

# **Analyzing and improving customer experience at communication agency Cocomms**

Fanny Heimonen

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<b>Author(s)</b> Fanny Heimonen	
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<p>This thesis aims to analyze and improve customer experience at a Finnish communication agency called Cocomms. The topic is relevant, because experiences have become an essential way to compete. Many companies recognize the importance of customer experience. However, only a few companies have a strategic approach to managing them or take actual action in improving them.</p> <p>Every company produces experiences, either coincidental or managed. Therefore, every company also has the opportunity to produce experiences that meet or exceed the customers' expectations. To be able to move the customer experience to the next level, companies must first understand the state of their current experience. Therefore, this thesis also studies how Cocomms' customer experience is perceived today.</p> <p>The theoretical framework consists of three themes. It deals with diverse perspectives to building customer experience; good practices to measuring customer experience as well as some key performance indicators; and, finally, some key management areas of customer experience.</p> <p>The research includes two perspectives: external (customer), and internal (company). The customer perspective studies Cocomms' strengths and weaknesses in chosen touch points and on relationship level. The customer perspective is studied through an online survey of all Cocomms' active customers. The company perspective, on the other hand, focuses on how customer experience is planned, measured and managed. It is studied through theory and by benchmarking Cocomms' Norwegian partner agency X through an interview. This also covers the international aspect of the thesis.</p> <p>Overall Cocomms' customer experience is seen as quite positive and it was difficult to identify key weaknesses. The main reasons for positive experiences by Cocomms were the team and quality of service. The key interview findings relate to the importance of culture in this type of business, and the role of people, measuring, and customer journeys. Generally, customer journeys are quite un-known. Furthermore, companies do not measure customer experiences. However, to be able to improve the experiences, companies need to know their customers, understand the customer buying process or customer journey, and implement systematic measuring processes. Therefore, these aspects were also suggested as future recommendation areas for Cocomms.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Customer experience, customer experience measurement, customer experience management, customer loyalty and advocacy, customer journey, touch points.	

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Background .....	1
1.2	Research question .....	2
1.3	Demarcation .....	4
1.4	International aspect.....	6
1.5	Benefits .....	6
1.6	Key concepts.....	7
1.7	Finnish communication industry and the case company.....	8
2	Understanding customer experience: from pieces to big picture.....	10
2.1	Defining customer experience and its importance .....	10
2.2	Building blocks of positive customer experience.....	12
2.2.1	The four essentials of customer experience .....	12
2.2.2	Psychological perspectives .....	13
2.2.3	The elements of a smooth customer experience .....	14
2.3	Measuring customer experience .....	16
2.4	Managing customer experience .....	22
2.4.1	Key management areas .....	25
2.4.2	The importance of the personnel .....	28
2.4.3	Management tools.....	29
3	Research design and methods.....	31
3.1	Research approach and methods .....	31
3.2	Research design and data collection .....	33
3.2.1	Primary data.....	33
3.2.2	Secondary data .....	35
3.3	Analysis methods .....	35
3.4	Risks and risk management.....	36
4	Results.....	38
4.1	Survey results.....	38
4.1.1	Choosing a service provider.....	41
4.1.2	Quality of the service.....	42
4.1.3	Pricing .....	43
4.1.4	Team .....	43
4.1.5	Communication .....	45
4.1.6	Relationship .....	46
4.1.7	The customer's experience .....	46
4.2	Interview results .....	50

4.2.1	Strategy .....	50
4.2.2	Culture and leadership .....	51
4.2.3	People .....	52
4.2.4	Systems and processes .....	52
4.2.5	Measurement .....	53
4.2.6	Customer perspective .....	54
5	Discussion .....	56
5.1	Key survey findings .....	56
5.2	Key interview findings.....	59
5.3	Recommendations .....	61
5.4	Validity and reliability.....	63
5.5	Reflection of learning.....	67
	References .....	68
	Appendices.....	72
	Appendix 1. Customer experience survey questionnaire .....	72
	Appendix 2. Interview framework .....	84
	Appendix 3. Open-ended questions' answers .....	86

# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the thesis topic and case company. The thesis topic is analyzing and improving customer experience at communication agency Cocomms. The case company Cocomms is the fourth largest Finnish communication agency. First, the topic is described in the business field, then from company perspective and finally from the author's own perspective. The research and investigative questions are also introduced. Next, there is discussion about the demarcation and international aspect. In addition, the key concepts are defined. Finally, the case company is introduced more closely.

## 1.1 Background

In the recent years, everything from business strategies to business structure and culture has been moving to a customer-centric point of view. Shaw, Dibeehi and Walden (2010, 10) recognize that it is the people and experience side of business that is the key differentiator in the commoditized markets when the core product or service are similar. Furthermore, Daniel Newman argues in an article (Forbes 2015) that while many concepts or trends are important in the field of marketing, such as big data, social, or content, all of these elements are only important if they help a company to enhance customers' experiences with their brand. As a consequence, companies have shifted from producing services to producing experiences. However, a research done by Talent Vectia in 2017 about the state of customer experience in Finland (Ahvenainen, Gylling & Leino 2017, 16-22) found out that only 24% of the 125 Finnish public companies researched develop customer experience as a part of their strategy. Furthermore, only 9% had a person responsible for customer experiences in their management. Thus, it could be argued that many companies have more willingness and know-how than actual actions in improving customer experiences.

Customer is the one that defines a company's success: it is hard to bring down companies with strong customer relationships that are built on trust. Markets, on the other hand, shift constantly. Therefore, a well functioning business strategy starts from the customers and their needs. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 13.) It is also important to understand that every company produces experiences, whether they are coincidental, expected, or managed. Therefore, every company has the possibility to offer experiences that meet, or even exceed the customer's expectations. Companies have started to invest in their customer experience efforts. Investments are being made to map customer journeys and create new ways to "delight" the customers (Soudagar, Iyer & Hildebrand 2012, xx). To be able

to move the customer experience to the next level companies must first understand how their customer experience is perceived today (Shaw & al. 2010, 18). Therefore, this thesis also aims to analyze the customer experience of a communication agency providing an up-to-date description of it. Through recognizing some key points about the current customer experience, there can be recommendations made to improve it.

This thesis is done as a commissioned thesis for a communication agency Cocomms. Cocomms is the fourth largest communication agency in Finland. The Finnish communication industry is intensively competitive and companies' service offerings are similar. In the past, Cocomms has been focusing on studying customer satisfaction, and have had some efforts on studying customer experience. This thesis aims to demonstrate the importance of systematically developing customer experience. That way, Cocomms can answer to competition and the demands of the market even better. Cocomms' customer experience was last measured in 2012, so there is a need to analyze the current state of customer experience. Through this thesis, Cocomms can recognize their current strengths and weaknesses in specific touch points and on relationship level. Based on the findings, Cocomms gains multiple opportunities to improve their customer experience. In addition, there is a survey questionnaire formed, which can be used for future customer experience measuring as well.

## **1.2 Research question**

This thesis aims to analyze and improve the customer experience of a communication agency. The objective is to provide survey, interview, and theory results, which the company can use as a basis and motivation for taking actions to improve their customer experience in the future.

The research question is "how to improve customer experience at communication agency Cocomms both from the customer and company perspective?" The research question is divided in to the following investigative questions:

IQ 1. What are the current strengths and weaknesses of Cocomms' customer experience from their customers' perspective in the following areas:

IQ 1.1. in chosen touch points?

IQ 1.2. on customer relationship level?

IQ 2. How is customer experience planned, managed and measured in Cocomms' partner agency X in Norway?

IQ 3. What recommendations can be concluded for improving Cocomms' customer experience?

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework and research methods for each investigative question. It also shows where the results can be found in this thesis.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical framework	Research Methods	Results chapter
IQ 1. What are the current strengths and weaknesses of Cocomms' customer experience in chosen touch points and on relationship level?	<p>Defining customer experience (CX)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Company point of view</li> </ul> <p>Building blocks of CX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The four essentials of CX (Soudagar, Iyer &amp; Hildebrand 2012)</li> <li>– Psychological perspectives (Löytänä &amp; Korteso 2011)</li> <li>– The elements of smooth CX (Gerdt &amp; Korhikoski 2016).</li> </ul>	<p>Quantitative survey</p> <p>Qualitative analysis of theory</p>	Key findings
IQ 2. How is customer experience planned, managed and measured in Cocomms' partner agency X?	<p>Managing customer experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Naïve to natural – model &amp; 9 orientation areas (Shaw 2005)</li> </ul>	Qualitative interview	Key findings
IQ 3. What recommendations are there for improving Cocomms' customer experience?	<p>Measuring customer experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Measuring CX on different levels (Löytänä &amp; Korhikoski 2014)</li> <li>– Keys to reliable data (Löytänä &amp; Korhikoski 2014; Brooks 2016)</li> <li>– Planning the measuring model (Gerdt and Korhikoski 2016)</li> <li>– Theory about KPI's (CSAT, NPS, CES)</li> </ul> <p>Managing customer experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 6-step model to managing CX (Löytänä and Korteso 2011)</li> <li>– Naïve to natural – model &amp; 9 orientation areas (Shaw 2005)</li> <li>– Core development areas (Gerdt &amp; Korhikoski 2016)</li> <li>– Importance of personnel</li> <li>– Management tools</li> </ul>	<p>Quantitative survey</p> <p>Qualitative interview</p> <p>Qualitative analysis of theory</p>	Recommendations

### 1.3 Demarcation

There are two perspectives to customer experience, external (customer) and internal (employee). The theory in this thesis is largely based on employee, or company, perspec-

tive, while the survey aims to find out the customers' thoughts, feelings and opinions. This thesis also involves an interview of a partner agency about their customer experience. The questions asked from the partner agency focus mainly on the company perspective. Thus, this thesis involves theory about customer and employee perspectives, as well as practical, real-life examples of both perspectives. This brings an interesting addition to the contents of this thesis and a possibility to compare the two perspectives.

Customer experience as a concept is very broad and could be elaborated on for many pages about many relevant topics. However, the theory part of the thesis will focus on three areas of customer experience: the building blocks of customer experience, measuring customer experience, and managing customer experience. There are multiple theories and key concepts that are very close to the topic and can't be unmentioned, such as customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy. These are briefly discussed, but this thesis will not elaborate on them. Other examples of important aspects that are closely linked to customer experience but are left out of this thesis are brand and social media. This thesis doesn't study them, simply because the scope would become too broad. These could be thesis topics themselves. Also, this thesis discusses about cultural change, however change management won't be elaborated.

Traditionally, customer experience has been studied in two domains, moments of truth and service blueprinting (McColl-Kennedy & al. 2015, 431.) This thesis does not study service blueprinting, or service design, because the scope of the thesis would become too broad. In addition, the theory part of this thesis does not focus on, for example, forming a customer journey map.

Customer experience covers the customer's entire lifecycle, and is generally measured on relationship and customer journey levels. Especially in business-to-business, customer experience is often measured on relationship level, which measures indirectly the success of all customer encounters (Löytänä & Korhonen 2014, 137). The touch points in the customer journey, on the other hand, are best measured right after the encounter. Due to this, and to maintain a compact survey, this thesis has a bigger focus on the relationship level, but also measures some specifically chosen touch points. The touchpoints were decided based on discussions with Cocomms.

The themes or topics of the survey have to be demarcated as well. Based on initial discussions with Cocomms, the themes of the survey were project management, communication, innovativeness and partnership. However, based on theory and later discussions, the survey themes were demarcated to the following categories: choosing a service pro-

vider, quality of the service, pricing, team, communication, customer relationship, and "my experience".

This thesis is also demarcated to one company, Cocomms. It studies Cocomms' customer experience from the point of view of its customers, and benchmarks another company to fulfill the international aspect. The interview focuses on the employee point of view on customer experience. This thesis is done as a commissioning thesis for a B2B company. However, Soudagar & al. (2012, 9) state that the difference between B2B and B2C perspectives on customer experience is almost minimal and both should be discussed in the same category, P2P, or people-to-people. Therefore, this thesis does not make big distinctions between B2B and B2C in the theory part.

#### **1.4 International aspect**

Cocomms' customers include global companies and brands. However, the author interviews a partner of Cocomms partner agency X in Norway to cover the required international aspect. The agency is one of Norway's leading public relations (PR) agencies that has customers in Norway, the Nordic region and all over the world. Cocomms has close co-operation with the agency in question. Thus, it was a natural choice of partners for the interview. The aim of the interview is to benchmark and gain more improvement ideas for Cocomms and a practical glimpse to employee or company perspective while covering the international aspect. The contents of the interview are described in detail in the research methods chapter, and the full interview framework is seen in appendix 2.

#### **1.5 Benefits**

The company benefits from this thesis by getting an analysis of the state of their customer experience based on feedback from their customers gathered with a survey questionnaire. They will learn what are their strengths and weaknesses in chosen touch points and on relationship level according to their customers. Through the interview of a partner agency, Cocomms gets to benchmark a similar service provider and compare their operations. They will also get concrete improvement suggestions for measuring and managing the customer experience. The improvement suggestions can be in the form of tools, models or further reading. In addition, in the past the company has been focusing on customer satisfaction surveys, which haven't been sent out in many years. Now along with the general business trend, they are also interested in moving toward measuring customer experience. The questionnaire in this thesis can be used for future measuring as well.

The customers will benefit by getting to share their opinions about the touch points and relationship with Cocomms. In the future, the customers will hopefully experience improved processes with the company. This can lead to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty and customer advocacy, and can benefit the company as well.

The Norwegian partner agency benefits from this co-operation in similar ways. The interview questions focus on planning, measuring and managing customer experience. Hopefully the respondent can reflect on their own processes during the interview situation, and finds it beneficial for them as well. They also get to read the findings in this thesis and might find some improvement ideas they can use too.

To the author, the topic is really interesting and will benefit her career. The author gains valuable knowledge about one of the biggest marketing trends. She will learn about building, measuring and managing customer experiences, which is useful in any field of business. Cocomms has many big client companies, and it is really interesting to get to hear their point of views. In addition, the author is interested in working, for example, in a media agency. Her goal would be to work abroad, preferably in a Nordic country. Thus, the thesis process also provides valuable networking possibilities.

## 1.6 Key concepts

Next, the key concepts of this thesis will be defined. It is important to understand these concepts, how they are all closely linked together, and how they differ.

**Customer experience** is the combination of the encounters, images and feelings that the customer forms of the company's operations. Thus, it is not a rational decision, but an experience that is highly influenced by emotions and interpretations made subconsciously. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11.)

**Customer experience measurement** consists of setting clear, measurable objectives and defining the measurement criteria. The measurement criteria can be for example satisfaction scores or increase in loyalty. Also, measuring customer experience requires developing metrics for each domain of customer experience. That can be done through, for example, using expert analysis, interviewing customers or benchmarking a competitor. (Schmitt 2010.)

**Customer experience management** means strategically organizing every interaction between the customer and the organization throughout the customer lifecycle. The goal is

to optimize customer interactions and create customer loyalty and customer advocacy. Shaw & al. (2010, 15) define that customer experience management is about seeing the world through the customers' eyes, thinking the way they think and feeling the way they feel.

**Customer loyalty and customer advocacy** are the objectives of managing customer experience. There can be three measures found for customer loyalty: customer satisfaction, willingness to repurchase, and willingness to recommend (Goldstein 2009, 28). Customer advocacy, on the other hand, refers to the customer speaking on behalf of the company, recommending it to others.

**Customer journey** refers to the entire process that the user/consumer goes through from finding information, to making a purchase decision, to using the product or service, to support services, and to rebuy (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 132).

**Touch points** refer to all the places and situations where the company and customers meet. They refer to both actual encounters, such as a meeting or a phone call, or passive encounters where a customer for example visits the company's website. (Löytänä & Kortesoja 2011, 74.)

## **1.7 Finnish communication industry and the case company**

Below is an insight to the Finnish communication industry. The figure was originally presented in an article in Kauppalehti by Senja Larsen (2015). The figure presents the largest agencies referring to sales margins. Communication has become a central part of managing organizations and daily activities. The expertise areas of the communication professionals have broadened to managing marketing and investor communication, and brands and reputation. (ProCom.) The industry has been growing rapidly in the last years. Some reasons for the growth are that communication is considered more valuable than before; different crises have increased the importance of communication; and companies have noticed that communication agencies offer new ways to reach target audiences. (Salo 2016.) Also, the difference between advertising, media and communication agencies has become blurred.

The competition in the industry is also intense, especially in competing with prices. As a consequence, many agencies have broadened their services to respond to competition better. (Kauppalehti 2016.) The agencies that want to thrive must provide a wide enough service offering and some special capabilities and know-how (Niiniluoto 2015). Nowadays,

the aim of communication agencies is to become strategic partners for their customers (Salo 2016).

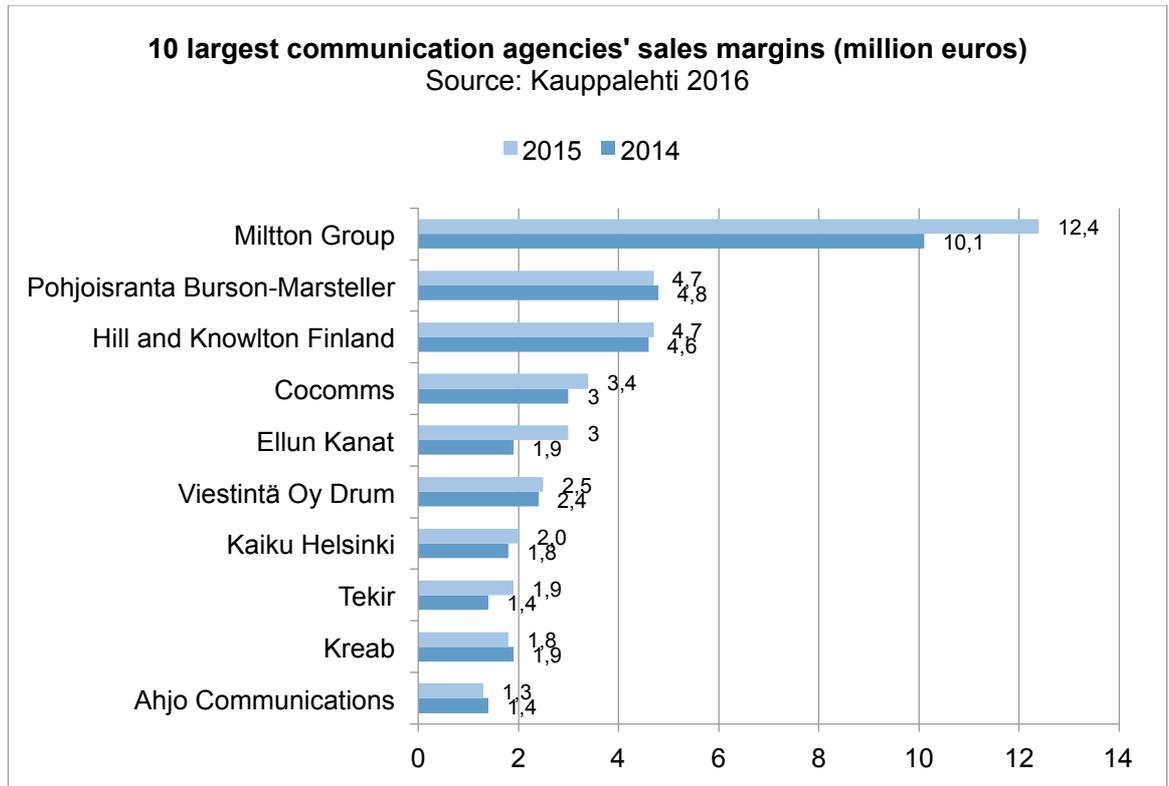


Figure 1. The largest communication agencies in Finland (adapted from Kauppalehti 2016)

Cocomms is the largest independent communication agency in Finland. It was established in 1989. Their office is located in central Helsinki. Cocomms employs 32 experts in various fields. They offer services in these fields, such as digital, crisis, change, corporate and visual communication, public affairs, social media et cetera. They cover major projects as well as offer assistance in smaller ones. In 2015, Cocomms had a turnover of 3,8 million euros. Cocomms is the most international communication agency in Finland. Over 50% of their customers are international companies that Cocomms supports abroad and in Finland. Cocomms has been working with big companies and organizations, such as Cisco, Netflix, Vaasan and the city of Espoo. Cocomms' values include partnership, happiness, and determination, which can be seen in their operations.

## **2 Understanding customer experience: from pieces to big picture**

The theory part of this thesis is divided into four sub chapters. The first chapter defines customer experience and discusses its importance for companies. The next chapter introduces the building blocks of customer experience. It introduces three theories about the elements of a positive experience and different perspectives on building customer experiences. The third chapter studies how customer experience can be measured. What should be measured and how often? What are some key performance indicators? The last chapter provides insights into managing customer experience. It discusses the management process, as well as some important management areas.

