program. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

As recruitment at Amcham is a content driven process, it often happens through engaging prospective members to the chamber's different programs and projects. In addition, Finnish companies that just entered the US market are also approached by the Amcham team. Important membership sales drive is also following the individuals, expats, who share the belief that the business should be conducted through network. Recruitment usually happens on the personal level, during face-to-face meetings. (Oksanen, 25.4.2013)

Since the recruitment is based on building a good name for the chamber, Amcham's team is not concerned with selecting the right companies for its members, believing rather that right companies will "select themselves" based on their fit to the community. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

A part of Amcham's strategy is to keep retention rate over 90% at all time. The aim is to keep the members happy through targeted programs and events. In case members are inactive or unhappy of the membership the Membership Relations Manager of Amcham steps in and explains in a practical way, how they could benefit more from their membership. In 2012 the member retention rate was 94%. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

The strategy is defined by the Amcham team as being the closest to members' issues and understanding member's needs best. The strategy is then approved by the board of directors. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

Amcham formulates its CRM strategy for a long term (5 years period) and for shorter operational periods (annually). In addition, the Amcham team looks into the strategy twice a year, and applies any necessary changes. These strategy reviews happen regularly on calendar basis, but may also happen outside the schedule if the situation requires it. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

A part of the Amcham strategy is customer segmentation. Long-lasting trials and experiments resulted in dividing the member companies into 5 segments depending primary on the company's origins (inbound or outbound) and level of establishment on the market (established or starting operations). (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

Amcham does not define its strategic members. All the companies are treated similarly as they all pay flat membership fee without differentiation based on the company size or other attributes. However there is a difference in the needs of the companies depending on the segment they belong to, and therefore the time spent with the companies may differ. For instance companies willing to start their operations in the US tend to need more help and assistance than established international firms in Finland. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

Figure 5. Customer segmentation at Amcham Finland

Figure 5. illustrates customer segmentation at Amcham Finland. The five segments are:

- Foreign affiliates in Finland
- Companies looking to invest in Northern Europe
- Established Finnish companies

- Finnish companies breaking into or expanding within the US market
- Service providers catering to the other four segments
  (Amcham, 2012)

Amcham has developed customized value proposition and services offered for each of the five segments.

5.4 Value proposition

The value proposition is individualized and defined separately for each of Amcham's 5 customer segments. The value proposition consists of Amcham's promise and set of services designed for the particular segment.

Segment 1 companies are branches or affiliates of foreign companies in Finland. Amcham's promise for these companies is:

> "*Your issues are understood and your voice is heard and magnified in Finland.*"
> (Amcham Finland, 2013)

The core services for the S1 companies are the ROI (Return on Investment) program, possibility to influence the decision-makers through the Policy Committee, Amcham's economic policy updates and networking through Executive Forum. (Amcham, 2012)

Segment 2 gathers companies interested in investing in Northern Europe. Promise addressed to these companies is:

> "*You have a soft landing place and you become an instant insider.*"
> (Amcham Finland, 2013)

Services offered to S2 companies include access to Amcham's members companies and to its partners, as well as presence in Amcham's media. (Amcham, 2012)

Companies belonging to segment 3 are the established Finnish companies. The Amcham promise to these companies is:

> "*You are connected inside Finland's leading international business organization; you can promote improvements to the Finnish business environment.*"
> (Amcham Finland, 2013)

Amcham's core services to the S3 companies are possibility to participate in networking events in Finland and abroad, as well as access to up-to-date information on foreign trade and economy. (Amcham Finland, 2012)

The segment 4 consists of Finnish companies wishing to enter to US market or develop and extend their business activity in America. The promise for these companies is:

> *"You have access to business development resources and receive guidance from established players in the community."* (Amcham Finland, 2012)

S4 companies are offered these services: workshops and panels on how to enter and grow within the US market, a workshop with the head of the consular section of the US Embassy, up-to-date business information and visibility in the Amcham's events or media on the annual basis. (Amcham Finland, 2013)

Companies of segment 5 are companies interested in providing services to the companies of other four segments. Amcham's promise to these companies is:

> *"You are actively promoted as a preferred business partner and enjoy access to well-profiled target groups."* (Amcham Finalnd, 2013)

Core services addressed to S5 companies are the Marketing Platform program and listings of Amcham's business partners and the decision-makers of Amcham's member companies. (Amcham, 2012)

The additional value for S5 companies, which are mostly hotels, is organizing Amcham's events at their venues. The use of the space is distributed equally among chamber's S5 members if possible. (Isola, 23.4.2013)

