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# INTERNATIONAL B2B- TELEMARKETING

– Experiences from Finnish SME's



BACHELOR'S ABSTRACT

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## INTERNATIONAL B2B TELEMARKETING

- Finnish SME's experiences about the subject

The purpose of this thesis is to study what kind of international telemarketing calls the Finnish small-and medium sized companies and entrepreneurs are receiving. Supported by literature and research, this thesis looks into world of international telemarketing and the ways of doing that kind of business. Furthermore, the thesis studies what is bought and how often.

The data for this thesis are collected through a questionnaire, whose purpose was to find out the answers to questions like how often SME's get those marketing calls, what is offered and how time consuming the handling of those calls is.

The questionnaire was sent to 50 companies and entrepreneurs from advertising-and content creation-sector. Companies were picked throughout Finland, but mostly from Southwest Finland. Response rate was 30%. The survey covered thirteen questions and it included both close- and open-ended questions.

The main finding of the survey was that services and software, but not physical products are often offered to companies. Another finding of the research was that there was a wide variety of what is offered to companies in those B2B-telemarketing calls. One could say that sky is the limit when keen telemarketers are conducting business. One more finding was that is not as time consuming to handle telemarketing calls as one could expected.

### KEYWORDS:

Telemarketing, international telemarketing, international sales, B2B-marketing

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## KANSAINVÄLINEN B2B-TELEMARKKINOINTI

- suomalaisten pienten- ja keskisuurten yritysten kokemuksia aiheesta

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on tutkia, minkälaisia kansainvälisiä telemarkkinointipuheluita suomalaiset pienet- ja keskisuuret yritykset saavat. Aihetta käsitellään kirjallisuuden sekä tutkimuksen kautta. Opinnäytetyö pyrkii vastaamaan, mitä on kansainvälinen telemarkkinointi B2B-markkinoinnin alalla, ja kuinka tätä liiketoimintaa harjoitetaan. Opinnäytetyö käsittelee myös sitä, mitä telemarkkinoijilta ostetaan ja kuinka usein.

Osana opinnäytetyötä on tehty kyselytutkimus, jonka tarkoitus oli selvittää mm. kuinka usein suomalaiset pienet- ja keskisuuret yritykset saavat markkinointipuheluita, mitä yrityksille tarjotaan ja kuinka aikaa vievää puheluihin vastaaminen ja niiden hoitaminen ovatkaan.

Kyselytutkimus toteutettiin verkkokyselyllä ja kohderyhmänä olivat suomalaiset pienet- ja keskisuuret yritykset sekä yksinyrittäjät jotka toimivat mainonnan ja sisällöntuotannon alalla. Kysely lähetettiin 50:lle yritykselle ja vastausprosentti oli 30%. Kysely sisälsi 13 kysymystä, sekä avoimia että monivalintakysymyksiä.

Yrityksille tehdyn kyselyn suurimpana löytönä oli se, että telemarkkinoijat eivät enää niinkään tarjoa tavaroita vaan erilaisia palveluita, sisältöjä sekä ohjelmia. Voidaan hyvin sanoa, että vain taivas on rajana, kun innokkaat telemarkkinoijat tarjoavat tuotteitaan ja palvelujaan. Eräs löytö oli myös se tosiseikka, että telemarkkinointi puheluihin vastaaminen ei ole niin aikaa vievää kuin luulisi.

ASIASANAT:

Telemarkkinointi, kansainvälinen telemarkkinointi, B2B-markkinointi, kansainvälinen myynti

# CONTENT

<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Motivation	9
1.2 Research questions	10
1.3 Structure of the Thesis	11
<b>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Roles of telemarketing	12
2.2 Internet and the global telemarketing	13
2.3 Impact of calls	15
2.4 B2B - sales and marketing	18
<b>3 TELEMARKETING CALLS ACCORDING FINNISH SME'S</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1 B2B-telemarketing in Finland	21
3.2 International telemarketing and Finnish companies	22
<b>4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 Research	23
4.2 Reliability, validity and generalization of results	24
<b>5 RESEARCH ANALYSIS</b>	<b>25</b>
5.1 Questions in questionnaire	25
<b>6 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>35</b>
6.1 Suggestions for further research	36
<b>7 REFERENCES</b>	<b>37</b>

## APPENDICES

- Appendix 1. Cover letter to companies
- Appendix 2. Questionnaire

## FIGURES

Figure 1 B2B Lead generation (Kumar, 2015)	8
Figure 2 calls from telemarketers during the week	26
Figure 3 Telemarketing calls from abroad/week	27
Figure 4 Time in telephone with telemarketers weekly	28
Figure 5 International calls	29
Figure 6 Calls related to business	30
Figure 7 Bought something from telemarketers	31

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B2B	Business-to business, commerce transactions between businesses
B2C	Business-to consumer, transactions between a company and consumer
Cold Call	Salesperson contacts individuals who have not previously expressed an interest in the products or service in hand (Investopedia, 2017)
SME's	Small-and Medium Sized Enterprises
Telemarketing	The act of marketing goods or services to potential customers over the telephone (Investopedia, 2017)

# 1 INTRODUCTION

International telemarketing is growing steadily, and is predicted to grow 4,8 % during the years 2017-2021. (Satprnews, 2017) Acknowledging this importance, this thesis analyses, how the international telemarketers are working and what kind of methods they are using when approaching the customer. This thesis also explores regions where the telemarketers are physically operated in global B2B-marketing business.

I have a several years of working background in a number of inquiry call centers in Finland. I started in my work in June 2010, and I have been working there since. I started by handling inbound phone calls from customers and aiding them in any situation needed. Among those customers were citizens and companies, entrepreneurs and retirees from all the social classes. During my years in this line of work, I have handled tens of thousands of phone calls. Many of them lasting less than 30 second, but some over one hour. So, every large and minor problem among the everyday life are familiar to me, I could say.