### **2.1 Defining customer experience and its importance**

Customer experience is a combination of the encounters, images and feelings that the customer forms of the company's operations. Therefore, it is not a rational decision, but it's an experience that is highly influenced by emotions and interpretations made subconsciously by an individual. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11.) Likewise, Shaw and Hamilton (2016, 8; 195) define that customer experience is about perceptions and includes the customer's rational, physical, emotional, subconscious, and psychological interaction with everything related to a specific organization. Thus, customer experience consists of all the interactions with the company and the interactions with other actors and resources outside the company. Palmer (2010, 202) states that individuals' schemata influence their experience. Schemata are cognitive frameworks for interpreting and organizing information. Therefore, no two people will see the same experience in the same way. Due to these perspectives, it is not entirely possible to control what kind of experiences the customer forms. However, companies can choose what kind of experiences they aim to produce. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 11.)

Today, companies are making investments to map customer journeys, identify the key touch points, or "moments of truth", and create new ways to "delight" the customers (Soudagar & al. 2012, xx). However, a survey was made in 2011 that aimed to find out the level of customer experience management in Finnish companies. According to the results, it seems that Finnish companies have more willingness and know-how than actual action in managing and developing customer experiences. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 38-39.) More recently, Ahvenainen & al. (2017, 19) introduced a study made in 2017 that found

out that one in every fourth Finnish public companies have customer experience implemented in their values, mission or vision.

The aim is to create meaningful experiences for the customers and through that to maximize the value produced to them (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 13). By putting the customer to the center of operations, the companies can gain new opportunities to increase the value to the customer. This also deepens the customer relationships and makes them more valuable, both for the company and the customer. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 19.) Other benefits include that the companies with good customer experiences are more profitable, have less price sensitive customers, are recommended more often and make clear savings in their business operations. In practice this can be seen as the satisfied customers rarely leaving the company; the customers recommending the company to others; and the company making more savings because they have to make fewer investments in customer acquisition, and do not have to waste resources for dealing with complaints. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 16-18.)

Shaw and Hamilton (2016, 6) state that businesses should aim to have “intuitive customers”, meaning that the customers make automatic decisions to buy from a specific company. After, they tell about it to others, showing both loyalty and advocacy. To reach this, the experience usually has to be exceptional and the customers’ expectations exceeded. However, Shaw and Hamilton (2016, 3) add that today customers’ expectations are at an all-time high. For the organizations to succeed in customer experiences, it is important to understand the psychology of why people do things, if they want to anticipate their behavior and serve them better.

Creating experiences has also become an important way to compete. Experiences are highly valued by customers and almost impossible for competitors to replicate. If a company succeeds in creating a positive experience they gain a competitive edge. If it fails, it can have massive effects. Examples of bad customer experiences have become more significant due to social media and its snowball effect. “Four times as many people will hear about someone’s bad experience on the Web as will hear about his good experience”. (Soudagar & al. 2012, 13.)

Finally, as stated, companies in both B2B, business-to-business, and B2C, business-to-consumer, industries are investing in their customer experiences. Are there some differences in creating experiences in these two industries? Soudagar & al. (2012, 9) argue that the difference is almost minimal and both should be discussed in the same category, P2P, or people-to-people. This is because in B2B the interpretations are still made by individu-

als. Employees expect the same level of customer experience as business partners, as they do as customers in their private lives. However, there are some differences. B2B companies have an opportunity to get to know their best customers on a personal level, which is quite unattainable in B2C companies that often do not even know who their best customers are. B2B companies have all the potential to create tailored experiences, but at the same time, their customers also expect more from them. B2B organizations face greater loyalty than B2C. One B2B relationship is worth much more than a B2C relationship, because usually the entire budget is given to one service provider or vendor, whereas in B2C it is often distributed among several ones. Therefore, the importance to foster the relationships increases in B2B companies. (Soudagar & al. 2012, 41.)

## **2.2 Building blocks of positive customer experience**

This chapter describes different perspectives on building customer experience. It describes some building blocks, key elements, and perspectives of a smooth, positive customer experience. There are multiple different perspectives on a positive customer experience. These depend on the industry, types of customers and business strategy. As mentioned in the chapter 2.1, Shaw and Hamilton (2016, 8) define that customer experience includes multiple perspectives and elements, for example rational, physical, emotional, subconscious, and psychological ones. Likewise, these different perspectives can be recognized in this following chapter about the building blocks of customer experience.

### **2.2.1 The four essentials of customer experience**

There are many elements of a positive customer experience. Soudagar & al. (2012, 15) introduce a concept called “bank of appreciation” which is an end result of multiple positive customer experiences. Positive customer experiences are built through the cumulative effect of three factors: stories people hear through word of mouth and the media, direct interaction, and the “moments of truth”. The bank of appreciation, on the other hand, is mainly built through trust. To be able to form an emotional bond with a customer that will keep them loyal, you first must establish trust between the parties. Trust is built of four things: reliability, convenience, responsiveness and relevance. These are also the most important elements of a positive customer experience, and the essentials of the customer experience edge.

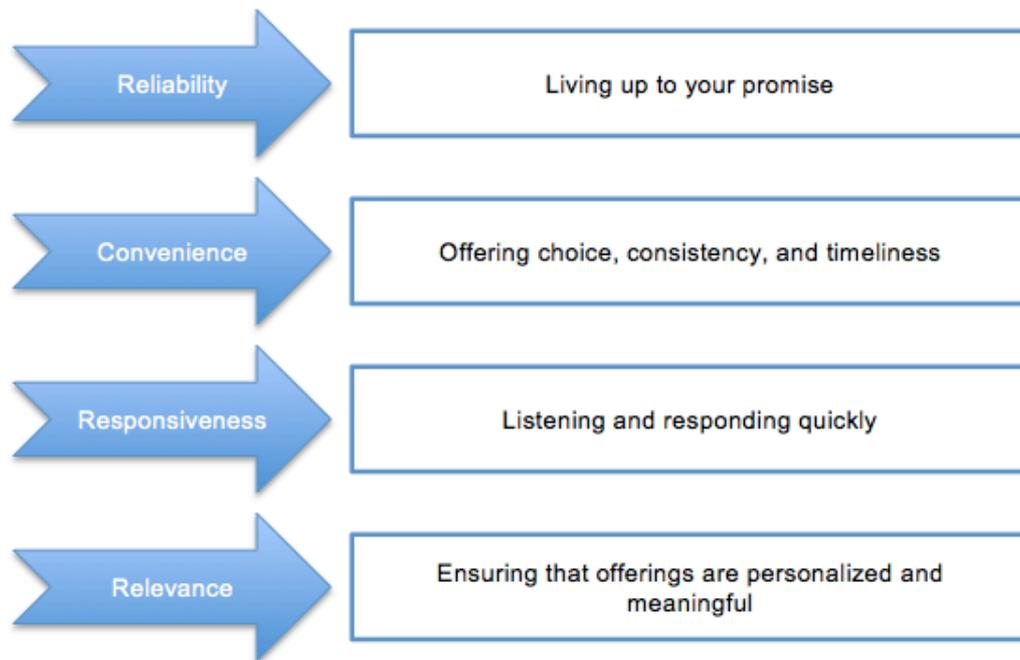


Figure 2. Four customer experience essentials (Soudagar & al. 2012, 18)

These elements can be seen in practice through the following. First, reliability is the most important element of a positive customer experience. Without it, the company can't deliver the other elements. Reliability refers to, for example, on-time deliveries. Second, convenience means the ease of doing business with the company, for example using multiple channels to interact with the customers. Third, responsiveness refers to listening the feedback you receive and acting on it. Finally, relevance refers to delivering what really matters to individual customers at a specific time. The figure refers to a survey done by Bloomberg BusinessWeek Research Services (BBRS), where 307 respondents named the most important elements of a positive customer experience. (Soudagar & al. 2012, 18-19.)

As mentioned before, all these elements build trust. Trust between the parties is the basis of a good customer relationship. Without trust, the company cannot expect loyalty, advocacy, engagement, or participation, which, on the other hand, build the customer experience edge. (Soudagar & al. 2012, 21.)

### 2.2.2 Psychological perspectives

Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 43) also recognize the psychological perspective, like Shaw and Hamilton (2016, 8). They state that a positive customer experience includes four psy-

chological perspectives that create different emotions. These perspectives are also something that companies should aim to deliver. First, it supports the customer's identity and self-image. Second, it surprises and creates strong experiences. Third, it is memorable. Fourth, it makes the customer want more. Next, all of these aspects are described more in detail.

The first perspective is that a good customer experience supports the customer's identity and self-image. In B2B the experience should support the professional image as well. For example, a manager decides to buy some consulting or expertise services. If the service then fails in any way, it can put the manager into a bad light and wound their professional identity. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 43-44.)

The second perspective is that a good customer experience surprises and creates experiences. The stronger the feelings, encounters and images born are, the stronger the experience will be. A strong positive experience involves a powerful feeling, usually joy, happiness, an epiphany, or delight. Experiences are also closely linked with positive surprise. Ordinary, every-day-things do not create experiences, which is why surprises depend heavily on culture and context. Things that surprise some people are self-evident for others. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 45.)

The third perspective is that a good customer experience is memorable. Mediocrity and ordinariness are often forgotten. Companies must aim to create positive engrams to customers' minds, and can only reach that through systematic management of customer experiences. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 48.)

The last perspective is that a good customer experience makes the customer want more. People often chase the feeling of satisfaction or pleasure. This is why companies should focus on creating positive customer experiences. When a customer gets a positive experience, he/she will most likely come back for more. In the best case scenario, the customer experience makes the customers seek up the company, instead of the company having to find potential customers themselves. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 49.)

### **2.2.3 The elements of a smooth customer experience**

Gerdt and Korhikoski (2016, 38-39) introduce the different elements that should be focused on to create a smooth customer experience. These elements are quite rational and some even physical. The elements are described in the figure below.



Figure 3. The elements of a smooth customer experience (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 39)

First, companies have to focus on stakeholders and follow and understand what they are talking about. More and more conversation is happening outside the company's influence, their own media and channels. Therefore, companies have to develop ways to follow this conversation, and make sure they are able to react to the messages originating from the outside sources. Consequently, next the companies have to focus on the channels. To be able to follow the conversation, the company must meet the customers in the channels the customers prefer. It is also important that the interaction is channel independent, meaning that a conversation started from a Facebook chat message and continued through email or phone call, can be combined as one big entirety and not processed each channel separately. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 39-40.)

Perhaps the most challenging element of a smooth customer experience is to personalize the experience in other encounters than physical and other personal encounters. Personalization tests the personnel's ability to identify the customer, or the customer persona, and adapt own behavior according to it. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 40.)

Companies are demanded to have an increasing amount of real-time information about their customers, but many companies struggle with updating even basic information about the customer to their systems. There is a need for new processes and tools to face this demand. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 40.) Similarly, McColl-Kennedy & al. (2015, 432) state that organizations need to take a long-term approach to gathering information about the customer experience. To be able to create personalized and meaningful experiences,

there is a need to obtain data on the customer's practices and interactions across all channels. Customer data is an asset that needs to be managed systematically, like any other assets. Finally, companies also need inner tools to secure a smooth communication and processes inside the company.

### 2.3 Measuring customer experience

This chapter presents and discusses theory about measuring customer experiences. It discusses some measuring practices, keys to receiving reliable data, and how to plan the measurement model. Finally, this chapter also presents three key performance indicators (KPIs): Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT), Net Promoter Score (NPS) and Customer Effort Score (CES). Their suitabilities as KPIs are also discussed.

The strategic purpose of measuring customer experiences is to use the knowledge to create positive and desirable customer experiences to reach higher levels of long-term customer loyalty (Zolkiewski & al. 2017, 173). According to Forrester's model, customer experience should be measured on three levels: on customer relationship level; in different points of the customer journey map; and in key touch points, or moments of truth. Customer relationship level indirectly measures the success of the customer encounters, whereas measuring the customer journey touch points and moments of truth are direct metrics of customer experience. (Löytänä & Korhikoski 2014, 137.)

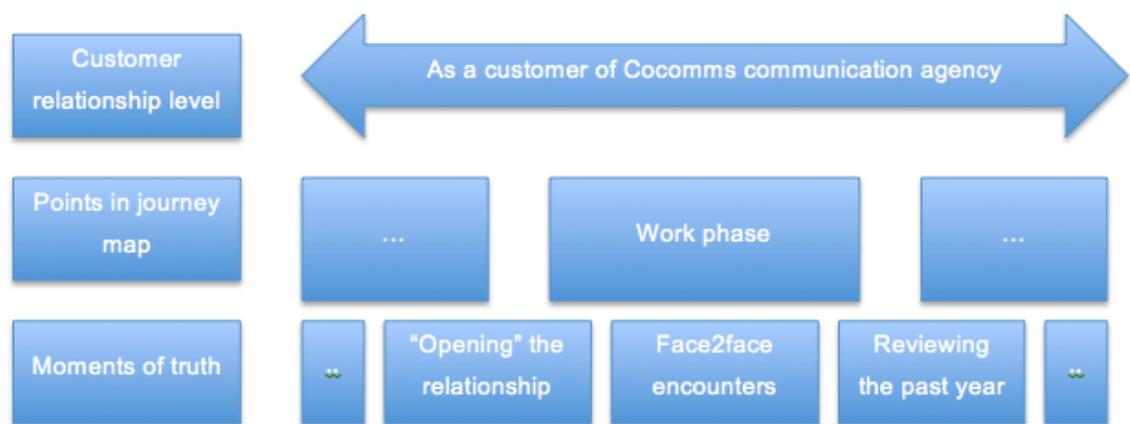


Figure 4. Measuring customer experience on different levels in a communication agency (adapted from Löytänä & Korhikoski 2014, 137)

First, customer relationship level measuring comprises the measuring done during the customer lifecycle. It helps understand the customer's experiences comprehensively and is often used in B2B companies. Second, measuring the customer's journey map refers to

systematically measuring the identified touch points between the customer and the company. Through this, the company can recognize the touch points where they've done especially well, or the ones that have the most to develop. The third level is the moments of truth. The companies should measure closely the encounters that are especially important to exceeding the customer expectations. Often, there aren't enough resources to properly measure all the encounters, so it is vital to recognize and choose the most essential or relevant ones. The aim is to form a suitable measurement "package" of the above-mentioned different levels to suit a specific company. The measurement package should support the company's objectives set for customer experience and business operations. (Löytänä & Korhonen 2014, 136-138.)

However, Zolkiewski & al. (2017, 173) point out a difference in B2B and B2C companies. B2C experiences are generally easier to measure, because they focus on a single customer journey, which measures the individual perceptions. They argue that this "single journey" approach is unlikely to be helpful in B2B companies, because there are multiple actors involved, such as buyers, managers and board members. All of these actors interact in different ways, have different objectives, and perceive the experience differently. Therefore, they state that there's a need for identifying better measures for evaluating this diversity of B2B customer experiences.

The aim of the measuring is to gain such reliable data that it can be used to make decisions about developing the business operations. Multiple theorists state that there are three cornerstones to reliable measuring data: correct questions, correct time and correct target group. Next, the keys to reliable data will be discussed more in detail.

The first key is *correct questions*. Often, companies use solely the Net Promoter Score (NPS) to study customer experience, which means asking the customers how willing they are to recommend the company on a scale from 0-10. However, this question leaves a lot of important information unanswered, such as why the customers give the company a specific NPS score. NPS should be supplemented with other questions as well, to find out what are the things that would have to be changed for the customer to give a better NPS grade for the company. (Löytänä & Korhonen 2014, 141.)

The second key is *correct time*. There are multiple opportunities to measure the customer experiences. Some encounters are good to be measured right after, so that the customer remembers what actually happened and the feelings evoked. On the other hand, some encounters shouldn't be measured too soon, because the impact takes a longer time to show. Companies often struggle with the thought that there are too many surveys that no

one has the time to answer. However, by optimizing the measuring process the response rate can actually be increased. Optimizing refers to better planning, and for example asking less frequently but from the correct people. (Löytänä & Korhikoski 2014, 142-143.)

The third key is *correct target group*. Having the correct target group is especially important in B2B companies. There should be responses from at least the most important client companies and from the right persons inside a specific company. (Löytänä & Korhikoski 2014, 142.)

Similarly, Brooks (2016, 186) recognizes that the keys to receiving trustworthy data is targeting the right customers, asking the right questions, and asking them at the right time. First, she introduces a concept of “voice according to value”, meaning that a company should use a sampling strategy that ensures they are receiving representation from key customer segments according to their value to the company. She states that especially in B2B companies, the sampling strategies are more complex, because there are several contacts that have an influence on the buying decision. In such cases, the sampling strategy has to target high-value individuals and prioritize highest-value accounts and ensure their feedback.

Next, according to Brooks (2016, 187) the company has to consider what is the correct metric for them. Companies have to also consider how the different metrics work together or whether they overlap. Last step according to Brooks (2016, 187) is to consider when to collect feedback from customers. She introduces two approaches: relationship and transactional. “The relationship” approach refers to collecting feedback from experiences in all touch-points, whereas the “transactional” approach obtains feedback at a particular touch-point that is most relevant.

According to Gerdt and Korhikoski (2016, 162) planning how to measure customer experience should follow the steps in the figure below. In this thesis, the measuring is done based on Cocomms customer journey and discussions about the key touch points with the company representative, as well as on relationship level. The measuring has also been done keeping in mind the importance of a compact survey. When a company has a well functioning customer experience model they know what kind of experiences they produce, how can they be improved and what are the benefits of improving the experiences.

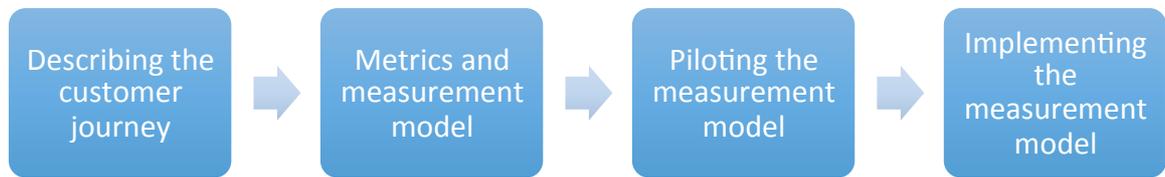


Figure 5. Steps in planning the measurement model (adapted from Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 162.)

Planning the measuring model should start from the customer perspective, referring to the customer journey and encounters. It is crucial to recognize the overall touch points with the company, and which ones of those are the most important. (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 163.) Next, the metrics have to be chosen. The decision is influenced by the business objectives, the ideal customer experience, and the type of the encounter that is measured (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 164). The third step is to pilot the measuring model. Piloting is a good way to for example reduce some fears, to get advocates, and to convince the management of the project. (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 172.) The final step is to implement the measuring model. On top of actual execution, it involves committing the people and training them. Too often, the measuring starts from the tools. Instead, it should begin from the customer's journey. The measuring should happen in the channel the customer uses, not in a way that is the easiest for the company. (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 174-175.)

Finally, Soudagar & al. (2012, 61) point out the importance of creating "listening" mechanisms, analyzing the feedback gotten and acting on it. These mechanisms collect both requested and unrequested feedback, such as surveys, social media monitoring, customer e-mails, comments on company blog, and feedback on third-party sites. They also remind that the insights a company receives through these mechanisms are valuable only if the company acts on them. This can mean redefining the processes, or developing or redesigning the products and services offered.

Next, the three key performance indicators are presented: Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT), Net Promoter Score (NPS) and Customer Effort Score (CES). Traditionally, measuring customer experiences or the relationship with the customer has happened through measuring *customer satisfaction (CSAT)*. CSAT is measured by dividing the number of satisfied customers with the number of all respondents (Ahvenainen & al. 2017, 26). Typical features of customer satisfaction measurements are that they're done once or twice a year, they cover all the departments in a company, and the results are reviewed once but don't lead to any concrete actions. (Löytänä & Korhikoski 2014, 134-135.)

Mittal (2016, 570-573) states that many studies have linked customer loyalty with customer satisfaction. Some studies add other variables, such as service quality, relationship quality and value, involvement, trust, or commitment as co-predictors to predict loyalty. These variables are correlated to satisfaction, because often they are transformed in the consumer mind as a feeling of satisfaction. Thus, these above mentioned variables are indirectly affecting loyalty through customer satisfaction. These elements create a hierarchy, where the variables mentioned above are at the bottom building satisfaction, which, on the other hand, builds loyalty.

However, Mittal states that there are different paths to loyalty than just through satisfaction. Likewise, the chapters of this thesis discuss whether customer satisfaction is the best predictor of loyalty. Finally, it is good to remember that the satisfaction-loyalty studies depend heavily on context, and how is it measured. Some studies measure satisfaction as a fulfillment of expectations, whereas some studies measure affective satisfaction, for example feeling delighted, pleasantly surprised, or upset. Measuring satisfaction more comprehensively is the key to improving the satisfaction-loyalty link. (Mittal 2016, 570-573.)

Similarly, Löytänä and Korteso (2014, 136) state that the biggest challenge is that customer satisfaction surveys don't always predict loyalty. According to multiple researches, over 80% of customers leaving a company can be satisfied. Therefore, customer satisfaction actually isn't a powerful enough indicator of the customer's preparedness and willingness to stay with the company. (Löytänä & Korhikoski 2014, 136.)