The starting point for development of the value proposition was feedback and issues raised by Amcham members. However, the division into five segments is rather static, the value and offering for the particular segments change constantly depending on members' needs and interests. Programs are launched, developed or terminated based on active dialogue with the members. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

Regardless on the segments they belong to, all Amcham's members get the access to businesses fostering environment, networking platform, up-to-date business information and the assistance of the Amcham team. In addition, their voice is magnified, when members' issues are raised up by the community rather than by a single company. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

Value is co-created with members. Members influence events' content and can become sponsors of the events. There are different types of sponsorships from sponsoring or hosting a single event (providing speakers, space at own premises and refreshments) to sponsoring whole series of events throughout the year. As the sponsors or hosts, member companies receive visibility during the event in printed material and on Amcham's website and the possibility to speak during the event (keynote or welcoming words). (Isola, 23.4.2013)

About half of Amcham's events have a sponsor or a partner recruited from the member companies. The sponsors get the visibility and the possibility to influence the event or program content. When it comes to cooperation on events and programs the initiative comes from both sides. Amcham is usually more active in finding sponsors for its regular programs, but the members often take initiative, when it comes to the cooperation on a smaller scale. (Oksanen, 25.4.2013)

Members, who wish to receive more visibility, can also join Amcham's Marketing Platform and through it co-operate in building a program or a single event. In addition there is a possibility for the members to use Amcham's assistance (such as moderating the event) or name for their own events. (Oksanen, 25.4.2013)

Amcham also provides its members with the current business information. The information is primarily targeted and offered to the members who have requested it. Besides that Amcham regularly follows news, databases and statistic organizations and informs its members of any crucial information through Amcham's internal communication or the media. (Wood, 25.4.2013)

5.5 Integrated communication

Since Amcham's offering is intangible, the "touch points" for the members are mostly communication channels as well as personal participation at the events. Communication channels at Amcham include videos, articles, member letters, emails, phone calls, invitations to the events, as well as one-on-one meetings. From these the most important ones are monthly video updates, face-to-face meetings, social media and Amcham events (Chari, 24.4.2013).

Communication activities are more frequent, when it comes to new members. They are regularly called, asked for feedback, advised about possibilities and programs. The aim is to engage the new members into Amcham's programs and events.
(Junnila, 23.4.2013)

Language of the marketing communication material (emails, invitations, flyers) is compact and communicative, yet energetic due to usage of active voice rather than passive. Amcham's messages consist of fair amount of positive adjectives and invitations often point out the possible benefit for the members (what is to gain). As it occurs often in marketing communication material, the direct form "you" is used. In addition the first name of the recipient is usually used in the greeting, giving the message more of a personal tone.

Before sending a message to members, Amcham's communication team performs test sending to other team mates. This way everybody can take part in correcting and controlling the messages, which are sent to the members. (Chari, 24.4.2013)

Amcham entered social media only recently. In member communication chamber uses Twitter and LinkedIn. (Chari, 24.4.2013)

Face-to-face contact with the members happens during the events and one-on-one meetings. Member visits are one-on-one meeting situations, when a representative of Amcham meets a contact person in the member company. On Amcham's side these meetings are held by the Member Relations Manager and the C.E.O. Not all the mem-

bers can be met every year, there are about 100 member visits done by Amcham yearly. The members are usually met when they join the chamber, have an important issue or want to get more involved. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

Amcham Finland offers its members approximately 60 events annually. The event calendar is divided into spring season (January to early June) and fall season (August to late November). Events belong to the different programs run by Amcham and the content depends on the program participants' needs. Each program has 3-4 events per year in average. Most of the value is delivered to Amcham's members through active participation in the chamber's events. (Isola, 23.4.2013)

A typical Amcham event is a few hours long. Events' participants are usually high level management and executives and therefore time is taken into consideration. It is always made clear in advance, what will happen during the event, and the chamber aims to deliver their promise during the events. Keeping it fairly short, focused on business as well as starting and ending on time, are the qualities common for all the chambers' events. (Isola, 23.4.2013)

The content of the events is mostly decided by the chamber's members, but there are also guidelines and suggestions coming from the Amcham's board of directors. The ideas for topics and speakers come also from the business world and are depended on what's "hot" in the business world at the moment. The speakers for the events are executives from member companies, but they also come from the public world (for example politicians) depending on the topic of the event. (Isola, 23.4.2013)

The idea for Amcham's events is to have the right people at the right events to make sure the participants will benefit from the events. In addition Amcham wants to assure best networking possibilities for its members. (Isola, 23.4.2013)