The employees in the call centers are not telemarketers, but sellers of information and aid customers. Company A is a large company and one of the behemoths in Finland on its business area. Service centers for number inquiries in Finland are located in Kajaani, Turku and Pori.

In my years of experience, I have noticed that many calls came from SME's, customers who tried to get information behind numbers, or whether this caller was from Finland or abroad. Many of the phone calls come from abroad and these days many calls are made via Internet. Nowadays, a majority of phone calls are coming from abroad and the caller's information is difficult to trace, in such cases, the only solid information accessible is, that the call is probably a telemarketing call.

As we can see from Figure 1, and as supported by other sources (Gatten, 2015), telemarketing is still one of the best B2B lead generation methods despite of e-mail and social media-marketing. Moreover, B2B-business

telemarketing is popular and an excellent way to get in touch with clients. (Gatten, 2015) In this regard, we should remember, that many of the Finnish companies and enterprises are doing business abroad nowadays, and making and receiving contacts may be paramount to conduct successful business. Especially when business often is “out there”, outside Finnish borders.

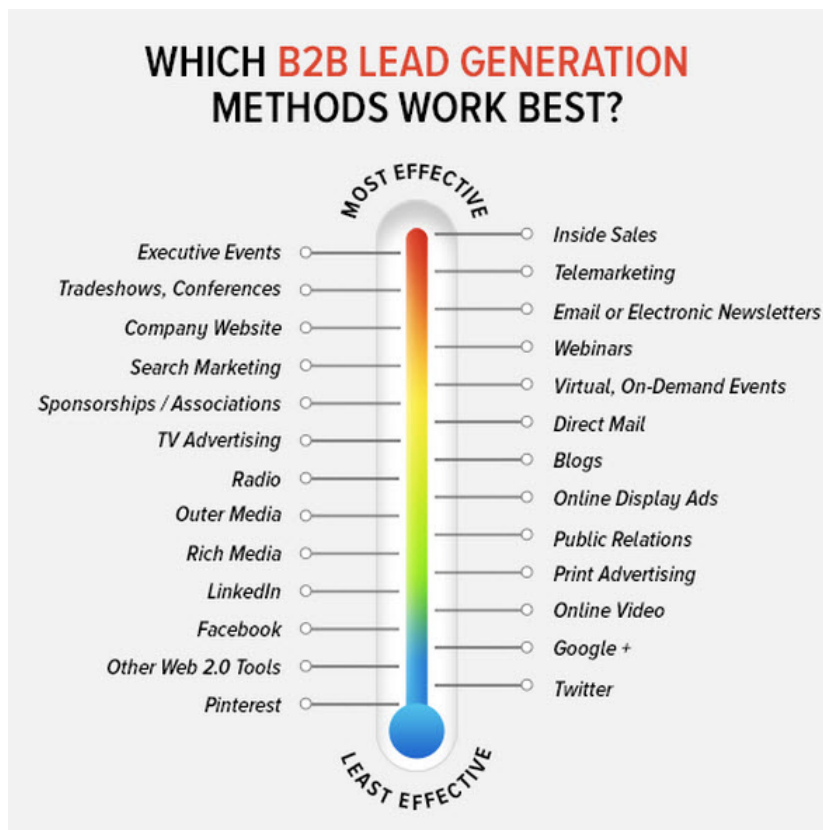


Figure 1 B2B Lead generation (Kumar, 2015)

International telemarketing is growing steadily and, as an example of this trend we could take a look at *Teleperformance* (Teleperformance, 2017).

Teleperformance is a multinational company which serves clients from more than 160 markets in 75 different languages through 311 contact centers.

Automotive and transportation, energy and utilities, financial services, government, healthcare, insurance, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, retail, telecommunications, and travel and tourism are the major industries served by this marketing company. They have over 215 000 people in the payroll, which



makes them world's biggest company in area of business. in 2016 Teleperformance had 3, 649 million € revenue, up 7,4 % from the year 2015. (BusinessWire, 2017).

## 1.1 Motivation

I'm very interested in how time-consuming is to answer international telemarketing calls, and if those salespeople are just trying to sell random services or tangible products. In other words, is telemarketing coming from abroad somehow targeted? Is there common logic behind? Keeping up contacts - for example? Is it also the case here in Finland? Are we different than others? We also had to remember, that even if it may feel uncomfortable and annoying to get telemarketing calls in person, as a *consumer*, that may not be a case in business life, where direct contact is very important, especially in B2B-sales.

The question why Finnish SME's were chosen, is relevant also. Because I'm Finnish, and my background in work life is mostly done here in Finland, I chose companies from Finland. The idea of writing this thesis came from my work. One relevant reason is that the smaller enterprise or company's CEO or entrepreneur is easy to reach. This is also known by telemarketers, who will always try to reach people who have influence to make business via phone, directly. Telemarketers do not want to call secretaries (gatekeeper) or other people, who usually do not pass on the message. In large, international or multinational companies CEO's and the entire field of upper management is oftentimes not available directly via phone, or e-mails. Usually a caller could not get farther than switchboard, and if you are calling from telemarketing company trying to reach a purchasing manager, your chances are not high.

The reason why I chose small-and medium sized companies as an interesting group for this study, is because there are a major group of companies and entrepreneurs in Finland which conduct business here in Finland. They produce an important portion of taxes and so called common good in our society. This is also the case in other major EU-countries (European Union, 2017).