Instead, companies should focus on other metrics. As mentioned before, *Net Promoter Score (NPS)* is a quantitative question that measures how willing the customer would be to recommend a company, or its products or services, on a scale from 0-10. It was developed by Fred Reichheld and was first introduced in 2003 in an article in Harvard business Review. It is calculated by subtracting the percentage of "detractors" (score 0-6) from the

“promoters” (score 9-10), which results in a comparable NPS index. The result can range from a low of -100, where everyone is a detractor, to a high of 100, where everyone is a promoter. (Net Promoter Network.)

Naturally the aim is that there would be more promoters than detractors. It is important to remember that the overall impact of the promoters and the detractors is the overall value of the customers that are gained through them, or taken away by them. Through calculating the overall impacts, the companies can have concrete examples of why they should invest in customer experience and measuring it. (Löytänä & Korkiakoski 2014, 147.)

As mentioned, NPS is a good starting point, but should be supplemented with other metrics as well. Some challenges of the NPS are that it is measured too rarely, and it isn't really understood why the respondent recommends or doesn't recommend the company. Löytänä and Korkiakoski (2014, 145) suggest that the NPS question should be asked after every encounter, and it should concern only the willingness to recommend based on that single encounter. In addition, the results should be properly analyzed, by for example the management contacting every promoter and detractor.

Finally, NPS is also a valuable system for the management use. The importance and superiority of the NPS has been debated. The critics have argued that it doesn't have any superior qualities compared to other key performance indicators. However, the promoters state that NPS contains a benefit: segment division. The customers can be segmented to promoters and detractors and NPS can therefore be used for relationship management. Other KPI's give an overall view of the customer satisfaction, but alone aren't enough for relationship management. (Faltejsková, Dvůráková & Hotovcová 2016, 97-98.) Similarly, Brooks (2016, 186) states that the NPS can be a segmenting tool itself, helping a company to understand who their most loyal customers are and how to focus on the high-loyalty and high-value segments.

*Customer Effort Score (CES)* measures how much effort did the customer have to put forth to handle their request. It was developed by Dixon, Freeman & Toman and was first introduced in an article in Harvard Business Review in 2010. It is measured on a scale from 1 (very low effort) to 5 (very high effort). The bottom line idea is that reducing customer effort creates loyal customers. (Check Market.) Reducing efforts in practice means helping the customers solve their problems quickly and easily by removing obstacles. There can be three recurring problems identified that customers face that focus specifically on customer effort. First, customers often have to contact the company repeatedly to get their issues resolved. Second, customers have to repeat same information multiple

times. And finally, customers often have to switch from one service channel to another. (Dixon, Freeman & Toman 2010, 4.)

There aren't as clear instructions for using CES as there are for NPS. It can be calculated the same way: by subtracting the high effort scores from low effort scores. However, CES can also be used freely according to the company needs. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 168-169.) Ahvenainen & al. (2017, 28) present an updated version of CES by Customer Executive Board. It includes a broader seven step scale instead of five, to increase precision and ease the interpretation of customer loyalty.

Dixon & al. (2010,7) evaluated the predictive power of these three metrics, CSAT, NPS and CES, on customer loyalty, referring to customer's intention to keep doing business with the company, increase the amount they spend, or spread positive word of mouth. They found out that Customer Effort Score (CES) outperformed both NPS and CSAT in predicting behavior. Their findings implicate that from the customers who reported low effort, 94% expressed an intention to re-purchase and only 1% said they would speak negatively about the company. (Dixon & al. 2010, 7.)

Nevertheless, despite CES being a good predictor of customer loyalty, Zolkiewski & al. (2017, 176) make an interesting remark. Both NPS and CES fail to explain where the customer experience issues are, in which touch points. Therefore, these measures still provide an insufficient view of customer experience.

## **2.4 Managing customer experience**

Managing customer experience means strategically organizing every interaction between the customer and the organization throughout the customer lifecycle. The goal is to optimize customer interactions and create customer loyalty and customer advocacy. When a company is managing their customer experience, they constantly gather and analyze feedback, compare what they have learned and communicate with the customers. Shaw & al. (2010, 15) define that customer experience management is about seeing the world through the customers' eyes, thinking the way they think and feeling the way they feel.

Gerdt and Korhikoski (2016, 45-46) state that the bottom-line is that all companies produce experiences, whether they aim at it or not. Every company should aim to produce at least a stable customer experience, meaning that the experience is not dependent on the employee or channel that the customer is dealing with. A stable experience means that the company has been successful in eliminating the worst experiences. After this stage,

they can start focusing on developing experiences that create a competitive edge. To be able to improve the experiences, companies need to know their customers, understand the customer buying process or customer journey, and implement systematic measuring processes.

Customer experience management is different in every company. The starting point to managing customer experience and building it strategically is to define what the company is all about, what is the mission and vision, and then aligning the customer experience strategy according to that. Customer experience strategy should help the company fulfill their business strategy. Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 165-179) describe a 6-step model to managing customer experience. It includes six areas to follow that form a process for customer experience management. The model is described in the image below.



Figure 6. 6-step model to managing customer experience (adapted from Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 167)

Managing customer experience starts by defining an objective. The objective should answer questions such as what value are we producing to our customers; what concrete benefits are we providing; and what kind of experiences we want to produce to our customers. Next, the company can start developing procedures to reach the objectives in every touch point. Third, the company should organize the personnel to create experiences according to the objective. This includes recruiting, training, measuring, compensation and rewards, and engaging the management. After, the company can start executing the strategy. Often it involves redefining procedures, and setting up, removing and developing

processes. The actual experiences should also be measured: how similar are they to the company's objectives. Finally, managing customer experience is continuous and involves constant redefining and innovating. The buying behavior is constantly changing, there are new competitors entering the market, and there are new technologies that shape the environment. Therefore, investing in customer experience is a long-term commitment. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 167-178.)

Shaw and Hamilton (2016, 172) state that the reason an organization delivers the customer experience they do is because of the way the organization is. In addition, Shaw & al. (2010, 62) state that an organization's customer experience is reflected in the attitudes and behavior of its staff. This refers to how they are treated, empowered, and feel about working in that specific organization. Optimizing and implementing the customer experiences usually requires a change on a corporate culture level (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 45-46). Similarly, Temkin Group, a leading customer experience research, consulting and training firm, has found out that building a customer-centric organizational culture is the only way to lasting differentiation and increased loyalty (Temkin Group 2017). Organizational culture, or corporate culture, consists of the values, beliefs, behaviors and taken-for-granted assumptions of an organization. These refer to, for example, the work routines and how people talk about the issues the organization faces. Culture has a major influence on strategy as well. If the organization wants to develop strategies that are different than the previous ones, they need to be able to challenge, question and potentially change the organizational culture that supports the current strategy (Johnson, Whittington & Scholes 2011, 181).

There are multiple benefits for managing customer experience. Shaw & al. (2010, 10) state that the people and experience side of business is a key differentiator in the commoditized markets when the core product or service is similar. Likewise, Palmer (2010, 197) states that the focus has now evolved to differentiating with experiences. It was argued already in the first chapter that companies can gain a competitive edge through customer experience. Moreover, managing customer experience is important due to multiple financial factors. Soudagar & al. (2012, 89) suggest that these financial drivers to implement customer experience successfully include reducing customer defection, acquiring new customers, and reducing cost of sales. Other financial drivers of customer experience are increased revenue and improved reputation. When you have created loyal customers, they will both buy more from you, and influence others to buy from you. They are more likely to make frequent purchases and less likely to buy from competitors. (Soudagar & al. 2012, 101-104.)

Finally, multiple theorists present similar important customer experience management areas. These are for example organizational culture, leadership, employees, strategy, and systems and processes. In the following chapters, these different areas will be discussed more in detail.

#### **2.4.1 Key management areas**

First, Shaw (2005, 6) describes a Naïve to Natural model. It helps organizations to understand how customer oriented they currently are. Shaw emphasizes that the experience an organization provides reflects the organization: if the organization is customer-centric, they will provide customer-centric experiences (Beyond Philosophy). The Naïve to natural model reveals how an organization's internal resources are prepared to deliver a great customer experience across nine orientation areas, all of which affect the customer experience. The orientation areas are:

- People
- Culture and leadership
- Strategy
- Systems
- Measurement
- Channel approach
- Customer expectations
- Marketing and brand
- Process

The model includes four stages: Naïve, transactional, enlightened, and natural. The organization can be at different stages in each of the orientation areas. The goal is to reach the “natural” stage. In it, the total focus is on the customer. The company is proactive and customer experience has been successfully implemented to the company's DNA. In this stage, the company has involved the customer in the design of the experiences and it has its own, unique customer experience recipe. They have developed data collecting methods, which they constantly use to improve their customer experience. (Shaw 2005, 21.)

Another theory with similar points is by Gerdt and Korhonen (2016, 96-97), who argue that a company should recognize those core processes and areas in a company that are crucial to develop concerning customer experience and the company's long-term financial success. These areas are described in the image below. They also argue that a strong customer service culture is the best way to produce excellent experiences. Customer service culture is built on the company's values. Organizational culture and values ensure customer-centric decision making in everyday situations. Next, each area is discussed more in detail.



Figure 7. Core development areas of customer experience (adapted from Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 97)

The first development area of customer experience is *culture*. The customer service culture can be referred to as a genuine willingness and a desire to serve the customers. Often, especially in Finnish culture, employees follow strictly the rules and processes, which might lead to bad customer service. Instead, the employees should be empowered to make the necessary decisions to produce a good experience. There is also a “can do” attitude required from the employees. When every employee is committed to creating good service experiences, they can be produced. (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 104.)

There are different strategies to building a customer service culture. Gerdt and Korhonen (2016, 99-100) present three strategies: the invisible customer, training through real-life customer service situations, and reverse customer thinking. The first strategy refers to “an extra chair strategy”, meaning including the customer to inner planning, decision-making situations and meetings. The empty, extra chair reminds of the customer and is a good way to consider what the customer would think of each decision. The next strategy refers to training employees through real-life customer service situations, for example video trainings. The last strategy refers to examining the products, services and practices in a reverse way. The starting point is the customer’s optimal situation that is then compared to the current situation.

Next, Gerdt and Korhikoski (2016, 109-110) discuss about the importance of *recruiting* the right type of employees. They highlight that it is more important to focus on the “potential” of the candidate, instead of their competences. Potential refers to the person’s ability to develop and change his or her actions based on the constantly changing environment, and especially according to the demands of the customer.

Third, they discuss about *empowering the personnel*. It is important that the employees working the closest to the customers understand the company’s strategy. To ensure that employees know how to act in every situation, the instructions have to be clear and the corporate culture strong. The employees must be empowered to make independent decisions based on the culture, trainings and decision-making support systems. In addition, the employees should be explained how different decisions influence the company’s profitability. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 112.)

*Rewarding* the personnel has also a huge impact on the result of the company. Rewards guide future behavior and focus areas. Often in Finnish companies, the personnel are rewarded based on sales. Consequently, acquiring new customers has become overrated. If the company focuses on rewarding based on acquiring new customers instead of building customer experience, customer experience won’t develop. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 114-115.)

Finally, Gerdt and Korhikoski discuss about *processes*. Companies are used to processes. They are often rooted to companies and quite hard to change, even though they might not serve the customer in the best possible way. That’s why start-ups often have a focus on customers. They have fewer processes and their procedures change according to needs. When the business grows, the amount of processes and bureaucracy increases, and the focus easily shifts from customers to the processes. Instead, mature companies should assess the existing processes and how necessary they really are. (Gerdt & Korhikoski 2016, 116-119.)

Similar management areas as the two theories above can be found from Temkin Group (2017). Temkin Group states that there are four customer experience competencies that companies must master if they want to succeed in customer experiences. These are purposeful leadership, compelling brand values, employee engagement, and customer connectedness. In practice, these are seen as operating consistently with a clear set of values, delivering on brand promises, aligning employees with the organization’s goals, and infusing customer insight across the organizations. Without one of these four competen-

cies the company is in risk of being stagnant, adrift, turbulent or disappointing. (Temkin Group 2017.)

#### **2.4.2 The importance of the personnel**

Gerdt and Korhonen (2016, 31) present the importance of the board of directors. It is important that the cultural change initiative starts from high enough in the organization. Sometimes, the board is missing sufficient vision and know-how in customer experience. In these cases, they are unable to make the powerful, strategic decision of transforming the organization to customer-centricity. In addition, without the know-how, the board is unable to guide, let alone supervise, how the operative management is carrying out the board's strategic customer experience decisions.

It is the management's job to place the customer at the center of operations. Therefore, the chief executive officer, CEO, is needed to regularly communicate why the change toward customer centricity is being done and what it actually means. If the customer experience is undertaken in only a few departments it is not transformative, it is marginal. As a consequence, the company will not be able to build trust, and therefore can't produce a profitable customer experience. (Soudagar & al. 2012, 23-26.)

The defining factor in the customer experience leader companies is that the executives in them believe in customer experience and are ready to invest in processes, funding and strategy. They also take action, and look for new ways to develop their customer experience to gain competitive advantage. (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 18-19.) There is a need for influential leaders who are passionate about the customers, and who believe that serving them will drive desired business outcomes. (Soudagar & al. 2012, 53.)

Löytänä and Korhonen (2014, 164) argue that without the employees' deep understanding of customer experience, it is impossible to implement the change on a personal level in every encounter with the customer. The employees in the entire organization must understand what customer experience is about, and they need to be willing and committed to serve customers better.

Finally, an interesting suggestion by Shaw & al. (2010, 63) is that before focusing on the customers' needs and emotions, companies should try to understand their employees' positive and negative emotions, what drives these feelings, and if there are any key segments in the personnel that like or dislike the organization. This way, the companies can find out if the customer experience values that the organization is trying to evoke in the

customers are actually perceived by the staff. It can also reveal whether your most valuable staff is emotionally engaged or not.

### **2.4.3 Management tools**

Customer experience theory and strategy are useless if the organization doesn't have the tools to implement and optimize the strategy and the experiences. Shaw and Hamilton (2016) present in their book "The Intuitive Customer" multiple valuable tools. They study in to the psychological perspectives and state that the aim is to understand how and why customers do things. Only through this the customer experiences can be optimized. (Shaw & Hamilton 2016, 194.)

Some tools that Shaw and Hamilton present are customer mirrors, evolution assessment, personas, and behavioral segmentation. First, customer mirrors refer to participating in the experience as if you're the customer. It is a valuable tool to get to see what the experience is really like. In business-to-business (B2B), the mirroring is more about observing the customer rather than acting as the customer. However, there are similar checklists for auditors both in B2B and B2C. It involves questions, such as what is the customer's goal; what habits did you observe the customer using; and what was the customer's emotional state at the end of the experience. (Shaw & Hamilton 2016, 163-167.)

The next tool they present is a "customer experience evolution assessment", for analyzing the existing customer experience program. It measures areas, such as customer knowledge, leadership commitment, sustainability, measurement, experience versus process design, infrastructure, and customer strategy. It assesses these on five stages on an evolutionary curve: deficient, undistinguished, differentiated, recommended, and advocate. (Shaw & Hamilton 2016, 173-176.)

Third, they present behavioral journey mapping and behavioral segmentation. There is a huge difference in process maps and journey maps. Process maps often follow the steps the organization would like the customer to take, whereas journey maps follow the customer's actual experience. Process maps are also often very rational, while behavioral journey maps should also include the emotional, subconscious and psychological aspects. In addition, Shaw and Hamilton highlight the importance of behavioral segmentation and further developing these segments into customer personas. When you know the persona, you can predict their actions and optimize their experience. However, behavioral segmentation might be harder in B2B, when there can be more than one contact person in one customer company. (Shaw & Hamilton 2016, 178-181.)

Gerdt and Korkiakoski (2016, 210) also offer some concrete tools to build excellent customer experiences. The tools they provide help to build a more customer centric culture and organization. Their tools help with strategy, aligning brand, employees, execution, understanding the elements of customer experience, and measuring and different metrics. Next, this thesis looks into the employee and execution tools.

First, they introduce a tool to empowering employees. It includes listing different development objectives, for example the employees understanding the company's strategy; the employees' ability to make independent decisions; and the investments and trainings conducted to benefit the employees. These objectives are set in a table, where one can see the person responsible for training the employees for each of these development objectives, what actions have been made and what were the results. By following the table, the company can make sure the employees are really empowered. (Gerdt & Korkiakoski 2016, 220-221.)

Another tool is for understanding the customer journey channels. It includes listing the most relevant channels for marketing, sales and customer service. After, the channels are drawn on a pie chart in the order of importance. Next, you draw spots in those channels that the customer actually uses. When you draw a line between the spots, you can see your company's typical customer journey. You can extend the picture by drawing a specific segment's buying process in to the picture. The customer's actual buying process can however be very different from what the company thinks it looks like. Finally, you can assess the picture. Do the processes look similar? Are you missing some channels that the customers are actually using? By looking at the pictures you've drawn, you can find ways to develop your customer experience. (Gerdt & Korkiakoski 2016, 224-228.)

### **3 Research design and methods**

This chapter describes the research design, and data collection and analysis methods used in this thesis. It also discusses the some risks and risk management issues. Generally, the data collection method depends on the research problem or question. Consequently, the analysis methods depend on the data collection methods. Information gathered by a specific data collection method has to be analyzed by a specific, suitable method. Data collection and analysis methods can be divided into two categories, quantitative and qualitative methods. (Kananen 2010, 28.)

#### **3.1 Research approach and methods**

Quantitative research requires knowledge of the subject and a wide theoretical framework. The idea is to ask a small group of people, a sample, questions about the research problem. The responds are considered to represent the entire frame population. Quantitative research requires a lot of responds so that the responds are considered reliable and can represent the entire group. The responds are analyzed with statistical methods. Therefore, quantitative research is based on measuring that aims to produce justified, reliable and general information. (Kananen 2008, 10.)

Qualitative research, on the other hand, is most often used when the subject is un-known, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the subject or a good description of the subject, or when there are new theories and hypotheses created. Usually, qualitative research is needed before quantitative to get familiar with the subject. One difference between the methods is in the number of research objectives. In qualitative research there's only one or few research objectives, whereas in quantitative research there are tens or hundreds of objectives. (Kananen 2010, 36-41.)

Both of these methods can be used simultaneously in the same research. Sometimes it is required to strengthen the results. Generally, it can be considered that using multiple methods produces more reliable information, however, that is not always the case. There are also two methods used in this thesis, a quantitative Web survey of the customers and a qualitative interview of a partner agency. (Kananen 2008, 10.)

There are many things to consider while choosing a research method, such as the type of population, question form, question content, response rates, and costs (Floyd & Fowler 2014, 63-68). It was decided that the survey in this thesis is self-administered and the questionnaire conducted through web with a service called Surveypal. This is less time and resource consuming than for example telephone surveys, which are often contrasted

to web surveys (Groves & al. 2009, 159). Some other benefits of self-administered data collections include that the respondent doesn't have to share answers with the interviewer, which makes the collection of sensitive data more likely valid. This thesis aims to gather such sensitive information about the customers' experiences and emotions, so self-administration was a must to get as honest responses as possible. Self-administration can also result in more thoughtful and reflective responses (Andres 2012, 47). In addition, using the Internet brings its own benefits, such as low cost, providing time for thinking the answers through, and potential high speed of response. Online surveys are also good for contingency questions (Sue & Ritter 2012, 5). On top of the above mentioned, the questionnaire can be considered easier from the customer's point of view. Organizing a personal interview is time consuming both from the interviewer and interviewee perspective. On the other hand, some possible disadvantages of self-administered data collections include that there's no one to control quality, meaning that all the questions are answered properly and that the respondents understand the questions. Therefore, it is crucial that the questionnaire is carefully designed and tested. (Floyd & Fowler 2014, 72-73.) Another crucial disadvantage is the abandonment of the survey, referring to the respondents quitting in the middle of the questionnaire (Sue & Ritter 2012, 18).

Interview is a research method that provides a picture of the interviewee's opinions, thoughts, attitudes and feelings about a particular subject. Thus, interviews are planned and designed beforehand and aim to collect some specific knowledge. Interview is a social interaction that involves both verbal and non-verbal communication. Both parties influence one another. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 41-42.) The interview in this thesis covers the company perspective on customer experience. The interview aims to find out examples of planning, managing and measuring customer experience and some improvement ideas for Cocomms. The interview was chosen for the following reasons. Interview is a direct interaction, so the interviewer has an opportunity to guide the research and find out motives and deeper meanings for the interviewees' responses. Interview also gives the respondent an opportunity to describe the interview subject as freely as possible, which is important in this thesis. It also provides an opportunity to gather examples that describe well the subject. In addition, interviews provide an opportunity to observe a lot of non-linguistic factors that can help understand the subject on a deeper level. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 34-36.)

The qualitative interview is done as a telephone interview. This was decided because of the costs. There is only one informant in the interview and the questions are open ended, so a telephone interview works better than for example web survey. Also, this way the misinterpretations can be avoided and both can ask some specifying questions. In addi-

tion, there aren't any travelling costs to the Norwegian partner agency, only the time cost of the parties. (Groves & al. 2009, 168; 225.)

### 3.2 Research design and data collection

The research design aims to collect information for the investigative questions defined in the beginning of this thesis. The figure below describes the research design and methods more closely. It is also discussed more in detail in the following chapters below the figure.