Networking is an important part of the chamber's events. The chamber assures that the event's participants have good networking possibilities by choosing the right topics

and speakers. In addition, at some events, like the Executive Forum luncheons, it is possible for the members to be seated next to a particular person. (Isola, 23.4.2013)

Different companies use Amcham's network differently. Some of them use the chamber's network to send a message to their customers (use the network as a medium of communication), others want to expand their business contacts and to be visible in a particular industry. Amcham aims to be a trendy and fun place to do business. Some members value the social aspect of the chamber's events, possibility to meet people and simple have some good time, while doing business. (Chari, 24.4.2013)

Amcham has recently started to use focus groups to communicate with the members. Focus groups consist of 6-8 members gathered together for breakfast or lunch and faced with several questions to answer to. The idea is to create a comfortable environment, where people would be open to share their opinions and thoughts. The outcomes of the meetings are then translated into insights and implemented into chamber's branding. The focus groups are meant to give the members a better possibility to influence Amcham's programs and the whole brand. The members for the focus groups are chosen randomly, however often the non-active members are first to be invited to join. (Chari, 24.4.2013)

Communication with members is the biggest challenge for Amcham as there are 300 members handled by a small team. However the Amcham members are usually happy with programs and events offered, some of them are not exactly aware of how they could benefit more from their membership. The contact persons in each member company are usually high level executives, who are often busy and do not wish to be spammed by endless emails and phone calls. Amcham tries to limit amount of messages sent to its members by for example careful targeting them to the right group of receivers. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

5.6 CRM technology

In March 2013 Amcham launched the new CRM system. The previous CRM technology was a ready package customized to Amcham's needs at the time. However as the

chamber was growing the need for the new, upgraded technology appeared. The new system was tailored according to the chamber's needs and developed during a dialogue with representatives from the Amcham team. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

Comparing to the old system the new CRM technology has more tools and possibilities, for instance reminders to make a phone call, when a company has been a member for 3 or 6 months or measurements of members' level of activity. The system has an option of gathering and standardizing feedback received from the members. In addition Amcham's scorecard of 2013 is now built into the CRM system, while in previous years it was remaining on separate excel sheet. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

The biggest change in the CRM technology is organizing data based on companies and individuals linked to them, instead on individuals themselves. This is an important change for Amcham as when people from member companies change their jobs, all the important data is linked to the company profile and therefore is saved and can be used for chamber's purposes. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

All the staff members received a general user training concerning the use of the new CRM technology. However data is not always inserted into the new system by everyone. The reason for this is the fact that the system was launched very recently, and not everyone had time to take it fully into use. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

5.7 Performance measurement

Amcham scorecard is basic management tool at the chamber, which provides multiple data useful for performance measurement purposes. Amcham's scorecard, its form, and the data to be measured, were developed by the team during several workshops. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

The goals to be achieved are decided for the scorecard on the basis of comparison with the previous year and of the main strategic goal, which is defined at the beginning of the year (whether chamber aims to grow in number, focus on programs development,

etc.). They are also dependent on the economy and the resources available. Goals are prepared by chamber's CEO in cooperation with Amcham's team.
(Helenius, 22.4.2013)

The scorecard of 2012 is in an Excel format and it measures few elements of CRM gathered in three main groups: Membership, Member Involvement and External Reach. (Amcham Scorecard, 2012)

Membership part measures two elements: new members' count and members' retention rate. Member involvement measures interaction with the members understood as participation in the events, personal meetings and phone conversations. It is noticeable that the scorecard measures these events in the 0-1 scale, regardless of the scale of the interaction (the single phone conversation is as important as a holding a bigger event in the member company premises). External reach measures website hits and high level press coverage, which applies to appearances in the reputable media.
(Amcham Scorecard, 2012)

The goals in the scorecard are set for the entire year as well as for the particular quarters. Similarly data summaries are available for the entire year and quarterly, which allows the comparison of the goals versus results in these two time perspectives.
(Amcham Scorecard, 2012)

Scorecard of 2012 shows that Amcham met most of its goals for that particular year. The chamber performs especially well with keeping its members' loyalty. The member retention rate is nearly twice lower than the one assumed by Amcham. Also other goals are met or nearly met, except the website hits number, which is much below the set goal. (Amcham Scorecard, 2012)

In order to gain more reliable member feedback, a professional survey company conducted a survey for Amcham among its members in years 2009 and 2011.