An important aspect is also a question, what do telemarketers from abroad are selling to Finnish SME's? I hope this thesis would also bring some light to this question, and I hope the reader of this work will also find the question intriguing. I have found that some entrepreneurs are surprised or even amazed to get calls from telemarketers from abroad. They can not imagine what kind of useful proposals or deals they could get. Alas, I do not go in a field of Finnish telemarketing in Finland in this work. Because of its relevance I should notice that some Finnish telemarketing companies targeting Finnish markets, are working outside Finland. Usually these companies are located places like Malta and Spain, (Espanja.com, 2015) and they have a Finnish speaking labour force.

Also, people in Finland do not know that calls are coming from Costa del Sol because calls are routed, and it look like coming from Finland instead.

## **1.2 Research questions**

This thesis aims to identify what is offered to Finnish SME's by international telemarketing. Furthermore, the aim is to separate what is offered and what is bought from telemarketers. In addition, this thesis is going to ask how often Finnish SME's are targeted by international telemarketers, based on the research findings.

This thesis is build based on the following research questions:

1. How much time are Finnish SMEs spending on phone with international telemarketers?
2. How many of the Finnish SME's answered in questionnaire had activity abroad?
3. Which type of services or products are offered to Finnish SMEs by international telemarketing?

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

In the second chapter of this, consists the theoretical frameworks, as in the concepts of international telemarketing and B2B-marketing, are introduced and explained. In the third chapter the ways of international telemarketers conducting business according the Finnish SME's are presented. The fourth chapter is devoted to research methodology. The chapter five is about the questionnaire methods. Chapter six analyses the questionnaire answers and the results are introduced there.

The seventh and final chapter concludes the thesis and includes the recommendations for further research.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

International telemarketing is a growing business, (The MarketingSite.com, 2017) english-language is a global language of business, so called *lingua franca*, (Communicaid.com, 2011) and there are many places in the English-speaking world where relatively cheap labor is available. Many of the younger generation in those places are highly educated and they will work on cheap. In India, for example, there are many large call centers where hundreds of workers are making outbound and inbound phone calls to everywhere in the world. (Quora.com, 2017) When call centers are placed in the countries like India and Bangladesh, companies could operate with cheap labor, cheap phone calls and be very productive and efficient. (John Burgess, 2007)

### 2.1 Roles of telemarketing

Telemarketing is a business where a salesperson reaches customer via phone, and try to sell products or services. Salesperson could make a call by himself, or in many cases, it can happen automatically. It means there are software behind which makes a call instead. These calls are called *robocalls*. (Investopedia, 2017)

There are four major roles in telemarketing. First one is *Direct selling*, when a salesperson is trying to sell products or services to a client via phone call, then *supporting the salesforce* is the way where telemarketers are calling to potential, or existing customers and make enquiries. These telemarketers are usually well trained and motivated (Isoviita, 1994). A third role relates to *generating and screening leads* as the way of making contact to potential customers, and then arrange the salespeople visit in target company. In this regard, telemarketers are supporting force to sales division, and they will work for common goal. Last role is *marketing database building and updating*, when calls to the customer may be needed when updating marketing databases for the future (Jobber, 2010).

In addition to these roles, one of the most known activities of telemarketing is *Cold calling*. Cold calling is defined as the solicitation of business from potential customers who have had no prior contact with the salesperson conducting the call. (Investopedia, 2017) Cold calling is used to attempt to convince potential customers to purchase either the salesperson's product or service. It is generally referred to as an over-the-phone process, making it a source of telemarketing.

## **2.2 Internet and the global telemarketing**

The Internet has provided many new opportunities to a global telemarketing business, but also challenges. (Stinson, 2012) Nowadays most of the calls from call centers internationally are made via Internet connection, and that means major downsizing to the cost-structure of telemarketing business. Over the last decades, the global world has grown smaller and faster at the same. Because of the Internet, we can reach out and be connected to distant places and each other, at the speed of light (technically, a little bit slower, but that makes no difference to us humans) (Laine, 2008).

In this regard, the coming of Internet has really change our World, and the ways of making business also. Companies could participate in business no matter where they are located. This is one big global megatrend, mention also by Philip Kotler in his books (Kotler, 2005).

Moreover, in business-life we can now be connected to our business partners, no matter how far they are, or in what time zone. E-mails, phone calls, instant messages will bind us together. (Wadhwa, 2014) It is very easy to use a mobile phone application like Alibaba, and order things directly from seller in China, and paying is as easy also, like applications like Alipay. (AliPay, 2017) The procedure is almost instant, only the waiting of your order is still relatively time-consuming happening.

The rapid development of telecommunication has impacted to business like telemarketing. Nowadays telemarketing is global, and because the English is the global language of business, operators could use English-based services when outsourcing services. These services are provided by countries like India, Singapore, Hong Kong or Philippines, (BBC.com, 2012) which all has a history of English spoken influence. The people in those countries are skilled, educated and fluent in English. That is most true in India, (Times of India, 2013) where the labour force is also relatively cheap. They got a large call centers, (www.callcentersindia.com, 2017) where hundreds of people are making calls everywhere in the world, 24/7. Because in the global world there is always a day somewhere.

The coming of Internet has also changed the structure of cost efficiency. Why using a landline when Skype and other applications are making calling so much cheaper via Internet-connections? Technically, in many parts of the world the connection is still done using landlines, (Akamai, 2017) but there are no teleoperators in the middle charging fees. This all together is one of the reasons why large number of call services in USA have been transfer to India, among other reasons. But there are other examples too. In Italy they have a pilot program about technical support where operators are answering and serving people in Italian, while operators are in South-Africa. (WorldWide CallCenters, Inc., 2017) Could we imagine something like this to happen before the era of Internet? No, we can not.