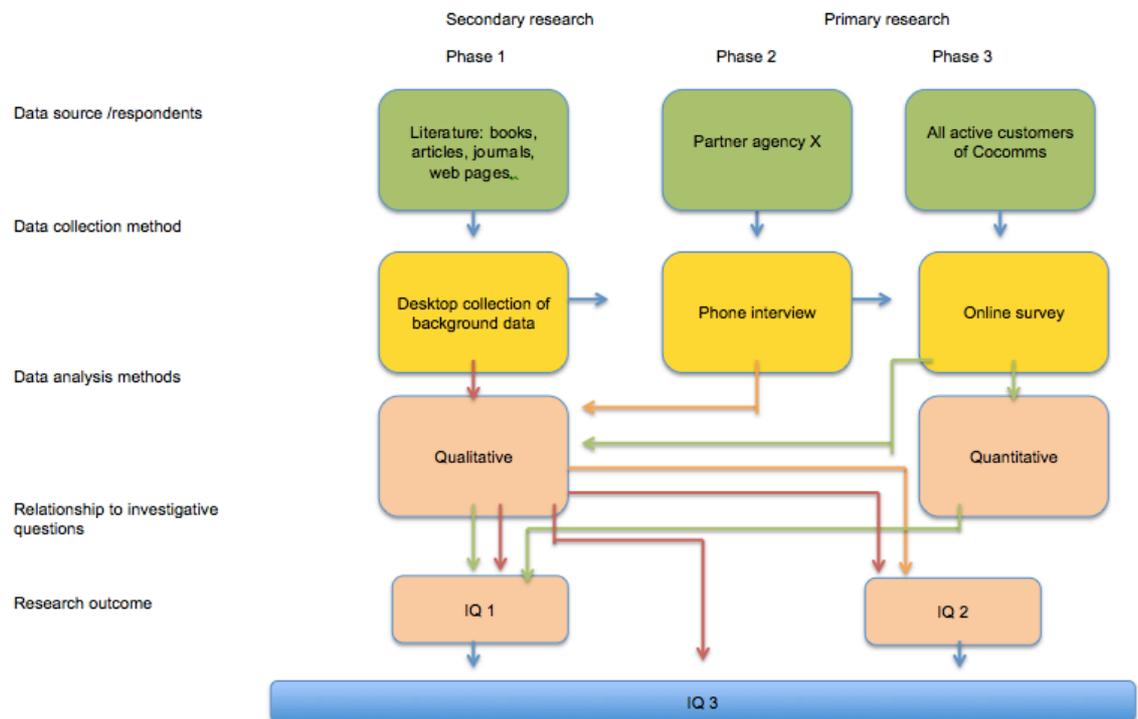


Figure 8. Research design and methods

#### 3.2.1 Primary data

The primary data consists of the quantitative survey send to selected customers of Cocomms. The primary data aims to answer the investigative question 1: "What are the current strengths and weaknesses of Cocomms' customer experience from their customers' perspective in the following areas:

IQ 1.1. in chosen touch points?

IQ 1.2. on customer relationship level?"

The frame population is the group of target population members that have a chance to be selected to the survey sample (Groves & al. 2009, 45). In this case, the sample is all the active customers of Cocomms, 116 possible respondents. Therefore, this is a census survey and there is no separate sampling needed. The sample includes informants from different sized companies and from different industries to ensure the sample frame is comprehensive and to find out as many perspectives as possible. The survey respondents in each company are the contact groups that Cocomms has dealt with. There can also be multiple respondents from the same company. In addition, the “voice according to value” concept introduced by Brooks (2016, 186) is followed in this thesis. The survey is targeted to the management level employees.

The survey is anonymous and will be sent both in Finnish and English. It is open for approximately two weeks. The survey is anonymous so the nonrespondents can't be contacted. The survey consists of seven themes: choosing a service provider, pricing, quality of the service, team, communication, customer relationship, and the customer's experiences. Thus, the survey focuses on specific touch points and customer relationship. The survey involves closed, multiple choice, ranking, and open-ended questions. The response options consist of check boxes, matrices, and open-ended text boxes. The respondents are invited to participate the survey with an email invitation by Cocomms. In the beginning of the questionnaire there's a short introduction by the author (look at appendix 1) describing the purpose of the survey, how the respondents were gathered, the identity of the author, how the data will be used, the average length of time to complete the survey, and how long the survey will be open.

Another source of primary data is the interview with the Norwegian partner agency X. The interview aims to respond to the investigative question 2: “How is customer experience planned, managed and measured in Cocomms' partner agency X in Norway?” The respondent is a partner of the company, and the interview is conducted in English. This specific agency was chosen, because it has close co-operation with Cocomms, for example joint projects. Originally, the interview was supposed to be conducted before the survey so that there's a possibility to make small adjustments to the questionnaire based on the interview, if necessary. However, due to timely issues, the interview was conducted after the survey was sent.

The interview is a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview is defined as having ready, complete questions to ask from all the interviewees, but allowing the interviewees answer in their own words, without pre-defined respond options. Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008, 47) also introduce a “focused interview”. It relies on the interviewer's knowledge

about the subject, the assumptions he/she has made based on his/her knowledge, and the interview frame he/she has created based on his/her knowledge.

The interview in this thesis covers the company perspective on customer experience. It is conducted as a telephone interview. The questions follow Shaw's Naïve to Natural model (2005, 6), more specifically the nine orientation areas mentioned in it. These are strategy, culture and leadership, people, systems and processes, and measurement. In addition, there are few questions about the customer perspective on the specific company's customer experience. For more detailed information and the complete interview framework, look at appendix 2. The interview framework is sent to the interviewee well beforehand. The estimated length of the interview is about an hour. The interviewer doesn't aim to write everything down during the interview. There can be some language barriers or technical issues on a phone conversation, which might affect hearing the responses. Therefore, the interview is recorded and the results analyzed later.

### **3.2.2 Secondary data**

Secondary data is used to gain an understanding of the theoretical background of the topic. This understanding is then used to form a survey questionnaire and interview framework. The secondary data of this thesis consists of books, articles, journals and web pages. The author aimed to study various perspectives on customer experience. The author also joined a Customer experience LinkedIn group, which introduced a lot of interesting articles and discussions about the topic. For example Temkin Group was found through LinkedIn. In addition, the secondary data is used to support the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this thesis. Based on primary and secondary data together, the thesis aims to answer the investigative question 3: "What recommendations can be concluded for improving Cocomms' customer experience?"

### **3.3 Analysis methods**

The survey results were analyzed using quantitative methods, whereas the interview results were analyzed using qualitative methods. The survey results were first shifted from SurveyPal to Excel for analyzing. First, the data required some cleaning. Despite initial testing, the data came in a form that contained both text and numbers. Therefore, the responses had to be recoded to contain only numbers. In addition, the Finnish and English results had to be combined for analyzing. First, the author analyzed every question separately and calculated frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Frequency shows the numbers or percentages of respondents who chose each response option. Mean is the

average of a set of responses. Standard deviation, on the other hand, shows variability: it indicates how close to the mean the observations are on average. (Sue & Ritter 2012, 153-157.) After, the author draw different charts and tables. The open-ended questions, on the other hand, were color-coded to find distinctive categories. Then, the author calculated frequencies for the categories. Finally, the results were viewed again, to decide which of the results were important to present.

The interview was recorded and the results analyzed based on the recording. During the interview, the author also wrote some keywords down. Interviews include allowing the interviewees answer in their own words and describe the interview subject as freely as possible. Therefore, there was a lot of information gained through the interview. The analyzing and categorizing was done by comparing the interview responses to the interview framework. This way only the relevant information could be found from the discussion. In addition, the respondent gave a lot of useful practical examples, which were also written down in the notes.

### **3.4 Risks and risk management**

When working with surveys and interviews, the biggest risk of the thesis is that something goes wrong with them. For example, if there aren't enough responses or the feedback is not constructive enough to write proper improvement suggestions. Also, the respondents might not understand every question, or leave some questions unanswered for other reasons. In addition, there can be some important questions left out that are noticed only after the questionnaire is sent. These risks aren't as significant in the interview as they are in the survey, because the interviewer is present for specifying anything necessary. Nevertheless, to manage the risks the research methods have to be carefully chosen. Response rate can be increased with for example incentives, however incentives weren't used in this thesis. The questions were all compulsory, to reduce item nonresponse. In addition, there should be enough possible respondents in the survey, so the sample needs to be big enough. This way, if there are challenges with some, we can still collect reliable data and it doesn't have that big of an impact. In addition, the questionnaire and interview framework were tested to make sure everything is understandable and consistent.

There can also be some mistakes made while analyzing the results, for example while recoding or combining the English and Finnish results. This can be avoided by precision and doublechecking the results. Analyzing the open ended questions and the interview results is ambiguous, meaning it's always from the author's point of view. For example,

most of the answers were in Finnish and it required a lot of translating. Therefore, the original and translated versions are included in the appendices for everyone to check.

## 4 Results

This chapter presents both the results for the survey and then for the interview. There were 116 possible respondents all together, and 34 of them answered the survey. 30 answered the Finnish questionnaire and four the English version. Thus, the response rate is approximately 31%. The response rate was slightly lower than expected. The low response rate might decrease the descriptiveness of the population or make it harder to generalize key findings. However, there are respondents from multiple industries, from both longer and short-term customers, and the responses are very similar, there weren't any extreme grades given. Therefore, the responses can be considered sufficient to form a descriptive picture of Cocomms' customer experience.

The interview lasted approximately 50 minutes and there was a lot of information gained. There was only one respondent in the interview so the responses were categorized only based on the predefined interview framework. The respondent also gave a lot of interesting practical examples to make it easier to understand the context.

### 4.1 Survey results

The survey results are presented in the forms of charts, tables and lists. Charts describe frequencies. Tables on the other hand, describe the mean, standard deviation and frequency. Standard deviations express how much on average the opinions differ from the average. The bigger the standard deviation, the more the opinions have shifted or differed. Open-ended questions are described through some examples that are listed. The lists present both the original and the author's translated version. For the complete list of open-ended answers, see appendix 3.

As background questions, the respondents were asked the industry of their company, their position in the company and how long they had been customers of Cocomms. There was quite a good representation of multiple industries. Most of the respondents were from manufacturing (26.5%), and human health and social work activities (20.6%). The "other, what?" respondents were from pharmaceutical industry, and organizations and unions. (Figure 9.)

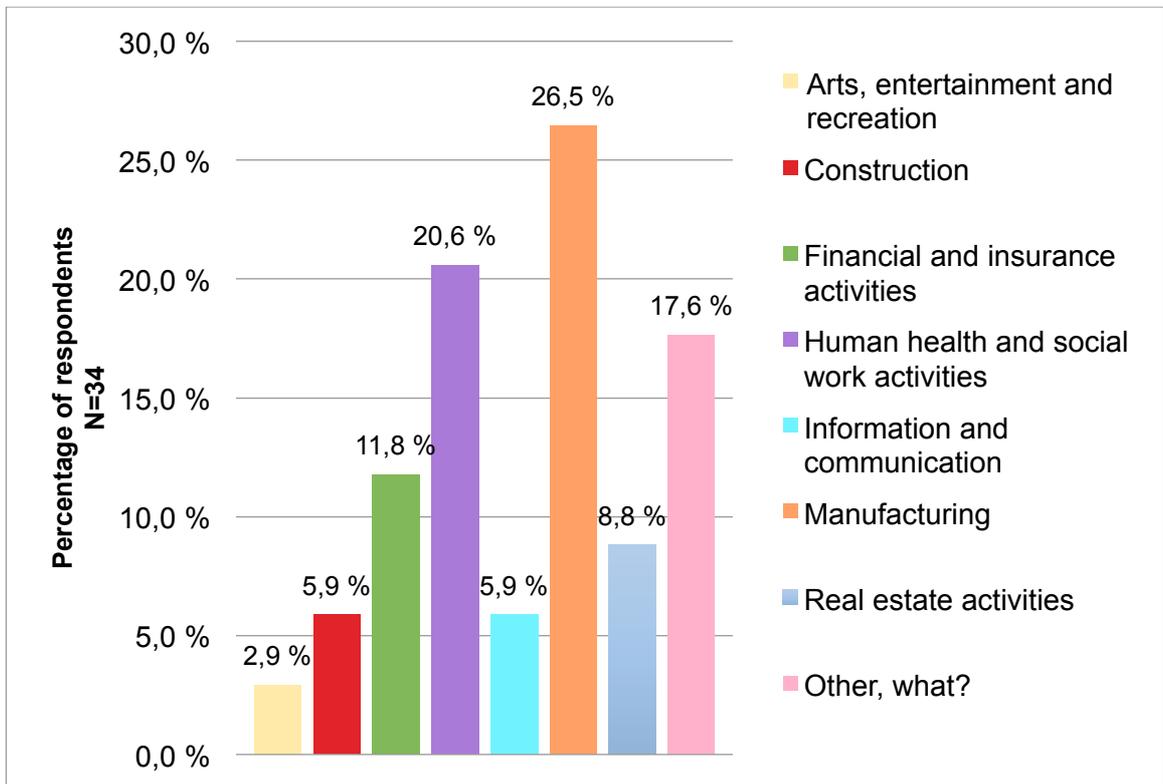


Figure 9. Industry of the company

Most of the respondents (47%) were also in a senior salaried employee position. The objective was to get the responses from the top management. However, most of the responses gotten are still from a senior position, and there are also some top management responses included. (Figure 10.)

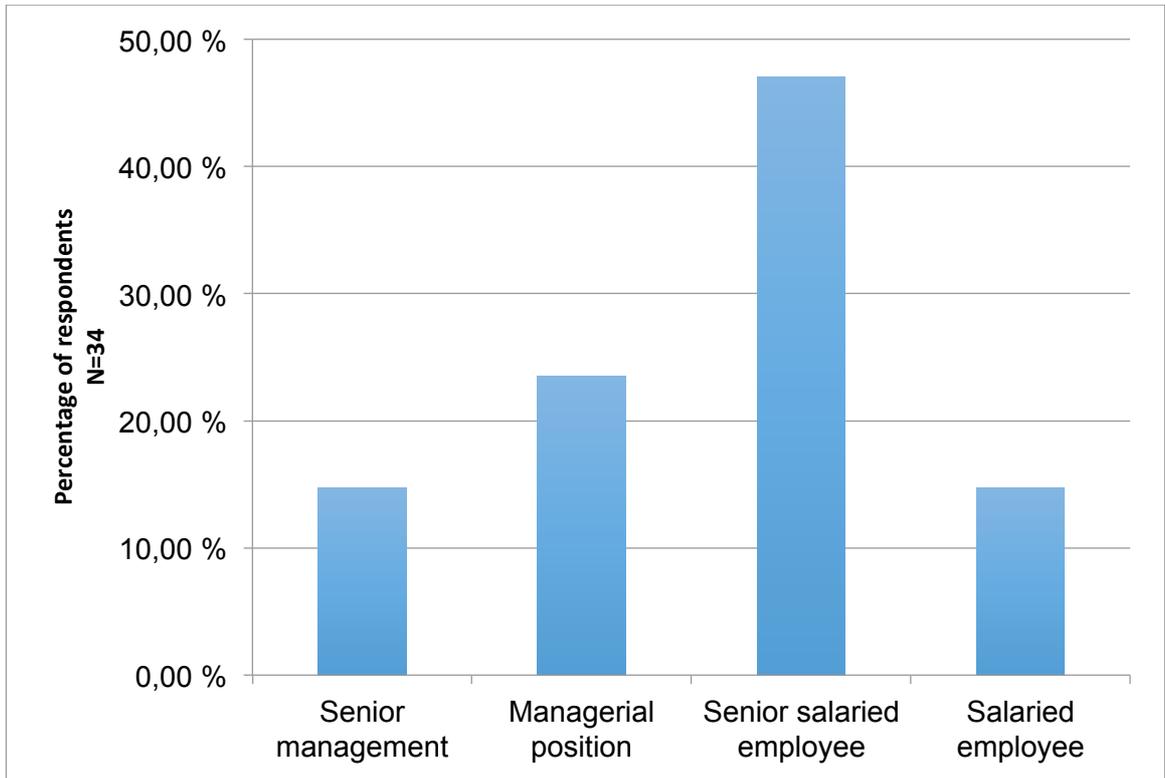


Figure 10. Position in the company

In addition, the respondents were asked how long they had been customers of Cocomms. The majority of the respondents (56%) had been customers for 1-3 years. (Figure 11.)

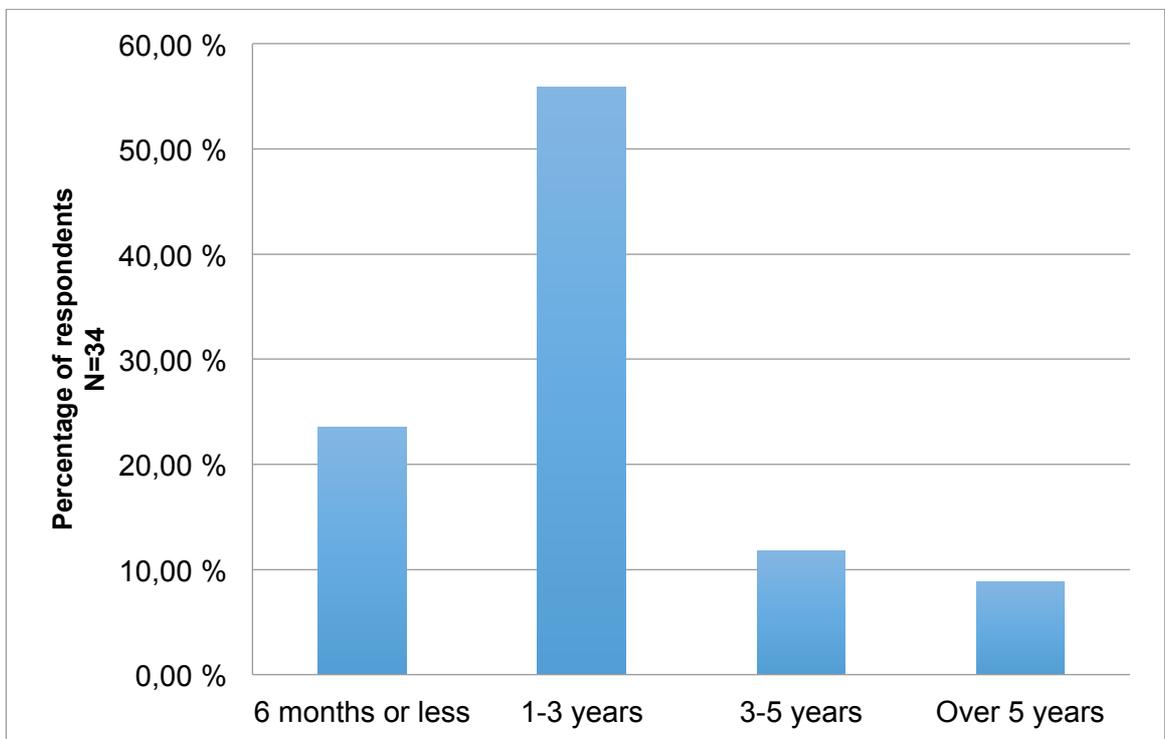


Figure 11. The length of customer relationship

#### 4.1.1 Choosing a service provider

The first theme of the survey was choosing a service provider. The respondents were asked to assess how important different factors, such as personnel, experience, references, accessibility, pricing et cetera were to them when choosing a service provider. The results show that the most important factor is clearly personnel, which is consistent with the findings in theory and the interview. Communication industry is a people business and that can be seen here also. The rest of the answers were graded quite similarly. However, only “accessibility”, referring to for example physical location, and “finding information on the company homepage” got any “not at all important” responses. (Figure 12.)