The 2009 survey was aimed to the top management of the member companies. The companies were informed by Amcham of the survey prior to being contacted by the company conducting the survey. A link to the survey was sent to 348 people from 207 companies by email and was followed by one reminder to fill in the questionnaire. The results were gathered during the period of January 14-30 2009. The response rate was 26% (58 persons from 53 companies), which was quite low, but acceptable to consider the survey results valid. (Amcham, 2009)

Survey results show the direct relations between member retention rate and the activity of the member. Retention rate among the most active companies was 93%, while the same parameter for the less active members was only 57%. The biggest strengths of Amcham in the eyes of its members appeared to be the networking environment and chamber's events in general. Member companies also judged well the possibilities of obtaining info and sharing experiences about topical issues, and user friendliness of the website. The element that needed improvement, according to the members was offering visibility to the members through speaking at events as experts, sponsorships, etc. (Amcham, 2009)

2011 survey was the last one conducted for Amcham. The response rate was even lower than in 2009 and too low to give reliable results. In addition, the responses came from the most active members, making it impossible to create the whole picture of Amcham members' feedback. Since then Amcham decided to concentrate on gathering feedback through constant dialogue rather than conducting surveys. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

Although the feedback gathered from the members wasn't previously standardized, it became a part of the new CRM system launched by Amcham in March 2013. The new system allows for standardizing and recording data concerning feedback obtained during the face-to-face meetings, phone calls, etc. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

Non-systemized feedback is usually obtained at the chamber's events. The random group of participants is asked, about their thoughts of the event (Chari, 24.4.2013). In

addition Amcham's recently launched focus groups are a source of feedback for the team. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

5.8 Human resources

Amcham's team consists of 12 professionals creating a platform for 300 companies. There is appointed a member relations manager, who is in charge for controlling the membership services and has the "big picture" on member relations, however serving the members is everyone's job and each team member has a role in dealing with the members. (Helenius, 22.4.2013)

There is no systemized training preparing the new staff members for serving the members. Instead the team provides constant internal dialogue in the forms of team meetings and one-on-one discussions on how the members should be served, what feedback they are giving and what could be offered or improved to satisfy members' needs. (Helenius, 22.4.2013) Similarly, the internal communication concerning membership issues takes a form of team meetings, internally sent emails and updates, discussions and open dialogue. (Junnila, 23.4.2013)

The internal communication language being English helps in effective communication, since everybody on Amcham's multinational team is able to hear and understand the message. The communication is also kept as emails, staff meetings and new CRM system which allow for effective communication between the team members.
(Wood, 25.4.2013)

6 Discussion

This chapter presents the key findings of the thesis, research's validity, researcher's own development, as well as the usefulness of this research for the case organization.

6.1 Results and development ideas

Amcham's customer relationship management can be evaluated as generally well and professionally implemented, however some development ideas and solutions can be recommended.

Well-defined mission is a necessity for every organization. In a specific case of non-profit organizations, the importance of mission and its visibility is growing. Amcham's mission is clear and simple: to support business of its members. The mission is understood and implemented by the personnel and can be seen in association's programs and offering, but there is somehow lack of presence of the mission statement in the communication materials (brochures, webpage). It could be recommended to make the mission statement more visible in the communication materials in order to make it known to Amcham's members and partners.

Amcham's CRM strategy is based on keeping their members happy and maintaining high retention rate at all the time. It can be then classified as customer retention strategy. The fact that strategic goals are settled at the beginning of the year and then reviewed several times during the year seems to be beneficial for the association. Customer segmentation at the association follows the theories and consists of clear segment division, segment descriptions as well as detailed offer for customers belonging to particular segments. Chamber charges all the member companies a flat membership fee and therefore does not define its crucial members. Moreover the representatives of the association state that no pre-selection of the members is done and everybody, who wishes to join the community, is welcome on board. This practice suits the idea of a wide international community and correspondents well with Amcham's brand; however some crucial members could be defined based on the company's brand, their will to cooperate on events, be sponsors, etc.

Chamber's value proposition is well defined and seems to be one of the strongest elements of its CRM strategy. There is a wide variety of services and programs for the whole community, as well as targeted offering for particular segments of companies. It is noticeable that Amcham's members are an active part, when it comes to creating value proposition; they influence the content of the events and programs or can act as partners or sponsors. In addition newly launched cooperation with members through working in focus groups should be beneficial for both association and the companies and increases the possibility of greater involvement of the member companies in developing programs and offerings. There was no possibility to ask Amcham's members about the perception of received value, however, since this aspect can be measured by the customer retention (which was 94% in 2012), we can assume that the perception of the value from the customer point of view is rather high.