In many cases, people do not mind where the service is located. The only need is to get a certain service, and the language matter, of course. This is another important reason for large US-based companies have outsourced their service centers to India, for example. And not just ordinary companies from consumer goods-business, but medical services also. X-ray from a patient in United States could be examined by a doctor in India. (Outsource2India, 2017) It is the same idea behind the telemarketing business. No matter where the service provider is located, as long as the connections are secured, and we have a common language. We should not forget the cost efficiency also.

When companies in Finland are getting telemarketing calls from abroad, they do not know where those calls are coming from. Traces from calls are easy to change, when most of these telemarketing calls are routed via Internet-connections. That is why the country code of an inbound call could be +44, for example, which is United Kingdom, but the actual call is coming from India or Pakistan. It is just routed. (Voipfone, 2017) The importance in this matter is, that when entrepreneur or company CEO is watching the inbound call, he or she does not put the effort to answer the call when they got no idea Who, why or where this call is coming from. This is the case when we are speaking of SME's, when bigger companies got phone calls from everywhere outside Finland, and they got a personnel to answer and handle those calls. Sometimes they will use outsourced services.

### **2.3 Impact of calls**

One of the most important problems with telemarketing calls are that they often come when you least expect them. When someone is busy and working with some important project in mind you are answering questions in the phone and trying to understand what is going on simultaneously. In many business, it is relevant to answer any calls from abroad, because you do not know which is the important one. If you just hang up the phone, it could be a sign for telemarketers to call back. (Elson, 2014)

Another issue with telemarketing calls is the trustworthiness. It is not easy to do business with some unknown voice over the phone, and you cannot even trust that this person really is who he/she claims to be. You cannot even trust the caller's phone number. As already stated, it is very easy to reroute phone calls made via Internet to look like they are coming from United Kingdom, when they really are coming from India. (Voipfone, 2017) This fact makes them very hard to trace. (Saltzman, 2015)

What is a robocall? It means a phone call made by an automated system, which records the calls. (Rouse, 2014) Because of advanced technology it is cheap

and easy to maintain, and is usually used in scams, not in real telemarketing calls. During the last years so-called robocalls have increased rapidly. In year 2016 alone over 29 billion robocalls were made in United-States alone, and last April 2,5 billion calls were made to an Americans (Nicole Lyn Pesce, 2017) . This is not a problem in Finland yet, because we are still relatively small market. If we think more of the legal status of the SME's considering the telemarketing in Finland, the situation is that companies and entrepreneurs do have the same juridical protection against telemarketing than individuals, but it is more difficult to acquire (Data Protection Ombudsman , 2013).

Most of the phone calls received from telemarketers are purely marketing calls. Answering those phone calls are time consuming, and sometimes annoying. There are still some calls which are hoaxes according the law. Some calls coming from Finland and some from abroad. A usually hoax-call is when telemarketer is phishing the word "yes", or closes the deal without really mattering what you say. Almost every marketing call is recorded automatically, and if the caller is doing something illegal, they could just pick up the yes-word from the tape and use it as a proof that deal has been made. (Suomen Yrittäjät, 2017)

In order to analyse the importance of telemarketing is relevant to analyse the impact of these calls, both hoaxes and legitimate. What is the impact of calls? Are telemarketing calls so-called "cold calls", when the telemarketer just trying to offer products or services to any one affords to buy, or targeted calls, when caller has knowledge about the target beforehand? Then telemarketer also offers something which is especially designed to these companies which they are targeting and is likely lead to sales.



Cold calling is very common in global business life, especially in B2B-sales, which favours a direct contact. (www.paperlessproposal.com, 2017). It is said that cold calling is dying out because now we have a social media and other platforms which help us making contact in business life. Still, many large companies all over the world rely strongly in cold calling. (Ramin Assemi, 2017) From Forbes 500-list we could find companies like Uber and Twitter. They have a lot of eager sales representatives in payroll making calls every day, and these are companies which are very innovative in nature.

The future of telemarketing has been here several years already. It is just adjusting itself, and moving towards e-mailing and social media platforms. Phone calls are not vanishing but more and more information are provided to a potential customers via e-mails and targeted campaigns which could take a form in environments like LinkedIn or Facebook. (Reardon, 2017)

## 2.4 B2B - sales and marketing

B2B-sales are commercial transactions between businesses. (SearchCio, 2013) They are essential to a global and local commerce, because companies and entrepreneurs need a solid flow of materials and services when producing their products and services. Actually, all the organisations that buy goods and services to use in production of goods or services their own are included here. It is said that business markets involve far more money than consumer markets. (Armstrong, 2008)

When thinking about the mechanics of B2B-sales, we often think it is just shaking hands in business meetings and conferences. This is only a partial truth about the case, because you can not be everywhere. In the world of global business, people and companies are very far from each other', and you can not be very effective with your customers if you spend your business days just flying around the world. So, what you going to do then? You will make a call, send e-mail or arrange a video conference with your client. (Conversion Sciences, 2017) It is simple, but at the same time it means you have to bring cold facts in the conversation. There are no shortcuts to successful business endeavour otherwise.

In this thesis I concentrate on telemarketing and I will therefore concentrate on this aspect of B2B sales. It is very effective way to reach out and getting contact with customers, already existing and the new ones. In B2B-sales making first hand contact is essential, because customers need to know who they are dealing with. No e-mails could do that what the voice of other human being could. Being convincing. Telling the facts regarding the service or product offered and advertise, of course. (Bizibl.com, 2014)

In this regard, international telemarketing is a part of B2B-sales and marketing. Outbound calls are made from a mass because those are very effective (Sara Longini, 2017). Nowadays the social media is highly respected when talking about reaching people and companies, but in the B2B-area old ways are still most effective. Moreover, some researches claim (Griffin, 2013) that outbound marketing is still most effective, and the social media least effective.