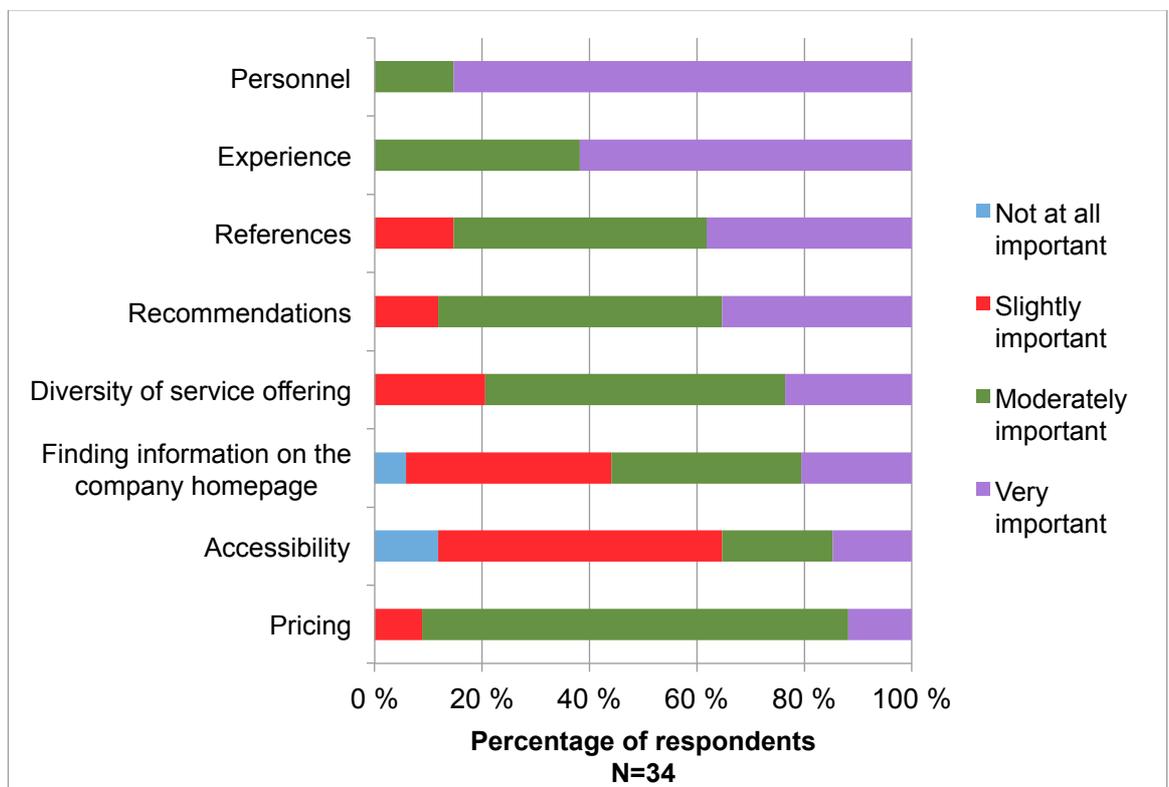


Figure 12. Choosing a service provider

The respondents were also asked a few open-ended questions. First, to describe how they found Cocomms, and then what they knew about Cocomms beforehand. Most of the respondents found Cocomms through recommendations and others' experiences. Many also worked in company that was already working with Cocomms when the respondent started there. Some also had found Cocomms through bidding and some through Internet searches. The examples below show both the original response and the translated version by the author. For the complete list of answers, look at appendix 3.

- *"Previous experience in my team"* [Aiempi kokemus tiimissä]

- *“Through my contacts and own networks, so asked colleagues for experiences”* [Konktatieni ja omien verkostojen kautta eli siis kysyin kollegoilta kokemuksia.]
- *“I didn’t find Cocomms, they had a long history with our company”* [En löytänyt Cocommsia vaan heillä on pitkäaikainen historia yhtiömme kanssa]
- *“The co-operation was on-going when I started”* [Yhteistyö oli jo käynnissä yrityksessä, kun aloitin.]
- *“It was chosen through my organization, through bidding”* [oli valittu organisaationi kautta, kilpailutuksen kautta]
- *“Through web pages”* [Verkkosivujen avulla.]

Next the respondents were asked what they knew about Cocomms beforehand. Most of the respondents answered that they did not know anything, or knew only the name of the company. The other respondents mentioned Cocomms’ reputation, and brought up Cocomms’ know-how and expertise in healthcare communications. Based on the answers, it seems that Cocomms is quite un-known. The respondents that knew Cocomms commented on the health sector expertise, and generally good reputation based on high quality and diversity. Some examples of the answers are the following:

- *“I knew the organization by name-one communication agency among others”* [Tiesin organisaation nimeltä - yksi viestintätoimisto muiden joukossa.]
- *“Not much, we had gotten familiar with the web pages and references”* [En paljoakaan, olimme tutustuneet nettisivuihin ja referensseihin.]
- *“I knew that it’s a communication agency leaning towards the health sector, which means a lot to us”* [Tiesin, että on terveystoimisto kallellaan oleva viestintätoimisto, jolla on iso merkitys meille.]
- *“Quite little, except that the agency is capable in large projects too. The agency’s expensive reputation was possibly something I had heard.”* [Aika vähän muuta kuin että toimisto on kykeneväinen laajoihin projekteihin. Toimiston kallis maine oli ehkä myös sellainen jonka olin kuullut.]
- *“Knew them by name, because the agency is a moderately big operator in the industry. The agency has quite good reputation.”* [Tunsin nimeltä, koska toimisto on kohtuullisen suuri alan toimija. Toimistolla on varsin hyvä maine.]

#### 4.1.2 Quality of the service

Next the survey looked into how the quality of the service is experienced. The respondents were asked to grade different statements about the quality of the service on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results show that the majority agrees that Cocomms delivers their services on time and are satisfied with the scope of services Cocomms provides. They also agree that Cocomms provides solutions that improve their business. However, the statement about Cocomms providing innovative solutions received somewhat smaller mean (3.8) than the other statements. The results are also presented with standard deviations. As one can see, the scores are very low so the responses were very similar. (Table 2.)

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of agreement for quality of service statements

	Mean	Standard deviation	N=
Cocomms delivers their services on time	4,7	0,5	34
I am satisfied with the scope of services Cocomms provides	4,5	0,6	34
Cocomms provides valuable services that improve my business	4,2	0,8	34
Cocomms presents innovative solutions	3,8	0,9	34

The thesis also aimed to find out if the respondents had faced some problems with Cocomms and if they had contacted Cocomms about it. Out of the 34 respondents 29 (85.2%) had not faced any problems with Cocomms. Five respondents (14.7%) reported having faced some problems, and all of them had contacted Cocomms about their problems. The majority was satisfied with how the problem was solved; only one respondent reported not being satisfied because he/she felt that the situation didn't change.

#### 4.1.3 Pricing

The questions about pricing aimed to find out if Cocomms' fees are experienced as reasonable and good value for money. Also, if the respondents' feel that Cocomms ensures they know what the final price consists of. The responses were graded on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Most of the respondents agreed that Cocomms' services represent good value for money (mean 4.1). However, the statement about Cocomms' fees being reasonable got a slightly lower mean (3.6) than the other statements. The majority still somewhat agreed that Cocomms' fees are reasonable. (Table 3.)

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of agreement for pricing statements

	Mean	Standard deviation	N=
Cocomms' services represent good value for money	4,1	0,8	34
Cocomms ensures I know what the final price consists of	3,9	0,9	34
Cocomms' fees are reasonable	3,6	0,9	34

#### 4.1.4 Team

Next the survey aimed to find out some factors concerning the team. The responses were graded on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The personnel play an important role in creating experiences, which could be seen from theory and from the first survey question about choosing service provider. Almost every respondent felt that the

team is easily approachable, which was given the mean of 4.6. The respondents also felt that the team listens to their opinions about the co-operation, and they know who belongs to their team, both of which were given the mean of 4.5. All of the team statements have low standard deviations so all answers are really similar. Offering other services than the ones the customers already use was a statement with the lowest mean (3.6) and the biggest standard deviation (1.0), meaning that there were some differing opinions between the respondents. (Table 4.)

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of agreement for team statements

	Mean	Standard deviation	N=
The team is easily approachable	4,6	0,7	34
The team listens to my opinions about our co-operation	4,5	0,7	34
I know who belongs to the team working with my project	4,5	0,7	34
The team understands my company and its needs	4,1	0,9	34
The team can offer also other services in addition to what we already use	3,6	1,0	34

The survey also asked how the respondents would describe the team. There were 8 adjectives defined and the respondents were asked to choose three adjectives which best describe the team. Nearly everyone (91%) described the team as professional. The next popular adjectives were flexible (56%) and pleasant (50%). Enthusiastic was also quite common (44%). The “other, what?” responses described the team as stiff, easily approachable, trustworthy and traditional. (Figure 13.)

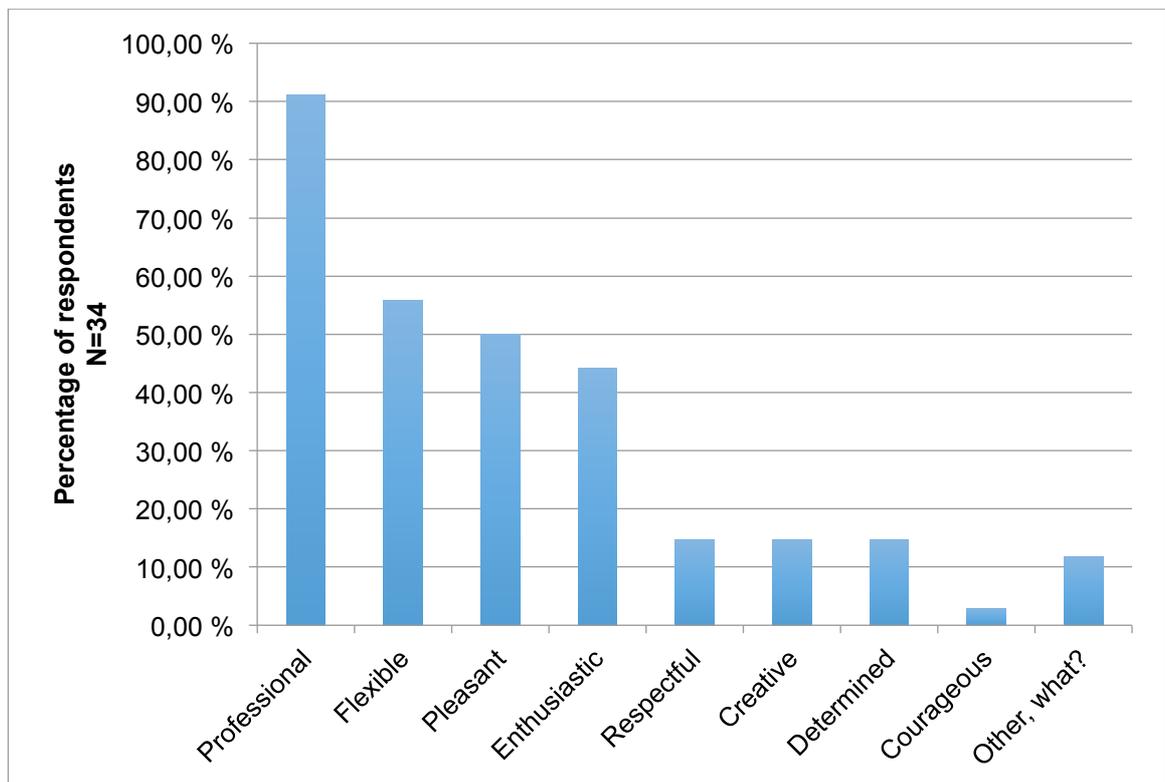


Figure 13. Describing the team

#### 4.1.5 Communication

Next the survey aimed to find out how the respondents experienced communication with the team. On average the communication is very good, not one of the statements got a remarkably lower grade than others. The majority knows who their contact person is (mean 4.7). They also agree that it's easy to communicate with the team (mean 4.6) and the team responds to their concerns (mean 4.6). (Table 5.)

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation of agreement for communication with the team

	Mean	Standard deviation	N=
I know who my contact person in the team is	4,7	0,6	34
It's easy to communicate with the team	4,6	0,7	34
The team responds to my concerns	4,6	0,6	34
The team keeps me updated about issues that affect our co-operation	4,4	0,8	34
Communication with the team is adequate	4,3	0,9	34

The respondents were also asked if their contact person with Cocomms had changed and what kind of effects had that caused. Approximately 21% had had their contact person change and four of them commented that it didn't have any negative effects, for example

the “hand over” was done successfully and the respondents were informed of it beforehand. The change had also led to better co-operation.

#### 4.1.6 Relationship

On average the respondents gave a 4.3 satisfaction grade for Cocomms as a business partner on a scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The other survey questions about relationship aimed to find out how customer focused Cocomms is, how easy Cocomms is to work with, how committed Cocomms is to help the customer reach their goals, and how well Cocomms addresses the customers future needs. The majority experienced Cocomms as easy to work with (mean 4.6). Cocomms was also experienced as customer focused (mean 4.2). There were a lot of differing responses to Cocomms treating the customers’ company as a priority, with the statement having a 1.1 standard deviation grade. Also, the statement about Cocomms taking care of the respondents’ future needs received the lowest mean (3.4) in the entire survey. 26.3% of the respondents either strongly or somewhat disagreed with Cocomms taking care of their future needs on top of their current needs. (Table 6.)

Table 6. Mean and standard deviation of agreement for relationship statements

	Mean	Standard deviation	N=
Cocomms is easy to work with	4,6	0,6	34
Cocomms is customer focused	4,2	0,7	34
I consider Cocomms our partner	4,1	0,8	34
Cocomms is committed to helping my company meet our business goal	3,9	0,8	34
Cocomms treats my company as a priority	3,7	1,1	34
In addition to my company's current needs, Cocomms takes care of our future needs	3,4	1,0	34

#### 4.1.7 The customer’s experience

The survey also asked questions about the respondents’ experiences or encounters with Cocomms. First they were asked to choose the three adjectives that best describe their experience. Relevant (50%), profitable (47%) and valuable (44%) were graded the most important. The “other, what?” responses stated Cocomms as stiff, businesslike, and passive and noted that Cocomms keeps their promises. The question was also criticized as being leading. (Figure 14.)

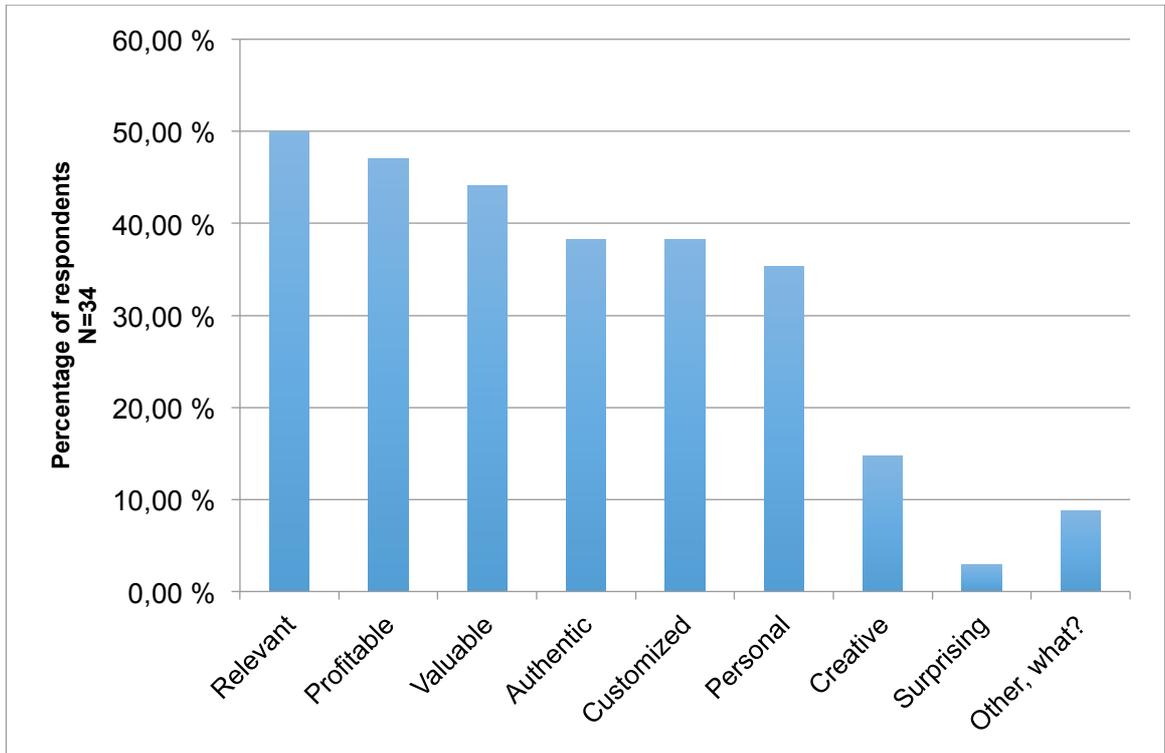


Figure 14. Describing the experience

There were also few questions about giving feedback, especially about being provided with the possibility to give feedback. Approximately 65% had been given the opportunity to give feedback. Out of those respondents approximately 59% had had Cocomms react to their feedback and 12% didn't get any reaction from Cocomms.

The respondents were also asked how willing they would be to recommend Cocomms to someone. 97% answered they would be either very willing or somewhat willing to recommend Cocomms. However, the respondents were also asked as a continuum if they actually had recommended Cocomms to someone. Approximately 56% had recommended Cocomms but 44% had not recommend Cocomms to anyone. (Figure 15.)

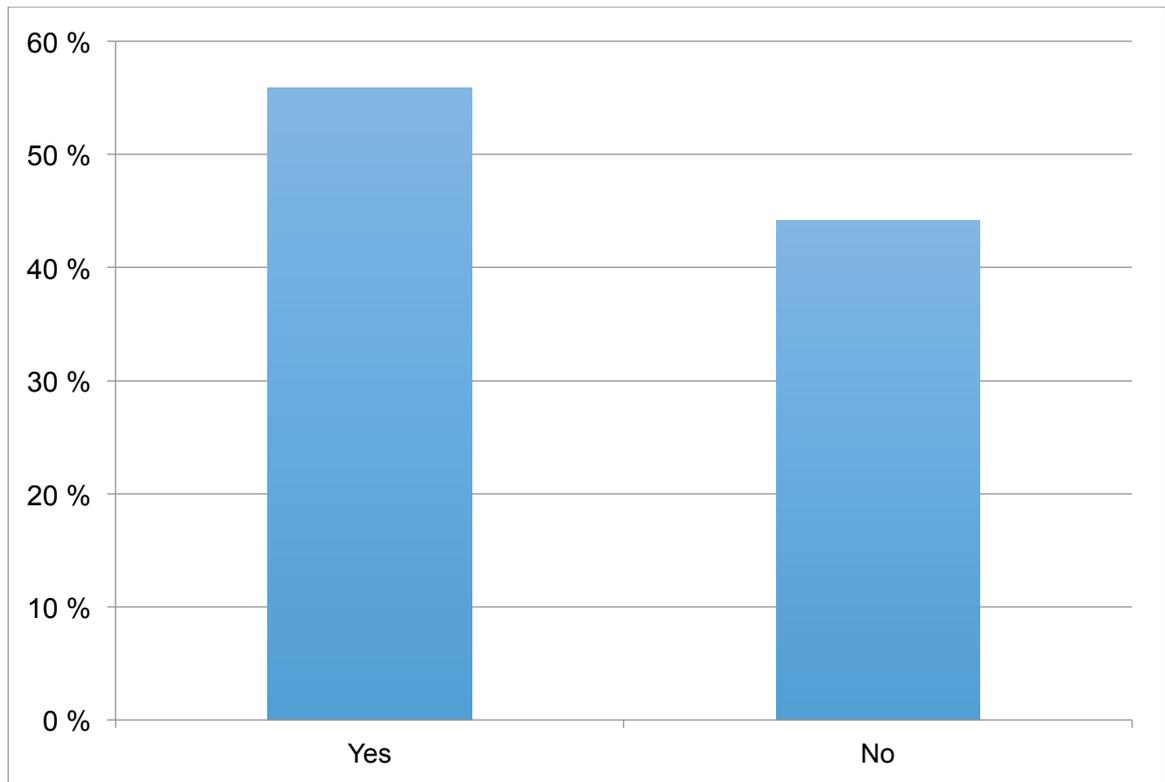


Figure 15. Having recommended Cocomms to someone

Finally, the respondents were also asked three open-ended questions: to describe what are the benefits they are getting specifically from Cocomms; what would they improve in Cocomms' operations; and what is the last thing that comes to their mind about their last dealing with Cocomms. The complete list of the answers can be found in appendix 3. For the first question "what benefits do you feel you're getting specifically from Cocomms", there were various types of answers received. Most of them were about Cocomms' qualities, some practical things Cocomms helps with, and concrete services Cocomms help with. For example:

- *"Good project management, customized service, efficient production, professionalism in communication.* [Hyvää projektinhallintaa, räätälöityä palvelua, tehokasta tuotantoa, viestinnän ammattilaisuutta.]
- *"Quality service that understands client company's industry and takes the business forward"* [Laadukas, yrityksen toimialaa ymmärtävä ja bisnestä eteenpäin vievä palvelu]
- *"Flexibility and quick reaction"* [Joustavuutta ja nopeaa reagointia]
- *"Great drive"*
- *"Very dedicated team. Always approachable, doing things fast and efficient"*
- *"Punctual service for our needs. Sticking to schedules and being precise."* [Säntillistä palvelua tarpeisiimme. Pysytään aikataulussa ja ollaan tarkkoja]
- *"Everyday support and help with communication issues, in a situation where in-house resources are at a minimum."* [Jokapäiväistä tukea ja sparrailuapua arjessa eteen tulevissa viestintähaasteissa tilanteessa, jossa in-house viestintäresurssit on viety minimiin.]