Communication seems to be the biggest challenge at Amcham. The association aims for involvement of its members, but at the same time there are 300 clients to be handled by a small team. Amcham emails and other marketing communication material are designed to suit the brand, the language and message is concise with the image of the association. However contact persons in member companies are usually the top level executives, extremely busy in their working life, and therefore do not wish to be bothered with unnecessary emails. Trying to obtain the feedback through professionally designed survey failed and it seems that the best way of communicating with the members are personal phone calls and face-to-face meetings. Events occur to be an especially good opportunity for this, but their disadvantage is a selected audience and lack of the possibility of communication with the members, who are not present.

In this light, company visits done regularly on yearly basis seem to be necessary. At this moment only 100 from 300 members meets Amcham representatives during the personal one-to-one meeting. It could be advised that this number would increase, and preferable include all the member companies. This task could be divided to all the Amcham's team members this way, so everyone have their "own" companies in charge to communicate with and to gather a valuable feedback.

Launching a new CRM technology at Amcham can be seen as a step into good direction. Custom-made CRM system should suit better the exact needs of the association. In addition positive for chamber's operation should be attaching the new scorecard to the system, which may allow for more accurate and up-to-date performance management. Since the system was introduced in spring of 2013, it is too early to evaluate, whether new technology fulfill its purpose, especially not all the team members feel comfortable with the new technology at the moment. It could be recommended to continue staff training and making sure that the system is used by everyone and all the information is inserted into the system. In the meanwhile it could be a good idea to keep some old performance measurement tools, like the excel version of the scorecard, until the new CRM system is not fully used by the team, in order to avoid the loss of any possible valuable information.

Scorecard as the main tool of CRM performance measurement tool is aligned with chamber's strategy goals and works well. Noticeable is that the date in the scorecard is presented on yearly and quarterly basis, which provides a good point for the reviewing strategic goals of the association. Attaching the new scorecard to the new CRM system should benefit Amcham, as the data will move directly from actions entered to the system (for example, participation in the events) and does not need to be handled manually. Since the new way of handling the scorecard is new in the association, the real benefits of the new scorecard handling policy cannot be yet evaluated.

Since Amcham's members do not wish to answer the surveys, it seems a good decision to stop trying to obtain the feedback this way. At the same time, Amcham cannot resign from obtaining regular feedback and systemizing in. According to Amcham's team, the new CRM system allows for storing a feedback gathered through personal meetings, phone calls and emails. It could be highly recommended to use this tool every time, when the feedback is given, as well as to standardize the way of obtaining feedback from the less active members (for example, every year a personal meeting and a phone call to each member).

Amcham's team is rather small, frequently communicating, and therefore no standardized training applies, when it comes to CRM. Such training could be advisable at least when it comes to the new staff members in order to ensure that the association's CRM strategic goals and policies are well understood and implemented by the whole team. Another idea could be preparing a reading package, consisting of all the crucial information, which could be read independently and create a base for employees training.

6.2 Research's evaluation

The research goal was to understand, how the business-to-business relationships are managed in case organization and this thesis answered this question well. In addition the research's validity can be evaluated as quite high.

The theoretical part of the thesis was written based on mostly recently published books and articles on academic level. In addition to CRM related theories, several sources on activities of non-profit organizations were quoted to bring up more accurate and holistic view of the problem. The empirical part of the thesis is based mostly on recent data, researcher could use all available company's material and the 6 interviews were conducted with people the most engaged with CRM processes in case organization. The cooperation on the case organization's side was very good and all the information was given in open, transparent way. In addition the researcher had a benefit of seeing the organization from both inside and outside point of view.

The drawback of the research was lack of the recent member survey results, as well as lack of possibility to conduct such survey by the researcher. However the information recorded on the scorecard (retention rate, member's activity, number of partnerships) gave some idea of the member's attitude towards the services offered. In addition new CRM system was introduced at the case organization very recently and therefore its proper evaluation appeared impossible. Efficiency of this system should be evaluated if any following researches in the chosen field are to happen again in case organization.

As this thesis writing was the researcher's first experience of combining the theoretical and empirical data, there was a good deal of learning involved in the thesis process.

Preparing and conducting interviews, gathering various data and evaluating the data against the theories brought up a good point of view on research process in general, as well as on conducting case studies at the chosen organization.

As the CRM plays a central role in the case organization's operations, the researcher believes that this thesis will be beneficial to Amcham. The CRM is a live process at case organization and the goals and policies are reviewed on regular basis. Amcham can use the results of this thesis as the starting point to rethink some aspects of its CRM and to obtain the objective point of view on the processes from outside of the company. The researcher also believes that implementing some of the development ideas (such as standardized personnel training in the field of CRM or increase in member visits) would benefit the company may improve its CRM performance.

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