In B2B-sales creating a dialog between the seller and the client is crucial, and therefore telemarketing is a good way to acquire it. You could raise the awareness of your product and your credibility in the eyes of potential customers also and we should not forget the fact that customers appreciate the expertise that a good salesperson has considering his product and its properties. (MarketingMo, 2017)

People in the B2B-sales business are often educated, and they know a lot of details and information about their products and services. Conducting successful sales requires this expertise. Many salespersons have a long history in the area of business, and a good sales representative usually earns well also. Last but not least, the most fundamental skill that people in B2B-sales need, is a understanding of customer's needs. (Albro, 2015)

### **3 TELEMARKETING CALLS ACCORDING FINNISH SME'S**

In Finland we have hundreds of companies practicing telemarketing. There are a wide variety of companies from selling magazines and books, vitamins and detergents to the funding and banking. Some companies are just one person-enterprises, others large banks and insurance companies. Many of these companies are selling their products and services as a B2C-businesses, directly to the consumers. Still, there are many companies in the B2B-sector who solely target other companies as a client. It is also common to sell same products to companies and as consumers as well. However, in B2B-sector telemarketing is often more sophisticated than in B2C-sector. Many companies need tailored services, like Procountor-software (Finago, 2017) for financial administration. It is one of the many services marketed via phone in Finland.

Problems to a Finnish companies with directory-providers had occurred because of different and even hazy companies, who are selling the opportunity to gain visibility in online. There are many in Finland alone, and the names of these companies are often delusive. Sometimes these telemarketers are calling to companies and start the conversation just by asking information about name of the company, address and such. (Myllymäki, 2015) The target company do not suspect anything before the bill is in the box. Company feels they had not made the deal, but the directory-company thinks otherwise. Suomen Yrittäjät has the legal service of their own which answers to members who had billed without consent. (Suomen Yrittäjät, 2017)

Other times a deal is made when a company pays the bill, and the circle is ready. It is often very hard to get information about the company who send the bill, and contact details for claim the compensation are vague or non-existent. Often, tracks lead outside Finland, countries like Estonia or Sweden. According Finnish law, companies had rights to consider telemarketing. (Data Protection Ombudsman, 2013) Companies could claim the recording made from the conversation with telemarketer. It requires the letter or e-mail to the seller with signature, if sending e-mail, the letter should have scanned. Companies could also deny telemarketing, but it will require direct contact to each and every one of the telemarketing companies. (Data Protection Ombudsman , 2013)

### **3.1 B2B-telemarketing in Finland**

Telemarketing in Finland is employes overall 100 000 people, (Siren, Anna, 2013) and largest companies has hundreds of employees in payroll. How many of those 100 000 are working primarily in B2B-sector, is unknown. However, the fact is that there is many companies making cold calls in Finland in Finnish businesses.

Although many companies in Finland still relay on cold calling in B2B-telemarketing, there are also alternative approach. Like giving something free, a hook - a telemarketer could provide an offer where a customer could use a software, for example, free of charge for 2 weeks, and then calls back. Usually the selling is changing to guidance of product or service, and that is an efficient way to claim new deals. Such sales-behaviour come from United States, and Finnish B2B-telemarketing companies are absorbing the model quickly. It is efficient and works better than just cold calling, the key word here is targeting. (Österlun, Pär, 2012)

The whole B2B-sector in Finland is changing. Companies are absorbing new and innovative ideas to get close an potential customer, and that is the reason why new methods are needed for. Digitalization brings these new ways to get in

touch in Finland also. What is very important, is the visibility in search engines. (Suomen Digimarkkinointi, 2017)

### **3.2 International telemarketing and Finnish companies**

As stated in section, international telemarketing calls to Finland could be made anywhere in the world. Finnish companies get telemarketing calls more often if they had activities abroad, naturally. When company had office abroad or they are visible in fairs and different shows, they usually are visible in online also. Foreign directory-companies then get the information about the target company to files of their own. Then they could sell the information to everyone interested of it. (Bisnode Finland Oy, 2017) One of these companies is Swedish-based Bisnode, which is leading provider of digital business information in Europe (Bisnode Finland Oy, 2017).

Finnish SME's are very active to take part in fairs abroad nowadays. They also seek new ideas from abroad, which means they have more contacts there. (Finnvera, 2017) It is very good idea heading abroad even when your business is small- or medium-sized, because everybody else are there already. We are living in the world where globalization and digitalization are new standard, and international telemarketing is one part of it.

## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is difficult to say how often Finnish SME's receive telemarketing calls from abroad. International telemarketing calls are not so different from the Finnish-ones, apart from the language being often English or Swedish. Today these calls could be made from very far away. There is one official member in Finland, Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority, 2017) whose line of duty is also supervising telemarketing in Finland. They cannot say much about international telemarketing calls because they are out of its jurisdiction, but we could presume that some of international telemarketing calls are made just to keep up business relationships (Jobber, 2010).

### 4.1 Research

This thesis tries to answer to the following questions:

- How much time does Finnish SMEs normally spend in phone with international telemarketers?
- How many of the Finnish SME's answered in questionnaire had activity abroad?
- Which type of services or products are offered to Finnish SMEs by international telemarketing?

In order to provide answers to these research questions a questionnaire was built, and data collected from Finnish SME's and entrepreneurs. The chosen research method in this thesis is an obtrusive data collection method, to collect qualitative data (University of Twente, 2017). The necessary data required in my thesis will be gathered via the questionnaire, which was send to 50 entrepreneurs and SME's, all among the small-and medium sized companies,

and independent entrepreneurs. Companies were randomly picked from all over Finland, and were all from the advertising - and content creation business. This questionnaire gives the material needed for analyse. Questionnaire was made in Finnish with Webropol-software.