- *“Professional doing, new perspectives, support in building and executing communication entireties.”* [Asiantuntevaa tekemistä, uusia näkökulmia, tukea viestinnän kokonaisuuden rakentamiseen ja läpiviemiseen.]
- *“Know-how in social media marketing”* [Some-markkinoinnin osaamista]
- *“Know-how in (PR) and networking. Know-how in societal issues.”* [Osaamista tiedottamisessa ja verkoistoitumisessa. Yhteiskunnallista osaamista.]
- *“Ideas, schedule management, channel suggestions. The most important partner in content production that we don’t have enough time for.”* [Ideoita, aikataulunhallintaa, kanavaehdotuksia. Tärkein yhteistyökumppanin sisällöntuotannossa, johon itsellä ei aikaa riittävästi.]
- *“Strong know-how in healthcare communication”* [Luja osaaminen terveysviestinnän saralla]
- *“Access to Finnish media”*

The next question was “what would you improve in Cocomms operations?” Most of the answers were about courage and suggesting new ideas. The rest of the comments were about diverse matters, such as proactivity, communication, precision et cetera. The respondents commented for example the following things:

- *“Courage to present even crazy thoughts”* [Rohkeutta esittää hullujakin ajatuksia]
- *“Creative ideas and rethinking things, so it wouldn’t always be the traditional, familiar and safe things. Challenging and courage to do things in another, even surprising way.”* [Luovia ideoita ja asioiden uudelleen miettimistä, ettei aina mentäisi sen perinteisen ja tutun ja turvallisen kautta. Haastamista ja rohkeutta tehdä asioita toisella, yllättävälläkin tavalla.]
- *“If the client relationship would’ve continued longer, proactive suggestions to improve customer communication.”* [Jos asiakassuhde olisi jatkunut pidempään, proaktiivisia ehdotuksia asiakasviestinnän kehittämiseksi]
- *“When we’re in a hurry, closer communication from their side”* [Kun meillä kiirettä, niin tiiviimpää yhteydenpitoa heidän puoleltaan.]
- *“Even more precision and with some people more willingness to listen to the client’s needs even better.”* [Tarkkuutta vielä enemmän sekä joidenkin henkilöiden taholta halukkuutta kuunnella vielä paremmin asiakkaan tarpeita.]

Finally, the respondents were asked “What is the first thing that comes to your mind about your last dealing with Cocomms?” Generally, the answers were positive. Many respondents commented about the pleasantness of the encounter and the team, and the professional way of working. Some other comments were about the easiness or straightforwardness, and good final results. Also, any slightly negative remarks were complemented with a positive comment about some other thing.

- *“Professionalism and extremely pleasant team. It is fun to co-operate with them.”* [Ammattitaito ja äärimmäisen mukava tiimi. Sen kanssa on hauska tehdä yhteistyötä.]
- *“Good feeling and straightforwardness/easiness”* [Hyvä fiilis ja mutkattomuus]
- *“Hurry on both sides, but it was good that the office kept in touch proactively.”* [Kiire puolin ja toisin, hyvä kuitenkin että toimistosta otettiin proaktiivisesti yhteyttä.]
- *“A two-sided image. I remember both a small typo that nearly ruined a good project, as well as at the latest a very positive case where I got help proactively and in schedule, so that I managed to execute it.”* [Kaksijakoinen mielikuva. Mieleen on jäänyt sekä yksi

pieni kirjoitusvirhe mikä oli vähällä tuhota hyvän projektin että toinen erittäin positiivinen case aivan viimeiseksi johon sain proaktiivisesti ja aikataulussa apua, jotta onnistun läpiviennissä.]

## **4.2 Interview results**

The interview framework included questions about strategy, culture and leadership, people, systems and processes, measurement, and customer expectation and experiences. For the detailed interview framework, see appendix 2.

First, the respondent was asked to define shortly what is their customer experience like both from the agency's and the customers' point of view. A big part of the agency's customer experience is that they're experienced as dedicated and committed, and the clients experience the joy the employees get for the clients' results on their behalf. The agency's culture includes that the service level is rooted to a lot of principles that they have, it can refer to putting the client first or going the extra mile. However, the agency doesn't want to be too precise in giving instructions, but rather give guidelines on how to work. It comes down to the culture that employees want to offer clients great service.

### **4.2.1 Strategy**

The first interview question asked the respondent to describe their customer experience strategy and evaluate it. The respondent stated:

“We do not have a clearly defined customer experience strategy, but we have certain guidelines or principles that define the organizational culture, which works as a strategy in terms of providing consistent approach to how we manage our clients and what we are focusing on.” (X 10 October 2017.)

The agency has been successful with sharing this part of the culture, which defines how they work with their clients. The respondent added that the agency was highly successful for the first 7-8 years. This was when the agency was smaller and sharing the culture and creating one consistent culture was a lot easier. However, when they grew and got more employees they lost some control. According to the respondent, it has been harder to get everyone on board to provide similar experiences to every client. Some employees the agency has hired have not “bought in” to the culture as much as would be needed. Now, the agency is trying to recreate the part of the culture they have lost, to create one consistent culture that defines how they manage their clients.

#### 4.2.2 Culture and leadership

The next interview question was about culture and leadership. The respondent was asked questions about the importance of culture, what kind of changes customer experience requires, how customer centricity is seen in their organization, and how management shows examples of the importance of customers. First, the respondent noted the following concerning the importance of the culture:

“X is a PR agency totally dependent on the polls of society. We do not have the long-term planning and we respond to opportunities on very short time frames. So, we have identified a need for strong, shared culture with principles that define what is the wrong or right behavior. We have also experienced that we need to give our employees the authority, to empower them, to make decisions on everyday basis. Therefore, the people need to know our approach and know that they have the backing to make decisions. Otherwise, we are becoming too much of a bureaucracy and the clients do not get the feeling that their best interests are in mind.”  
(X 10 October 2017.)

In addition, the agency has implemented a concept of “leadership on every share” meaning that everyone has a leadership responsibility and is responsible for keeping the clients happy. In practice this can mean for example not involving management in every decision that is done on a team level. From the management perspective, there’s a responsibility to create a healthy environment where one is allowed to make decisions, and allowed to occasionally make wrong decisions as well.

According to the respondent, customer centricity is very visible in the agency. It can be seen in two ways: how the employees spend their time, and in key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets. The employees work more than what is required from them. For example, they offer more results than what the customer expects. On the other hand, when the employees reach the predefined goals, they do not stop, instead they want to impress the customers. This is where the culture can be seen: the team very often goes the extra mile for the customer’s sake.

The respondent stated that the agency has struggled with the management showing example of how important the customers are. As mentioned, some senior employees have not “bought in” to the culture and carried it that well and that has become very visible for the younger employees. It has created a situation where that behavior and attitude is acceptable. Instead, the management team should lead by example and show dedication.

### **4.2.3 People**

The people part of the interview framework asked about employing the right type of people, training employees, and committing the employees to the strategy. Concerning employing the right type of people, the respondent stated:

“We have not been that successful in terms of hiring. We have had as many hits as misses. Hiring is a learning process for us in terms of talking about all the intangibles in our culture, and making it clearer for the people applying for work what they are actually getting into. Because we have had people enter our office and be more or less shocked about the expectation levels, culture, et cetera. A lot of younger people have experienced that the agency expects more than they are able to offer, or willing to offer, and they have moved on.” (X 10 October 2017.)

The respondent also added that at the moment the recruitment process does not involve any testing of for example ambition or attitude. Now, the process has not been successful in terms of identifying key characteristics among the people they are hiring.

The respondent described that the training is sort of a mentoring system, where four seniors each have 4-5 employees that they are following in terms on development. The seniors ensure the younger employees understand what is required from them and they have someone to talk to whenever they have questions. The client training, on the other hand, takes place in the teams. The employee is immediately put into the team and in the middle of all the action. Each team has defined roles and responsibilities so it should be clear what is expected from the employee. The respondent also added that the employee is given time to reach the “right” quality and efficiency of work, which differs with each client.

The whole organization is in the middle of a process where they are shaping up very specific principles that will help people understand the right type of behavior and what is expected from them. They have travelled to Sweden for a joint training where they worked with defining the culture and those underlying principles that define them.

Finally, the respondent raised one problem with committing the employees and ensuring that they are aware of the strategy. The agency speaks a lot about going the extra mile and putting in the extra effort. However, the problem with these expressions is that people interpret them differently. Depending on, for example, one’s upbringing, values and how ambitious one is, the extra mile can mean different things for different people.

### **4.2.4 Systems and processes**

The systems and processes part of the interview asked questions about empowering people to make decisions versus following the rules, and about developing customer ex-

periences. For the question about empowering people or having them follow specific processes, the respondent stated:

“The business is changing so fast that we need the type of mentality that people are actually making decisions, thinking, and not relying on instructions and defined processes. If we have employees that need to look to some “rulebook” to see how to manage client relationship, it would actually limit our ability to be successful.”  
(X 10 October 2017.)

Still, the respondent stated that there is a need for processes on a general level, for example how the employees are managed. There needs to be some consistency to reduce frustration among employees. However, according to the respondent it is still more important that the employees have the ability to think. Think and see what is this situation requiring from them, what do they need to do to solve the problem, what are the expectations from the clients, and how do they manage the problem with the resources and timeframe they have. The respondent added that the employees should be brave thinkers who make decisions every day in the meetings with clients. Rather have them make the wrong decisions a couple times and learn from them, than not make decisions at all. That is the key to be really valuable consultants.

Finally, according to the respondent, from the management perspective this means that if an employee makes a wrong decision, the management needs to be careful how they respond to that because they might shut the thinking down or people might not be brave enough to make decisions anymore.

The agency is consistently looking for the best way to work. If there for example is a need for processes, such as charts with checkboxes to ensure they have done everything they are supposed to. The respondent added that processes and documents, however, increase bureaucracy that the agency is trying to avoid.

#### **4.2.5 Measurement**

Next the interviewer asked about measuring customer experience. The respondent told that they have discussed about defining a client survey to do every 6 months, but they have not done it yet. The planned survey consists of two parts: the clients are asked to define what is the highest importance to them in working with this type of an agency, in terms of results, relationships, communication et cetera. Next, the clients are asked to score the agency with those same factors. However, as mentioned, the agency has not yet done it, because all the employees are too tied to client work, so there is a limit to how much agency development they can do.

#### 4.2.6 Customer perspective

Finally, the respondent was asked about the customer perspective on the experience they as an agency create. It involved questions about understanding customer expectations and actual experiences. For the first question about understanding customers' expectations, the respondent stated that the account directors have most of the responsibility to manage the relationship and understand the client. 85% of the time it works really well, but not always. For example lack of chemistry between client and account director might be preventing speaking openly, especially when things are not going the right way. The respondent described that often if something goes wrong, it is down to the relationship how happy the client is. If the chemistry is good, it creates a sort of "safety net". If it is not ideal, then the safety net is not there.

The next question was about the benefits the clients are getting specifically from this agency. The respondent stated:

"I mentioned the dedication and commitment but that is not what they are paying us to do. They are paying us to create results. Results are the key for clients staying with us. If the results are not there, you will lose the accounts at some point. It is the only thing that matters in the end." (X 10 October 2017.)

The respondent also added that the team is really good at getting results. Sometimes they are even too good because the clients' expectations might increase, because the previous results create a benchmark for the next results. So the clients might measure the agency against previous success, without being able to see that the environment, for example the market, is different than few years ago.

Finally, the respondent was asked if they have received some specific feedback about their customer experience. The respondent commented the following:

"We are an agency and a business where we are constantly winning or losing based on how good ideas we have in terms of solving client problems. Sometimes we are approaching the part of solving the problems of the clients in a too narrow way. We are defining the area of opportunity too narrow." (X 10 October 2017.)

The respondent added that sometimes they are not good enough in challenging what they are doing, or they are too narrow in defining what they actually can do. Also, the clients are sometimes asking for something fresh and new.

Finally, the respondent stated that in order to survive they need to be paranoid. It requires looking at a client of many years with new eyes. Thinking about what would the agency's biggest competitor do with the client. They need to throw all assumptions away, such as

this will never work or the client will never accept this. They also need to ask every year if they are doing the right things and are they doing them in their best ability.

## 5 Discussion

First, this chapter describes the key findings of the survey and interview, thus answering the first two investigative questions. The key findings are analysed and assessed against theory. Then, the key recommendations are presented, thus answering the third investigative question. After, some key reliability and validity issues are discussed. Finally, the author describes her own learning during the thesis process.

As a remark, the biggest source of error in this thesis is the unit nonresponse error of the survey. Unit nonresponse refers to the respondent not participating in the survey at all, whereas item nonresponse refers to the respondent skipping specific questions. (Sue & Ritter 2012, 48.) This survey had approximately 70% unit nonresponse rate, calculated by dividing the number of individuals who did not answer the survey by the total number of potential participants, thus  $[(116-34)/116 \times 100]$ . However, even if there were more respondents, the author argues that the answers would most likely have been approximately as positive as now. It is unlikely that the 82 nonrespondents would all comment something negative, thus changing the overall results of the survey.

### 5.1 Key survey findings

Generally, the results were very positive. The small amount of responses affected the results by making it harder to identify key findings. There were only few strengths and weaknesses that were commented multiple times, thus making it possible to generalize those comments as the key findings of this thesis. The author had hoped that there would have been more constructive feedback available. Nevertheless, based on theory, survey results and interview results, the most important findings of this thesis are the importance of people, culture, innovativeness, proactivity, and the role of measuring and customer journeys in creating customer experiences. These all help answer the research question *“how to improve customer experience at communication agency Cocomms both from the customer and company perspective?”* Next the results are looked at more closely and every key finding elaborated on. First the survey findings are analyzed, and after the interview findings.

The survey aimed to answer the first investigative question: *“What are the current strengths and weaknesses of Cocomms’ customer experience from their customers’ perspective in the following areas:*

*IQ 1.1. in chosen touch points?*

*IQ 1.2. on customer relationship level?”*

All the responses are addressed together, instead of dividing them based on the subquestions about touch points and relationship level. This is because one response can answer both questions. The key finding was that generally Cocomms is experienced as very positive. The recurring strengths based on the responses were related to team and relationship, quality of service, and the positive emotions evoked in the customers.

First, the importance of the team could be noticed from multiple themes of the survey. Already in choosing a service provider personnel was the most important factor for most respondents (85%). The key strengths with the team and relationship were related to working with the team, the qualities of team, and communication. One recurring comment was easiness, which came up in the team, communication and relationship statements. In general, Cocomms was considered easy to work with (mean 4.6). Also, many respondents experienced the team as easily approachable (mean 4.6) and easy to communicate with (mean 4.6).

Referring to the qualities of the team, a clear majority (91%) described the team as professional. This was reinforced in the open-ended questions, as many commented that the benefits they are getting from Cocomms or the first thing that comes to their mind about their last dealing with Cocomms, was the professional approach and expertise. In addition, in many conversations during the thesis process, Cocomms' employees described that they are generally liked and previous feedback has shown that they are experienced as pleasant to work with. This survey gathered similar comments. Half of the respondents (50%) described the team as pleasant. A lot of respondents also answered in the open-ended questions that the first thing that comes to their mind about their last dealing with Cocomms was the pleasantness of the team, experience and service. Shaw & al. (2010, 62) stated that an organization's customer experience is reflected in the attitudes and behavior of its staff. As one of Cocomms' values is happiness, it could be argued that Cocomms has been able to recruit people who carry their organizational culture and values, and show those in the encounters with customers.

The second strength was the quality of service, which was studied with the theory about the elements of a positive experience. Soudagar & al. (2012, 15) stated that a positive customer experience is built of four essentials: reliability, convenience, responsiveness and relevance. Without them, companies can't expect loyalty, advocacy or engagement which build the customer experience edge. The survey aimed to assess different statements relating to these essentials. First, reliability could be seen by living up to your promise. The survey results showed that most of the respondents agree that Cocomms deliv-

ers their services on time (mean 4.7). A lot of respondents also commented in the open-ended questions that the benefits they are getting specifically from Cocomms include that they deliver what is agreed on, on time and accurately. Many also commented about the positive end results. Reliability is the bottom line of offering positive experiences and building trust, and that is something that Cocomms is doing well.

Second, convenience could be seen by offering choice, consistency, and timeliness (Soudagar & al. 2012, 15). Many was satisfied with the scope of services Cocomms provides (mean 4.5). However, the statement about the team offering other services in addition to what the customer already uses got a slightly lower rating (mean 3.6) than the other statements. Thus, the respondents might feel that Cocomms has a wide enough service offering, but the team is not offering all of Cocomms' services as much as would be needed. The respondents also commented in the open-ended questions that what they would improve in Cocomms' operations is providing solutions for entireties and actively offering new services. Still, talking about convenience, some respondents described that the first thing that came to their mind about their last dealing with Cocomms was the easiness or straightforwardness of the experience.

Third, responsiveness could be seen as listening and reacting quickly (Soudagar & al. 2012, 15). Most of the respondents agreed that the team responds to their concerns (mean 4.6). Cocomms' responsiveness could also be seen in the questions about gathering feedback and reacting to it. 65% of the respondents had been provided with the opportunity to give feedback. 59% of them had had Cocomms react to their feedback.

Finally, relevance could be seen as ensuring that the offerings are personalized and meaningful (Soudagar & al. 2012, 15). 50% of the respondents described their experience as relevant and approximately 38% as customized. Many also commented that Cocomms understands the customers' industry, and is an expert in healthcare communication.

The third strenght was the positive emotions evoked in the customers. Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 43) stated that customer experience includes four psychological perspectives that create different emotions. The most important ones of the perspectives are that a good customer experience surprises and creates experiences, and is memorable. The stronger the feelings, encounters and images born are, the stronger the experience will be. A strong positive experience involves a powerful feeling, for example joy. As mentioned, most people experience Cocomms as pleasant and professional. People emphasized the good feeling and mood, which were also the first things that came to their minds about Cocomms. Based on the recurring comments about the pleasantness, and how fun

it is to work with Cocomms, it could be argued that Cocomms has been able to create a strong, positive emotional bond with their customers. Considering that Cocomms doesn't have a strategy, or systematic management program for customer experience, the recurring positive experiences are a really good accomplishment. One can only imagine what the experiences could be like if they were managed. It could create a real competitive edge for Cocomms.

The weaknesses, on the other hand, are related to innovativeness and proactivity. Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 45) also stated in the psychological perspectives that experiences are closely linked with positive surprise. Surprisement might be something that Cocomms has to improve. When asked to describe their experience, only one respondent checked the "suprising" option and five respondents the "creative" option. This can also be linked to innovativeness, which was something that a lot of respondents were hoping for. Comparing to the other quality of service statements, Cocomms presenting innovative solutions got a slightly lower rating than the others (mean 3.8). Many respondents also commented in the open-ended questions that they hope for new, crazy, and different ideas, instead of the same traditional ones. Innovativeness was an important factor for Cocomms as well, which came up in the initial discussions about what contents to study. The interview respondent also emphasized the importance of it, stating that they as an agency are often assessed based on how good ideas they have.

The second weakness was about proactiveness. The statement about Cocomms taking care of the customers' future needs in addition to their current needs got the lowest rating in the survey (mean 3.4). Some respondents also described their experience as passive. This was also reinforced in the open-ended questions as some respondents commented that what they would improve is having Cocomms proactively offer solutions for entireties and make proactive suggestions to improve customer communication. On the other hand, the interview respondent stated that the industry and type of business is such that they have to react on very short timeframes. According to the levels in the "customer centrality pyramid model" (Löytänä & Korhikoski 2012, 26), Cocomms might not be at the highest level of customer centrality, "excited about the customers". The level includes that the company listens to what the customers reach for in their business operations, and proactively find new ways to produce value to them.

## **5.2 Key interview findings**

The interview aimed to answer the investigative question two: *"How is customer experience planned, managed and measured in Cocomms' partner agency X in Norway?"* The

key findings were about the importance of culture in this type of business, and the role of people, measuring, and customer journeys. The first key finding was about the importance of culture in this type of business. Shaw and Hamilton (2016, 172) stated that the reason an organization delivers the customer experience they do, is because of the way the organization is. It became clear that in a situation where there is not a strategy for customer experience, culture is an important factor to drive desirable behavior. The respondent discussed a lot about the importance of culture; it was present in almost every answer. The strong culture guided what is the wrong or right behaviour, and what is expected from the employees. Similarly, Gerdt and Korhonen (2016, 96) argued that organizational culture and values ensure customer-centric decision making in everyday situations. The respondent discussed that as the type of business involves quite independent work, it is important that the employees know the agency's approach to managing clients. The business requires thinking and decision-making, and not relying on instructions. Culture provides the guidelines and consistency in how the agency manages their clients, thus increasing the importance of it. In addition, the agency does not have long-term planning instead they react to opportunities on very short timeframes. This also increases the importance of culture.

Shaw & al. (2010, 62) stated that an organization's customer experience is reflected in the attitudes and behavior of its staff. The interview supported this statement because the respondent stated that this type of business requires a certain mentality, for example going the extra mile for the client. The respondent also described a situation where some employees have not carried the culture and bought into it as much as needed, and it had notable impacts. This has created its own challenges in for example recruiting, as it is important to show already in the beginning what is expected from the employees.

Proceeding with the people perspective, the interview respondent emphasized the importance of chemistries, and how they can carry customer relationships if the results are not so good. Another key finding about the importance of people was the role of management. On top of management having to carry the culture especially well to show example, they also have to support the employees in decision making and know how to respond to occasional mistakes. Because of the type of business and the "leadership on every share", the management is responsible for creating a healthy, supportive environment for working.

Finally, one key finding was the role of measuring and customer journeys. Theory showed that companies have more willingness and know-how than actual action in managing and developing customer experiences. The interview respondent also stated that they are not measuring customer experience. They had been planning to create a survey, but had not

done it yet. However, measuring is an important part of developing customer experiences. It requires committing to the measuring process, and devoting a lot of time and effort for it. A well functioning measuring model provides information about what kind of experiences the company produces, how the experiences can be improved, and what benefits the improving would provide (Gerdt & Korhonen 2016, 160). In addition, measuring is closely linked with customer journey. The interview respondent found it hard to describe their journey. Based on theory and the interview it could be argued that customer journeys are still quite un-known. However, building superior customer experiences begins with understanding the customer's journey. Customer journeys are elaborated on the recommendations chapter.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The third investigative question was: *"What recommendations can be concluded for improving Cocomms' customer experience?"* The survey provided practical insights in to Cocomms' strengths and weaknesses from the customer perspective. As the feedback collected through the survey was mainly positive, how to take Cocomms' customer experience to the next level? The findings showed that the biggest weaknesses were about proactiveness and innovativeness. These are difficult factors to come up with recommendations for as an outsider of the company. Therefore, the author argues that as Cocomms does not currently have a customer experience strategy, more important are the recommendations for company perspective: how to improve the overall state of customer experience. The recommendations provided in this chapter are largely based on the interview and theory findings. The recommendations are also recommendations for further studies. The key recommendations are related to customer journey and measuring program.

First, to be able to improve the experiences companies need to know their customers, understand the customer buying process or customer journey, and implement systematic measuring processes. Similarly, Gerdt and Korhonen (2016, 50) state that building superior customer experiences begins with understanding the customer buying process. First, Cocomms should draft a customer journey map. That is the basis for measuring and managing experiences in the future. The company has a "service journey" or service map, however that journey is largely based on the company perspective. Drafting a customer journey is a good way to look at the company's customer experience from multiple perspectives. Drafting the journey is generally difficult, because every client is unique. It gets even more complex in Cocomms' industry and the type of business. The company operates in a B2B service industry where there can be multiple actors involved. As Zolkiewski & al. (2017, 173) argued, all of these actors interact in different ways, have different objec-

tives, and perceive the experience differently. In addition, it is harder to model the journey and find the concrete touch points, than if Cocomms offered physical products. Still, when a company understands their customers' entire journey, they really know their customers and all the factors and risks influencing the experience, including different stakeholders and subcontractors (Ahvenainen & al. 2017, 74). After, systematically managing, measuring and developing customer experiences becomes easier and more accurate.

Second, the author recommends Cocomms to build a systematic measuring program or model. The purpose of measuring was to produce knowledge that can be used to create positive and desirable customer experiences (Zolkiewski & al. 2017, 173). Gerdt and Korhikoski (2016, 162) presented four steps in planning the measurement model. First of them was describing the customer journey. As one can see, drafting the customer journey is the basis for many other functions. This thesis presented some possible key performance indicators, and many remarks concerning the measuring practices. In addition, Löytänä and Korteso (2011, 188) point out that there are numerous ways to measure customer experience, some examples are collecting feedback, analyzing encounters, focus groups, or following social media. Cocomms has to think of their objectives and possible KPIs, and come up with a measurement package suitable for them. The author would recommend Cocomms to start small, implement NPS or CES to the encounters and see how it goes. As Gerdt and Korhikoski (2016, 157) state, do not wait for the perfect measure, start and try. Finally, although it was initially considered that the questionnaire in this thesis could be used in the future as well, there was quite big nonresponse rate. Thus, the questionnaire will most likely require some polishing. As theory showed, companies struggle with the thought that people do not have time to fill in surveys, but actually by optimizing the measuring process the response rate can be increased.

Finally, the experiences Cocomms produce are already on quite good level, however, there is always room to improve the experiences. One recommendation could be to study the organization and employees. Löytänä & Korhikoski (2014, 164) argued that without the employees' understanding of customer experience, it is impossible to implement the experience on a personal level in every encounter with the customer. Shaw & al. (2010, 63) suggested that before focusing on the customers' needs and emotions, companies should try to understand their employees' positive and negative emotions, what drives these feelings, and if there are any key segments in the personnel that like or dislike the organization. There were some tools introduced already in the management tools chapter. The tools help with both internal and external perspectives to customer experience. These were for example customer mirrors, and tools to empower the employees and understand

the customer journey channels. The author recommends Cocomms to test the tools provided, and as further studies to find other tools for examining the experience they produce.

As a conclusion, Cocomms is experienced as very positive. The main reason for Cocomms creating such positive experiences seems to be the team. Communication industry really is a people business, which can be seen from the survey and interview results as well. In addition, Cocomms' quality of service was quite high. They have managed to implement the four essentials of customer experience: reliability, convenience, responsiveness and relevance. Thus, they have been able to create trust with the clients, and therefore have the "bottom of the pyramid" in place. Trust between the parties was the key to forming an emotional bond with a customer that will keep them loyal. As an answer for the research question "*how to improve customer experience at communication agency Cocomms both from the customer and company perspective?*" the survey results showed that from the customer perspective, the things Cocomms has to improve are proactiveness and innovativeness. From the company perspective, Cocomms' customer experience can be improved through the two recommendations provided previously in this chapter: drafting a customer journey, and creating a measuring program. After having defined a customer journey it becomes easier to measure the experiences and there can be more accurate data received. Furthermore, the information gained through measuring is the basis for developing customer experiences, as it shows where the problems are and what things are done well. Finally, it should always be remembered to act on the results. It was argued by Löytänä & Korteso (2011, 49) that in the best-case scenario the customers will seek up the company instead of the company having to find potential customers themselves. If Cocomms combines all these remarks and recommendations, they have the ability to take their customer experience on a whole new level. Some benefits were profitability, less price sensitive customers, more recommendations, and clear savings in their business operations.

#### **5.4 Validity and reliability**

According to Andres (2012, 115), information is valid if it answers the research questions, describes precisely the sample or population, and it can be broadened to other individuals than the participants of the study. Kananen (2008, 81) also adds that in quantitative surveys the validity can be ensured by using the right research method, right metric or instrument, and by measuring the right things.

Andres (2012, 116) presents different factors to validity, for example credibility, face validity, content validity, and external validity. First, in order for the study to be credible, the

researcher must ensure that the study results accurately reflect the participants' behaviors, attitudes and opinions. It involves making sure that the whole process from identifying the research problem, to designing the survey instruments, to data analysis, is described and identified accurately. The methods chapter describes and justifies the research and analysis methods used from multiple perspectives, thus increasing the credibility of the thesis.

The second factor is face validity. Often, the first impression of a questionnaire will determine if the possible respondent completes the survey or not. The first impression can relate to for example cover letter or the appearance of the survey. The questionnaire in this thesis was designed to look appealing and professional. However, the duration of the survey, which was mentioned in the cover letter, and the lack of incentives to fill in the survey might have decreased the face validity. There were many nonrespondents, so the designing of the survey could have been done more accurately. The length can also have influenced the respondents to quit the survey in the middle. To increase interview validity, the appearance, presentation and performance must be paid attention to. The interview respondent was given a proper introduction of the purpose of the interview, the use of the results, and of the interviewer.

The third and most important factor is content validity. It refers to the relationship of a measure to a given variable. Determining the measure includes a thorough review of literature, talking with experts, and piloting questions. (Andres 2012, 117.) The aim is that the chosen measure measures the exact right thing. However, it is impossible to measure all aspects of one variable, instead the research has to be demarcated. This thesis aimed to study customer experience on two levels: in touch points and on relationship level. The touch points had to be demarcated because it is impossible to measure all touch points in one survey. The demarcation was done based on theory, discussions with Cocomms, and other surveys. However, after completing the data analyzing, the researcher noticed that it was harder than expected to clearly divide the measures into either touch point or relationship category. As mentioned in the demarcation chapter, this thesis had a bigger focus on relationship level. Therefore, the final results describe the relationship with Cocomms quite well, what are the strengths and weaknesses. However, they fail to describe the strengths and weaknesses in the key touch points. The results describe some touch points, but not the key ones. The key touch points should have been defined before measuring, to have more accurate questions, and to receive more valid data. It is also possible that measuring touch points would have required another measuring instrument. This was the biggest issue of validity in this thesis.

Finally, Andres (2012, 118) discusses external validity, which refers to how well the findings about a sample can be generalized beyond the study sample. The findings can be generalized if the sample matches the population. This research was a census study, so the target population and sample were the same. However, there was a big difference between the sample and the actual respondents (116-34=82). Still, as argued before, it can be argued that the nonrespondents experience Cocomms approximately as positive as the current respondents. This was due to the fact that the current responses were very similar, there were no extreme grades given. It seems quite unlikely that the 82 nonrespondents would experience Cocomms complete differently.

According to Sue and Ritter (2012, 52-53) the validity of a questionnaire can be threatened by respondent-centered threats, and question format and wording. One respondent-centered threat to validity is the respondents providing inaccurate information, for example providing misinformation to fit into the social norm, or offering opinions without really having one. Social desirability can lead the respondents to give the “right” answer instead of the real or the valid one. Online surveys were chosen for this thesis for the exact reason that the respondents would answer more honestly. On the other hand, every issue might not be important to the respondent. They might not have any opinion about the subject, but still give one. Almost all questions in the survey were compulsory. Therefore, most of the survey questions had to involve a “neutral” response option to increase validity.

Validity and reliability can also be threatened if the wording of the questions is faulty or the questions involve inadequate or inappropriate response options (Sue & Ritter 2012, 55-56). Thus, in order for the survey to be valid, the wording must be correct and the respondents must understand the questions as they are intended to. To increase validity, the questionnaire was tested among Cocomms’ employees. Cocomms checked the questionnaire for any language, or related issues. There were also some contingency questions, or skip-logic questions that had to be tested. Only after this, the questionnaire was sent to the respondents. Similarly, the interview framework was tested for consistency, understanding, and language issues.

The other threat was if the questions involve inadequate or inappropriate response options (Sue & Ritter 2012, 55-56). Especially the response options were carefully designed in this thesis. Most of the questions in the survey were ranking questions. The scale mostly used in this survey had five levels, with a neutral option in the middle. The neutral option is a must, because without it the respondents are forced to choose a positive or negative side, and often in these cases people tend to choose the positive side of the scale. This can lead to invalid data. (Sue & Ritter 2012, 64.) It is important that the respondent

understands the differences between each number of points on the scale. Therefore, the points on the scale were labeled with easy to understand, standard labels: strongly agree (5), somewhat agree (4), neutral (3), somewhat disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). This way, respondent misinterpretation of scale definitions can be minimized and validity increased. (Sue & Ritter 2012, 65.) Other ways of increasing validity through response options was to provide open boxes to complement close-ended questions when necessary. Also, there were some multiple-choice questions, which involved choosing three best suitable options to avoid the respondents selecting all options that seem even mildly appealing. However, one multiple-choice question was criticized as being “leading”, because all the response options were positive. Finally, despite the general thought that open-ended questions should be used sparingly, this thesis involved quite many open-ended questions to get the respondents’ examples and descriptions about their experiences. Actually, according to Sue and Ritter (2012, 57) open-ended questions can lead to more valid responses than closed-ended because the respondents are not forced to select from a list of options, but can provide more diverse answers.

*Reliability*, on the other hand, refers to the consistency of the study, if the findings can be replicated. It also refers to if the study can be replicated with similar samples and conditions to receive similar results. (Anders 2012, 122-123.) If the responses are reliable, it does not automatically mean that they are valid. The respondents can give the same answer to a question twice at different time periods, while the question is actually measuring something completely different than what it is supposed to.

In quantitative research, reliability can be ensured by re-testing. However, re-testing is usually not worthwhile in theses due to financial and timely reasons. It should be enough to carefully document the phases and justify the decisions, so that the process can be considered solid. (Kananen 2008, 83.) The research and analysis methods in this thesis are justified from multiple perspectives in the research methods chapter. Nevertheless, Groves & al. (2009, 284) state that one way to assess reliability is by using multiple questions to assess the same construct. As mentioned, the survey aimed to study customer experience on two levels: in touch points and on relationship level. For the relationship level, for example, there were multiple themes and statements that contributed to the overall assessing of the relationship. Questions about the team, communication, experience, and relationship can all evaluate the relationship between Cocomms and their customers. Therefore, the information can be considered reliable.

The reliability of the interview could have been improved by interviewing multiple respondents. However, as the current respondent was at a management position in the

company, the author trusts that the responses were true. In addition, the interview results are presented anonymously so the responses are most likely honest and genuine. These increase the reliability.

## **5.5 Reflection of learning**

This final chapter discusses the author's personal learning. All in all, the process has been a huge learning experience for the author. The thesis process is a good way to practice project management skills. Doing extensive research on a subject that has a lot of information available taught valuable skills of assessing the information and deciding what to include and leave out. The author also learned to summarize and organize the information, develop critical thinking, and to build connections between concepts, and theory and practice. The author also learned to manage a quantitative and qualitative research process: to gather different types of data, analyze it in various ways, and make conclusions and recommendations based on it. This thesis was also done as a commissioned research. The process included multiple actors, two companies and various advisors from school, which was at times hard to manage. First of all, everyone had busy schedules. Also, sometimes there were some conflicting opinions. However, there weren't any bigger problems with the process and in the end everything worked out well.

The author got a glimpse in to the industry in question. As mentioned in the beginning, the author was interested in working for example for a media agency. The industries are quite similar, so considering the author's future aspirations it was fascinating to get an insight to how the industry works. The importance of customer experiences can be seen in the working life. As the author is close to graduation, she has been seeking for jobs to match the education. Many positions require understanding customer experiences, and the author has been able to leverage her insights in the job hunt. Now, the author would be interested in getting to see how to improve customer experiences in practice.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Customer experience survey questionnaire

# Cocomms' customer experience survey

This survey is conducted as a part of a final thesis for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The survey aims to find out the current strengths and weaknesses of Cocomms' customer experience. The survey consists of seven themes, with closed and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire will require approximately 10 minutes to complete and it is open until the 3rd of October. The survey is sent to all Cocomms' active customers. All answers are anonymous and processed confidentially. Results are presented on a general level and it is impossible to recognize individual respondents.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to fill in the survey! Your feedback is highly valued. If you have any additional questions, feel free to contact me through my e-mail below.

Best regards,  
Fanny Heimonen  
fanny.heimonen@myy.haaga-helia.fi

Next

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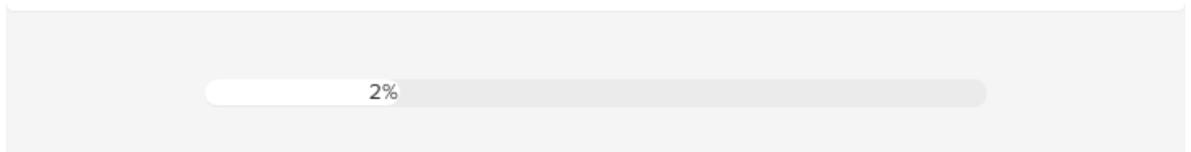
# Choosing a service provider

Describe how important the following things are when choosing a service provider?

	1 Not at all important	2 Slightly important	3 Moderately important	4 Very important
References *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experience *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recommendations *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding information on the company homepage *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pricing *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessibility (eg. physical location) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Diversity of service offering *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personnel *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Previous

Next



# Choosing a service provider

How did you find Cocomms?\*

What did you know about Cocomms beforehand?\*

Previous

Next

7%

# Quality of service

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

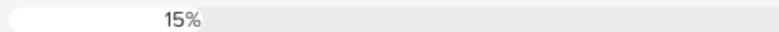
	1 Strongly disagree	2 Somewha t disagree	3 Neutral	4 Somewha t agree	5 Strongly agree
Cocomms delivers their services on time. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cocomms presents innovative solutions. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cocomms provides valuable services that improve my business. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with the scope of services Cocomms provides. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you faced any problems with Cocomms? \*

- Yes
- No

Previous

Next

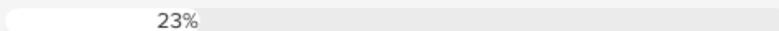


Did you contact Cocomms about this problem? \*

- Yes
- No

Previous

Next



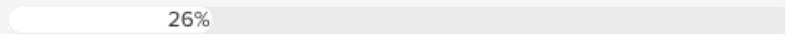
Were you satisfied with how your problem was solved?\*

Yes

No, why?

Previous

Next



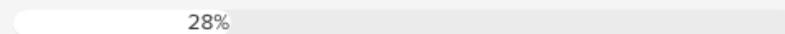
## Pricing

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Cocomms' fees are reasonable.*	<input type="radio"/>				
Cocomms makes sure I understand what the final price consists of.*	<input type="radio"/>				
Cocomms' services represent good value for money.*	<input type="radio"/>				

Previous

Next



# Team

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I know who belongs to the team working on my project.*	<input type="radio"/>				
The team is easily approachable.*	<input type="radio"/>				
The team can offer also other services in addition to what we already use.*	<input type="radio"/>				
The team understands my company and its needs.*	<input type="radio"/>				
The team listens to my opinions about our co-operation.*	<input type="radio"/>				

Which three (3) of the following best describe Cocomms' personnel?\*

- Professional
- Determined
- Pleasant
- Respectful
- Flexible
- Enthusiastic
- Courageous/bold
- Creative
- Other, what?

Previous

Next

34%

# Communication

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Somewha t disagree	3 Neutral	4 Somewha t agree	5 Strongly agree
It's easy to communicate with the team. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication with the team is adequate. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The team keeps me updated about issues that affect our co-operation. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The team responds to my concerns. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know who my contact person in the team is. *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Has your contact person changed? \*

- Yes  
 No

If your contact person has changed, what kind of effects has that caused?

Previous

Next

42%

# Customer relationship

How satisfied are you with Cocomms as a business partner?\*

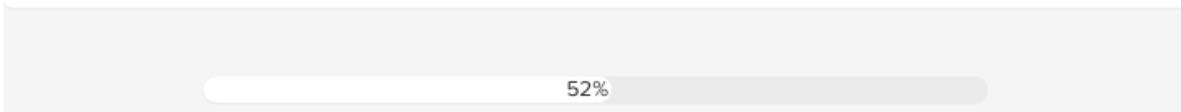
- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Cocomms is customer-focused.*	<input type="radio"/>				
Cocomms is easy to work with.*	<input type="radio"/>				
I consider Cocomms our partner.*	<input type="radio"/>				
Cocomms is committed to helping my company meet our business goals.*	<input type="radio"/>				
Cocomms treats my company as a priority.*	<input type="radio"/>				
In addition to my company's current needs, Cocomms takes care of our future needs.*	<input type="radio"/>				

Previous

Next



## My experience

Which three (3) of the following best describe your experience with Cocomms?\*

- Personal
- Authentic
- Relevant
- Customized
- Valuable
- Emotional
- Surprising
- Profitable
- Creative
- Other, what?

I have been given the opportunity to give feedback about Cocomms.\*

- Yes
- No

If I have given feedback, Cocomms has reacted to it.

- Yes
- No

How willing are you to re-purchase from Cocomms?\*

- Very willing
- Somewhat willing
- Not at all willing

I have recommended Cocomms to someone.\*

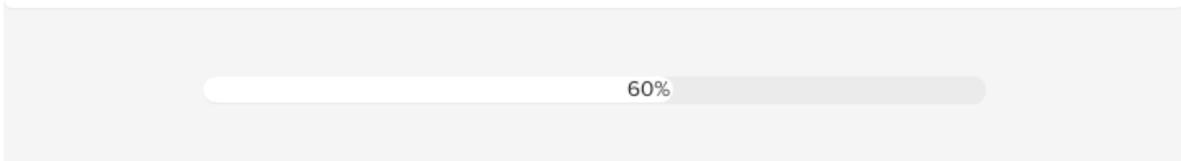
- Yes
- No

How willing would you be to recommend Cocomms to someone?\*

- Very willing
- Somewhat willing
- Not at all willing

Previous

Next



# Respondent information

What is the industry of your company?\*

- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Wholesale and retail trade
- Accommodation and food services activities
- Information and communication
- Financial and insurance activities
- Real estate activities
- Professional, scientific and technical activities
- Administrative and support service activities
- Public administration and defence
- Education
- Human health and social work activities
- Arts, entertainment and recreation
- Other, what?

What is your position in your company?\*

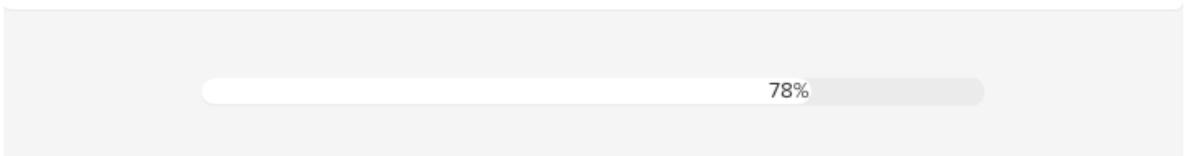
- Senior management
- Managerial position
- Senior salaried employee
- Salaried employee
- Other, what?

How long have you been a customer of Cocomms?\*

- 6 months or less
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- Over 5 years

Previous

Next



## Final thoughts

What benefits do you feel you're getting specifically from Cocomms? \*

What would you improve in Cocomms' operations? \*

What is the first thing that comes to your mind about your last dealing with Cocomms? \*

Previous

Submit

89%

Thank you for your reply! The survey is complete, you can now close the page.