There were 13 questions, and the poll was made as user friendly as possible. This survey was published online on 9.10.2017, and it returned 15 responses versus 50 invitations, all those sent during 3 working days since 9.10.2017. The percentage of returned questionnaires was exactly 30%. We should keep this as a very good rate. Only one company from the fifty send a message where refused to answer at all, for reason unknow.

## **4.2 Reliability, validity and generalization of results**

The survey was conducted as a questionnaire where there were open questions also, and possibility to answer anonymously. This was for the reliability of study. It was very important that as many as possible from the 50 poll-receivers would answer to query. However, the choice was made not to publish any given information about the answerers.

Validity in the data collection method research means, that it measures what it intends to measure. Therefore, the questions in the questionnaire must be designed carefully. (Saunders, 2012) Many of the questions asked were about subjective experiences according the international telemarketing.

The main concern was that there are too few returned questionnaires. The limit was draw to ten returned polls. Under that amount would have been too narrow scale.



## 5 RESEARCH ANALYSIS

In this section analysis from the gathered data for each question will be provided.

First, the 50 invitations to participate in questionnaire were sent to different companies, and I selected a minimum amount of 15 returned queries. Meaning that 30 % of the queries sent were returned. We could say that companies and entrepreneurs are willing to answer questionnaires trying to solve what is offered to them by telemarketers from abroad.

### 5.1 Questions in questionnaire

1. Question: Do your company has any activity or customers abroad?

Yes: 10 No: 5

2/3 of companies had activity abroad. This means also visibility abroad in online marketing places, catalogues and websites. This is also the way to telemarketers get information about possible clients who to approach.

Surprisingly many of the companies had activities abroad, but if we remember the fact that many of the Finnish SME's are taking part in fairs and making contacts to another companies, it is going to right perspective.

2. Question: How often do you receive telemarketing calls? Please notice the domestic calls also!

Once a day: 1, 2-3 times/week: 8, Less than that: 6, not so often: 0

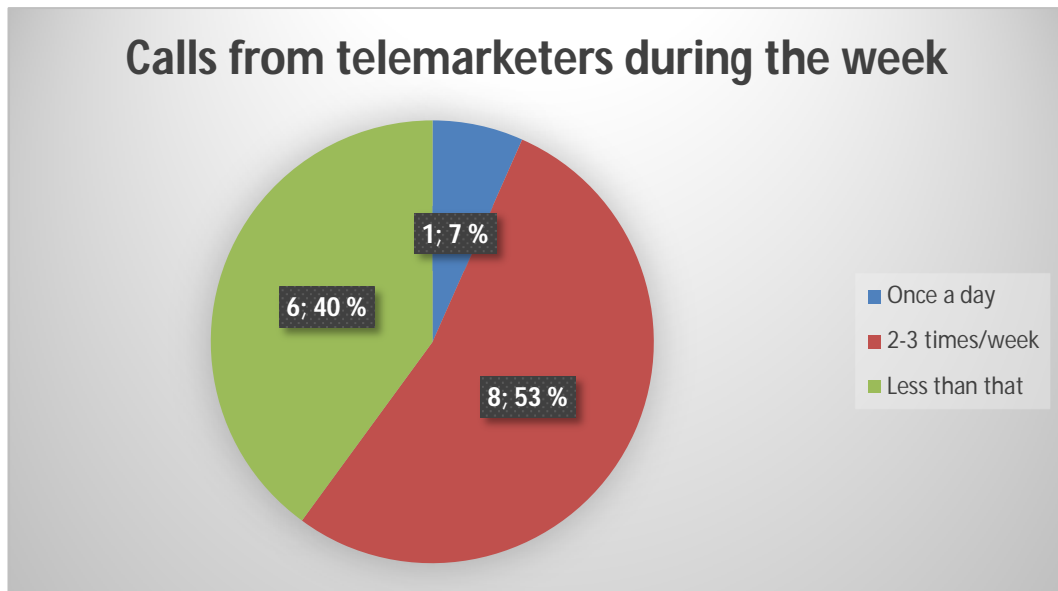


Figure 2 calls from telemarketers during the week

Amount of telemarketing calls received is very modest, as we could see clearly from the pie chart above. Companies answered in query said that 9 out 15 are receiving calls at least 2-3 times a week. The results are surprising due to the fact that there are increase in telemarketing globally.

3. Question: How often do you receive telemarketing calls from abroad?

2-3 times/week: 1, Less than that: 14



Figure 3 Telemarketing calls from abroad/week

Answers indicate that receiving international telemarketing calls is sparse in our selected group. I was expecting calls coming more often during the business week, but data indicates something else. We could say, that calls are received but not often. Does this tell us that Finland is still a small market and far from rest of the Europe, we could not say. We need more data before that kind of assumptions.

4. Question: How much time you'll estimate to spend with telemarketers during the week? Please notice all telemarketing calls.

0 – 15 min/week: 13, 15 – 30 min/week: 2

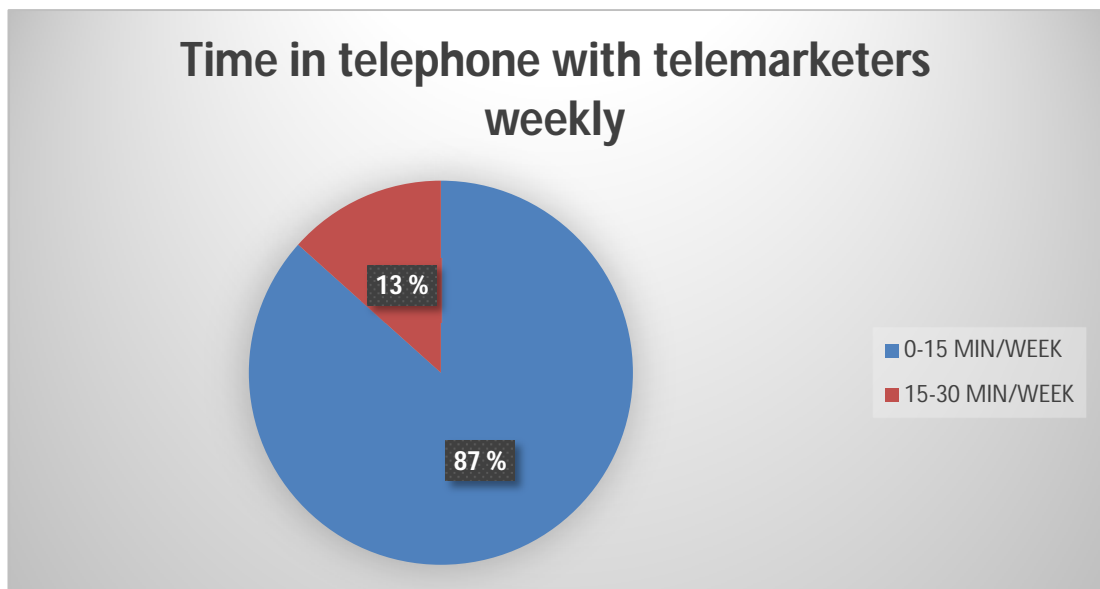


Figure 4 Time in telephone with telemarketers weekly

Time spent with telemarketers during the business week is modest. At least the companies who answered, do not spend much time talking with telemarketers. 13 of 15 claim that spent less than 15 minutes in phone with telemarketers per week. What we could say about the time consuming, one could have expected that SMEs and entrepreneurs would spend a substantial amount of time with it. After all, it is sure that more studies are required about the subject in the future, and with broader view.

5. Question: How many of the telemarketing calls you'll receive are international calls? Then the country code is different than +358 and the language is other than Finnish.

0-25%: 11, 25-50%: 4, 50-75%: 0, 75%-: 0



Figure 5 International calls

We could say that international calls are still in minority when compared to all telemarketing calls received. There are always more domestic than foreign marketers in Finnish market. Alas, one reason could be forwarding services also, provided by Finnish companies to international telemarketers.

6. Question: How many of the telemarketing calls you received is directly connected to your business?

0-25%: 11, 25-50%: 3, 50-75%: 0, 75-%: 1



Figure 6 Calls related to business

Most of the companies (11) reported that 25% or less from inbound telemarketing calls were directly connected to area of business. Then major portion of calls are considering something else than core business. The result is indicating cold calling very well, because usually services offered via cold calling could be anything at the marketing agenda. Like magazines and books. Very often telemarketers making cold calls do not choose or targeting the client companies beforehand.

7. Question: Is the telemarketing call you have had ever lead to deal or bargain? If so, how often?

Yes: 5 No: 10

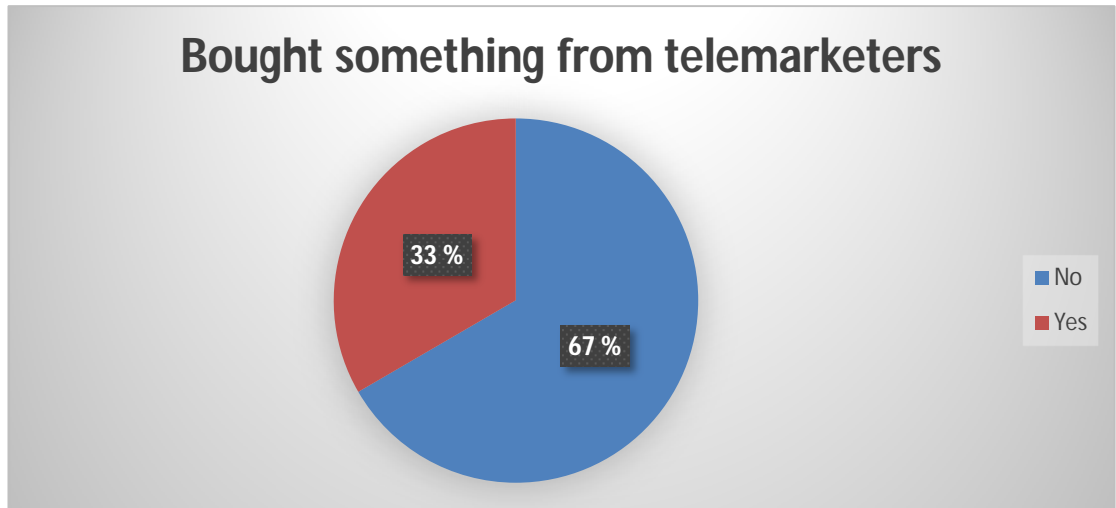


Figure 7 Bought something from telemarketers

1/3 of companies informed they have bought products or services from telemarketers. It is 33% of companies, and this means that many companies are using services offered via telemarketing calls. This is going hand in hand with the statistics about effectiveness of telemarketing calls.

8. Question: If you answered Yes or often to question 7, please clarify.

Buying/ordering something useful to company, insurances, literature, magazines.: 5

Companies bought only products or services they thought be useful to company. Customer often thinks that he or she will buy with logic in mind, and order only useful products and services to the company. Some companies answered that financial and investment advice was for sale. These often involved a considerable sum of money, and transactions will go outside of Finland.