## **Appendix 2. Interview framework**

*The following questions are concerning agency X's customer experience with their own customers, not with Cocomms.*

**1. Shortly, in your own words, what is your customer experience like both from your company's and your customers' point of view?**

### **Strategy:**

2. If you have a customer experience strategy, could you tell a little about it/describe it.

3. Evaluate your customer experience strategy. Do you think you've been successful in implementing this specific strategy with your customers?

### **Culture and leadership:**

*It is often stated in theory that implementing customer experience strategies successfully includes a change in the organizational culture.*

4. What do you think about this cultural change and are there some other kind of changes customer experiences require in an organization?

5. How can customer-centricity be seen in your organization? *Eg. In everyday work routines, decisions, processes..*

6. How is the management in your organization involved in showing example of how important the customers are?

### **People:**

7. How do you make sure that you employ the right type of people?

8. How are the employees trained for customer encounters? *Real-life case scenarios, video trainings...*

9. How do you make sure that every employee is committed and aware of your customer experience strategy?

**Systems and processes:**

*According to theory, it is important that the employees are empowered to make necessary decisions (keeping in mind the culture, trainings etc) to reach the strategic goals of customer experience, rather than strictly following the rules.*

10. What do you think about this “empowering people vs. processes”?

11. In what ways do you develop customer experiences (or other approach with customers)?

**Measurement:**

12. Do you have a measuring program for customer experience?

**Below is customer perspective.**

**Customer expectations:**

13. How do you make sure you have an up-to-date understanding of the customers’ expectations?

**Customers’ experiences:**

14. What benefits do you think your customers are getting specifically from you?

15. How would you describe your customer journey?

16. Have you received some specific feedback on your customer experience: what are some specific things you are doing well, what should you improve?

### Appendix 3. Open-ended questions' answers

Table 7. How the respondents found Cocomms

How did you find Cocomms? (Translated)	Miten löysit Cocommsin? (Original)
Cocomms was our partner's agency	[Cocomms oli yhteistyökumppanimme toimisto.]
We were interested in Cocomms as an operator, so it was natural to contact them.	[Cocomms on kiinnostanut toimijana, joten oli luontevaa ottaa yhteyttä.]
Offer to a bidding	[Tarjous kilpailutukseen]
I didn't find Cocomms, they had a long history with our company	[En löytänyt Cocommsia vaan heillä on pitkäaikainen historia yhtiömme kanssa]
Partner of many years	[Monen vuoden yhteistyökumppani]
Previous experience in my team	[Aiempi kokemus tiimissä]
It was chosen through my organization, through bidding	[oli valittu organisaationi kautta, kilpailutuksen kautta]
Through a colleague	[Kollegan kautta.]
Based on recommendations from work friends -Cocomms is one of our chosen partners	[Työkavereiden suositusten perusteella - on yksi meidän valituista yhteistyökumppaneista]
My supervisor had invited the representatives to our office	[Esimieheni oli kutsunut edustajat toimistomme]
The co-operation was on-going when I started	[Yhteistyö oli jo käynnissä yrityksessä, kun aloitin.]
Cocomms was already our consultant when I started my job in the firm	[Cocomms oli jo meidän konsulttimme kun aloitin työni firmassa.]
Through my contacts and own networks, so asked colleagues for experiences	[Konktatieni ja omien verkostojen kautta eli siis kysyin kollegoilta kokemuksia.]
Don't remember	[En muista]
Public bidding that Cocomms took part in	[Julkinen kilpailutus, johon Cocomms osallistui]
Through a recommendation	[Suosituksen kautta]
By Googling	[Googlettamalla]
By Cocomms contacting us. The company was already familiar through word of mouth and other visibility. I also knew some employees.	[CoCommsilta tulleen yhteydenoton kautta. Yritys oli jo aiemmin tuttu kuulopuheiden ja muun näkyvyyden kautta. Tunsin myös ennestään joitakin työntekijöitä.]
My supervisor had previously worked with Cocomms	[Esimies oli aiemmin työskennellyt Cocommsin kanssa]
I've known about the agency for years	[Olen tiennyt toimistosta jo vuosia.]
Another company from our corporation had used C's services previously and was satisfied.	[Toinen konserniyhtiömme käytti C:n palveluita jo aiemmin ja oli Satisfied.]
Bidding	[Kilpailutus]
Co-operation existed already when I started at my current company	[Yhteistyö oli jo olemassa aloittaessani nykyisessä yrityksessäni.]
Through a customer relationship	[Asiakassuhteen kautta]
Through what I heard from an active network and based on the positive buzz around Cocomms. This is years ago.	[Aktiivisen verkoston kautta kuulemani ja Cocommsin ympärillä olleen positiivisen pöhinän perusteella. Tästä on jo vuosia.]
Experience from a project with previous employer	[Kokemusta edellisen työnantajan projektista.]

Through web pages	[Verkkosivujen avulla.]
Well, I know every big communication agencies operating in Helsinki.	[Noh, tiedän kaikki Helsingissä toimivat isot viestintätoimistot.]
We had a call for bids for several communication agencies, Cocomms took part in it.	[Kilpailutimme useamman viestintätoimiston, Cocomms oli mukana kilpailutuksessa.]
The company has been familiar for a long time, for example friends have worked here.	[Yritys on ollut pitkään tuttu, mm. kavereita ollut täällä töissä.]
We would give Cocomms the best grade possible!	We would give Cocomms the best grade possible!
Very satisfied with you.	Very satisfied with you.
Recommended by another agency	Recommended by another agency
Recommended by another agency (from Sweden)	Recommended by another agency (from Sweden)
n.a.	n.a.

Table 8. What the respondents knew about Cocomms beforehand

What did you know about Cocomms beforehand? (Translated)	Mitä tiesit Cocommsista ennen asiakkuutta? (Original)
I knew the organization by name-one communication agency among others	[Tiesin organisaation nimeltä - yksi viestintätoimisto muiden joukossa.]
I knew that it's a communication agency leaning towards the health sector, which means a lot to us	[Tiesin, että on terveystalolle kallellaan oleva viestintätoimisto, jolla on iso merkitys meille.]
Quite little	[Varsin vähän]
The name	[Nimen]
Nothing	[En mitään]
Barely nothing	[En juuri mitään]
Nothing	[en mitään]
Inner references, good experiences. Strong communication experts, and communication trainers	[Sisäisiä referenssejä, hyviä kokemuksia. Vahva viestintäosaaja ja -kouluttaja.]
I've heard their presentation once-didn't know much	[Olen kuullut heidän esittelyn kerran - en tiennyt paljoakaan]
Barely nothing	[En juuri mitään]
Didn't know	[En tiennyt.]
Nothing	[En mitään.]
Quite little, except that the agency is capable in large projects too. The agency's expensive reputation was possibly something I had heard.	[Aika vähän muuta kuin että toimisto on kykeneväinen laajoihin projekteihin. Toimiston kallis maine oli ehkä myös sellainen jonka olin kuullut.]
Barely nothing, previously there were more advertising agencies and less PR agencies used	[En juurikaan mitään, aikoinaan käytettiin enemmän mainostoimistoja ja vähemmän PR-toimistoja.]
Knew them by name, because the agency is a moderately big operator in the industry. The agency has quite good reputation.	[Tunsin nimeltä, koska toimisto on kohtuullisen suuri alan toimija. Toimistolla on varsin hyvä maine.]
I had gotten familiar with the people from Cocomms years ago through Procom. The company was familiar.	[Olin tutustunut cocommsilaisiin jo vuosia sitten Procomin kautta. Yritys oli tutu.]

What I could find from the web pages	[Sen mitä verkkosivuilta löytyi.]
Special know-how in healthcare communication	[kts. edellinen vastaus. Erityisosaamisen terveystietä]
Nothing actually	[En oikeastaan mitään]
Strong expertise in healthcare communication	[Vahva terveystietä osaaja.]
I knew few consultants by looks, and of course I knew Kaija Langenskiöld	[Muutamien konsulttien tunsin ulkonäöltä, ja tietysti Kaija Langenskiöldin.]
Very little	[Hyvin vähän]
Big, high quality, Finnish communication agency	[Laadukas ja iso suomalainen viestintätoimisto.]
Nothing	[En mitään]
What I had heard from my acquaintances and seen in some event, and what was told on the web pages.	[Sen mitä olin kuullut tuttaviltani ja nähnyt jossain tapahtumassa sekä mitä nettisivuilla kerrottiin.]
Before a project with my previous employer, I knew nothing about Cocomms	[Ennen edellisen työnantajan projektia en tiennyt Cocommsista mitään.]
Nothing actually	[En oikeastaan mitään.]
Specializing in healthcare communication	[Terveystietä erikoistumisen.]
Not much, we had gotten familiar with the web pages and references	[En paljoakaan, olimme tutustuneet nettisivuihin ja referensseihin.]
Versatile communication agency, some experiences of co-operation from previous jobs	[Monipuolinen viestintätoimisto, joitain kokemuksia yhteistyöstä aiemmista työpaikoista.]
N/A	N/A
No	No
nothing as we were not active in Finland	nothing as we were not active in Finland
Zero	Zero

Table 9. What benefits the respondents feel they're getting specifically from Cocomms

What benefits do you feel you're getting specifically from Cocomms? (Translation)	Mitä hyötyjä koet saavasi juuri Cocommsilta? (Original)
"Coaching" for the project on hand	[Sparrausta käsillä olevaan projektiin.]
Valuable "coaching" and further development, good vision/outlooks	[Arvokasta sparrausta ja jatkojalostamista, hyviä näkemyksiä.]
A professional	[Ammattilaisen]
Professional approach	[Ammattimainen lähestymistapa]
Quality service that understands client company's industry and takes the business forward	[Laadukas, yrityksen toimialaa ymmärtävä ja bisnestä eteenpäin vievä palvelu]
Know-how in social media marketing	[Some-markkinoinnin osaamista]
Necessary product that we need for production use	[tarpeellisen tuotteen jota tarvitsemme tuotantokäyttöön]
Good project management, customized service, effective production, professionalism in communication	[Hyvää projektinhallintaa, räätälöityä palvelua, tehokasta tuotantoa, viestinnän ammattilaisuutta.]
Help with "coaching", practical execution	[Sparrausapua, käytännön toteutusta]
In situations when there's a hurry, and when we're executing a campaign that requires extra resources	[Kiiretilanteissa ja jos toteutetaan kampanja, joka vaatii extraresursseja]

Know-how in PR and networking. Societal know-how	[Osaamista tiedottamisessa ja verkostoitumisessa. Yhteiskunnallista osaamista]
Flexibility and quick reaction	Joustavuutta ja nopeaa reagointia.
While our own communication resources are small, so help with planning and execution, ideas on how to take projects forward by utilizing communication in diverse ways	[Oman viestinnän resurssien ollessa pieniä niin suunnitteluapua, käsipareja tekemiseen, ideoita siihen, miten hankkeita voisi viedä eteenpäin viestintää monipuolisesti hyödyntäen.]
Ideas, schedule management, channel suggestions. The most important partner in content production that we don't have enough time for	[Ideoita, aikataulunhallintaa, kanavaehdotuksia. Tärkein yhteistyökumppani sisällöntuotannossa, johon itsellä ei aikaa riittävästi]
Reliably doing what is agreed on	[Luotettavasti tehdään se, mistä on sovittu.]
The agreed material in a reliable way	[Luotettavasti sovitun aineiston]
Support in planning and executing marketing and sales activities	[Tukea markkinointi - sekä myyntiaktiiviteettien suunniteluun ja toetukseen.]
We've only done one project, and the final result was successful	[Olemme tehneet vain yhden projektin, jonka lopputulos oli onnistunut.]
Expertise, precise solutions	[asiantuntemuus, täsmäratkaisut]
Big picture of the development of the healthcare field	[Iso kuva terveydenhuoltokentän kehityksestä.]
Second opinion and honest comments	[Second opinion ja rehelliset kommentit.]
Basic things	[Perustekemistä]
Localizing, networks	[Lokalisoimista, verkostoja.]
Help with communication	[Apua viestintään]
Everyday support and help with "coaching" in communication issues, in a situation where in-house communication resources are at a minimum	[Jokapäiväistä tukea ja sparrailuapua arjessa eteen tulevilla viestintähaasteilla tilanteissa, jossa in-house viestintäresurssit on viety minimiin.]
Familiar people. We know what we're getting	[Tutut henkilöt. Tietää mitä saa.]
Professional doing, new perspectives, support in building and executing the communication entireties	[asiantuntevaa tekemistä, uusia näkökulmia, tukea viestinnän kokonaisuuden rakentamiseen ja läpiviemiseen.]
Strong know-how in healthcare communication	[Luja osaaminen terveysviestinnän saralla.]
Professional communication service	[Ammattitaitoista viestintäpalvelua.]
Punctual service for our needs. Sticking to schedules and being precise.	[Säntillistä palvelua tarpeisiimme. Aikataulussa pysytään ja ollaan tarkkoja.]
Translation of our texts into Finnish -> lowers the threshold of content being picked up in Finnish newspapers. Content is being sent out in a timely manner to media contacts -> very important for us	Translation of our texts into Finnish -> lowers the threshold of content being picked up in Finnish newspapers. Content is being sent out in a timely manner to media contacts -> very important for us
Great drive and	Great drive and
very dedicated Team always approachable, doing things fast and efficient	very dedicated Team always approachable, doing things fast and efficient
Access to Finnish media	Access to Finnish media

Table 10. What the respondents would improve in Cocomms' operations

What would you improve in Cocomms' operations? (Translated)	Mitä parantaisit Cocommsin toiminnassa? (Original)
Courage to present even crazy thoughts	[Rohkeutta esittää hullujakin ajatuksia.]
Language planning and maintenance	[Kielenhuoltoa]
Suggesting new solutions, innovativeness	[uusien ratkaisujen ehdottaminen, innovatiivisuus]
Customer focus	[Asiakaslähtöisyys]
Innovativeness in creating new ways of marketing	[Innovatiivisuutta uusien markkinointitapojen luomisessa]
Differentiation. We don't want the same stuff that has been sold to other similar companies for many years..	[Erileistuminen. Emme halu samaa kamaa mitä on myyty jo monta vuotta muille alan firmoille...]
Nothing comes to mind	[ei nyt tule mieleen]
Proactively offering solutions for entireties	[Proaktiivista kokonaisratkaisujen tarjoamista.]
I only know a small part of the company	[Tunnen vain pienen osan yritystä]
Offering and processing pictures-that might have something to improve	[Kuvien tarjonta ja käsittely - siinä ehkä jonkin verran parannettavaa]
Nothing special	[Ei erityistä]
Clarity in invoicing, what the work hours are spent on	[Selkeyttä laskutukseen, mihin käytetty työaika on mennyt.]
If something then maybe agreeing on regular communication. Now it's more like when a phase is ready then we discuss, but in bigger projects regularity and some "half time" information might be good	[jos jotain niin ehkä tietty säännöllisestä yhteydenpidosta sopiminen. Nyt ehkä enemmän sitä että kun vaihe valmis niin sitten keskustellaan mutta joissain isommissa hankkeissa säännöllisyys ja väliaikateitojen vaihtaminen voisi olla hyväksi.]
-	-
A slightly more risque graps that would also look at the client from outside would be needed	[Hieman ronskimpi, asiakastakin ulkoapäin katsova ote olisi paikallaan.]
If the client relationship would've continued longer, proactive suggestions to improve customer communication.	[Jos asiakassuhde olisi jatkunut pidempään, proaktiivisia ehdotuksia asiakasviestinnän kehittämiseksi]
Hard to find improvements	[vaikea löytyy parannuksia.]
Co-operation worked well based on one experience	[Yhteistyö toimi yhden kokemuksen perusteella hyvin.]
When we're in a hurry, closer communication from their side	[Kun meillä kiirettä, niin tiiviimpää yhteydenpitoa heidän puoleltaan]
There can be some hurry seen in their operations, which raises the bar for us to contact them	[Toiminnassa näkyy jonkin verran kiire, mikä nostaa kynnystä ottaa yhteyttä.]
More activity and braver suggestions	[Lisää aktiivisuutta ja rohkeampia ehdotuksia]
Creativity and innovativeness	[Luovuutta ja innovatiivisuutta]
The quality of translations	[Käännösten laatua.]
Activity to offer new services/solutions	[Aktiivisuutta tarjota uusia palveluita / ratkaisuja]

Creative ideas and rethinking things, so that it wouldn't always be the traditional, familiar and safe things. Challenge and courage to do things in another, even surprising way.	[Luovia ideoita ja asioiden uudelleen miettimistä, ettei aina mentäisi sen perinteisen ja tutun ja turvallisen kautta. Haastamista ja rohkeutta tehdä asioita toisella, yllättävälläkin tavalla.]
Don't know	[EOS]
Even more precision and with some people more willingness to listen to the client's needs even better	[Tarkkuutta vielä enemmän sekä joidenkin henkilöiden taholta halukkuutta kuunnella vielä paremmin asiakkaan tarpeita.]
Nothing comes to mind	[Ei tule kyllä mitään mieleen.]
More courage	[Rohkeutta lisää.]
Creativity and deeper understanding of the client's industry could be improved	[Luovuutta ja asiakkaan toimialan syvempää tuntemusta voisi hieman kehittää.]
Nothing comes to mind	Nothing comes to mind
More new ideas	More new ideas
nothing really - we are very satisfied	nothing really - we are very satisfied
n.a.	n.a.

Table 11. The first things that come to the respondents' minds about their last dealing with Cocomms

What is the first thing that comes to your mind about your last dealing with Cocomms? (Translated)	Mikä on ensimmäinen asia, joka tulee mieleesi viimeisimmästä asiointikerrastasi Cocommsin kanssa? (Original)
Good feeling and straight forwardness/easiness	[Hyvä fiilis ja mutkattomuus.]
Professionalism and extremely pleasant team. It is fun to co-operate with them.	[Ammattitaito ja äärimmäisen mukava tiimi. Sen kanssa on hauska tehdä yhteistyötä.]
Thank you for being quick and for good performance	[Kiitos nopeudesta ja hyvästä suorituksesta]
Quick	[Nopea]
Expertise	[Ammattitaito]
Creativity?	[Luovuus?]
Pleasant experience	[miellyttävä kokemus]
Good and productive conversation and exchange of thoughts, mutual vision how to effectively take the project forward	[hyvä ja tulokellinen keskustelu ja ajatustenvaihto, yhteinen näkemys projektin tehokkaasta edistämisestä.]
Good work and good final presentation	[Hyvää työtä ja hyvä loppuesitys]
Even though the starting point of a campaign got a bit delayed, the final result was good	[Vaikka kamppiksen aloitusajankohta vähän venyi, oli lopputulos hyvä, eli kannatti fiilata]
Pleasant	[Miellyttävä]
Our needs and schedule were considered excellently	[Meidän tarpeet ja aikataulu otettiin erinomaisesti huomioon.]
A positive e-mail in a project that is left in a certain point and unfinished	[positiivinen sähköpostiviesti hankkeessa joka on jäänyt tiettyyn vaiheeseen ja kesken.]
It went well	[hyvin meni]
Easiness	[Helppous]
The agreed things arrived on-time, some hassle with the checking process but everything was handled	[Sovitut jutut tulivat ajoissa, pientä sählyystä tarkastusprosessin kanssa, mutta asiat kuitenkin hoituivat.]
Quick reaction	[Nopea reagointi.]

Friendly service	[Ystävällinen palvelu]
Easy and punctual	[Helppoa ja täsmällistä]
Hurry on both sides, it was good though that the office kept in touch proactively	[Kiire puolin ja toisin, hyvä kuitenkin että toimistosta otettiin proaktiivisesti yhteyttä.]
Success :-)	[Onnistuminen :-)]
Who's responsible for what	[Kuka vastaa mistäkin]
Friendly.	[Ystävällinen.]
Good presentation coaching from Nina	[Hyvä esiintymisvalmennus Ninalta]
Good mood :-)	[Hyvä mieli :-)]
Learning something new	[Uuden oppiminen]
Two-sided image. I remember both a small typo that nearly ruined a good projet, as well as at the latest a very positive case where I got help proactively and in schedule, so that I managed to execute it.	[Kaksijakoinen mielikuva. Mieleen on jäänyt sekä yksi pieni kirjoitusvirhe mikä oli vähällä tuhota hyvän projektin että toinen erittäin positiivinen case aivan viimeiseksi johon sain proaktiivisesti ja aikataulussa apua, jotta onnistun läpiviennissä.]
Expertise	[Ammattitaito.]
Expertise, has control	[Ammattitaitoisuus, langat hyvin käsissä.]
Expert/professional	[Asiantunteva]
We had the pleasure of visiting them in Helsinki -> good meeting, presentation on latest coverage, lunch with them and pleasant conversations.	We had the pleasure of visiting them in Helsinki -> good meeting, presentation on latest coverage, lunch with them and pleasant conversations.
Very pleasant and open to feedback	Very pleasant and open to feedback
professional handling of the different Projects we work on	professional handling of the different Projects we work on
Professional & solid people	Professional & solid people