9. Question: Here you could tell what offers you have received in calls.

Comment lines under are directly from questionnaire:

- *services like Salesforce; when you try a demo, after the period telemarketer makes a contact and tries to sell a service*
- *online availability, leads, booking service, different training to personnel, books, magazines and advertising opportunities*
- *marketing technology-systems*
- *magazines, advertising in magazines and online, marketing services, communication- and convention opportunities, IT-solutions, software*
- *magazines, programmes, booking services, wealth management, insurances*
- *professional journals, mobile-and online extensions, training and tips about investing wealth*
- *online- search services, loans*
- *financial investing-services, financial administration-services, Digi marketing services, books, magazines, opportunities for charity*
- *financial services, coding resources, contacting-services, insurances, fairs*
- *mostly investing opportunities*
- *investing services, some online marketing*
- *no clue about services offered, very hazy*
- *insurances, magazines, extensions, accounting services*

What the study revealed was the fact that there are no actually limits to what is offered to customers via telemarketing. Still, it seems that physical products, like books and magazines, were not offered so often as services and non-physical products, like software. It could be said that it is easier to offer a services or



software in international telemarketing calls. Those bargains could be made by telephone, and bills and documents or the entire software can be delivered via online. This works for international B2B-customers as well. There is no need to wait a product via courier service or postal service. Books, for example, are still travelling a couple of weeks from U.S.A to Finland these days. Many services offered to customers and found via query were related to insurances and financial services. These are commodities which are easy to deliver, and the profit marginal is bigger than in stuff like books and magazines. Insurances, for example, could be quite expensive, depending on coverage they bring.

10. Question: How clear was the deal offered in calls?

	1	2	3	4	5		Total	Mean
Clear product info	0	4	3	3	5	Unclear product info or terms	15	3,6

Question above is trying to reveal how clear were the terms offered in phone. Average is 3,6 in scale to 1-5. It shows that in many cases the product info or terms offered are vague. This is clearly not good result for telemarketer's point of view. If you want to sell something, you should take care about the facts.

11. Question: How understandable was the language and terms used in calls?

	1	2	3	4	5		Total	Mean
Clear speech & terms	0	6	4	4	1	Unclear speech & terms	15	3

The language and terms used in telemarketing calls has a large meaning. If speech or terms are unclear, the client will not buy or order anything from the seller. In this study average is 3 from scale to 1-5. Average result. It is still clear that there is a wide variety between telemarketers and their skills.

12. Question: Free Speech: tell about your ideas or any questions according this poll.

This space was left to answerers opinions and experiences. Here are some of the results:

- “international telemarketers calling to our company are all qualifiers. This means that after we had participated to some webinar according to services some company provides, telemarketers quickly made a contact to us, usually during 1-2 days after”
- “the expertise of telemarketers varies a lot. Some of them just read from the paper directly, and cannot answer any of the questions not included in that sales speech-paper”
- “speech is not fluent, and they are not capable of discussions”
- “very professional approach and good expertise about the subject on hand. They usually get a dialog of the subject.”
- “not listening to the customer, just reads directly from the paper, cannot say nothing outside the box”

Answers were interesting, there was a lot of different experiences about telemarketers. We could say there is a lot of variety in the skill set of telemarketers. Some are very professional, and others read the text directly from the papers.

13. Question: Your information. You could send your answers unidentified if you want. The name of the companies isn't published in any case.

This was the last question in questionnaire, reserved for answerers information. 2 were total anonymous, 2 were partial anonymous and 11 people left their name, company's name, status in company-details and e-mail-addresses. Name of the enterprises are not published.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to find out how international telemarketing is targeting the Finnish SME's. In addition, this thesis aimed to point out what kind of methods the international telemarketers are using and what kind of products and services are offered. The three research questions are:

1. How much time are Finnish SMEs spending in phone with international telemarketers?
2. How many of the Finnish SME's answered in questionnaire had activity abroad?
3. Which type of services or products are offered to Finnish SMEs by international telemarketing?

The first question measured the time spent in phone with international telemarketers. We find out that the answer to this question is that it is not as time consuming as one could think. Many of those who answered stated that this was no more than 15 minutes per week.

The second question was about how many of the companies had activities outside Finland. 2/3 answered they had. Are there differences in the amount of international telemarketing calls received for those SMEs with activities abroad and those with no international activity.

Third question was asking what kind of products or services were offered by international telemarketers, and we were able to find that variety is large from insurances to books. There was nothing special service or product among these answers over others, but services were offered more often.

## 6.1 Suggestions for further research

The question of what was bought from telemarketers indicated that companies only buy products and services which are useful to company. That includes books of professional literature, insurances and magazines. At least nobody claimed to be ordered something spontaneously. We should notice the fact that when ordering something from telemarketers, the deal is almost all time spontaneous. Companies also mentioned that they were bought something, but no more than once. Further research is required considering what is bought and how often.

The author believes that international telemarketing is growing steadily, especially when we are talking about B2B-telemarketing. The Finnish companies and entrepreneurs are conducting business in the global world, and are in interaction with other businesses and enterprises abroad. It is good to remember, that in the world of B2B-marketing and sales the direct contact between people is very much valued.

The international telemarketing requires more research due to the importance of this matter to companies.

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## Cover letter to companies

Hei!

Olen Teemu Reinikainen, ja opiskelen Turun Ammattikorkeakoulussa englanninkielisessä koulutusohjelmassa nimeltään International Business Administration. Valmistelen opinnäytetyötäni, jonka teen englanniksi. Tarvitsen Sinun apuasi, ja toivon että ehdit vastata suomenkieliseen kyselyyni.

Opinnäytetyöni tulee käsittelemään ulkomailta Suomeen suuntautuvaa telemarkkinointia, sen tarjontaa sekä mahdollisuuksia suomalaisille pienille ja keskisuurille yrityksille sekä yrittäjille. Telemarkkinoinnilla on merkittävä rooli kansainvälisessä B2B-markkinoinnissa, ja nyt haluaisin tietää, mitä kokemuksia Sinulla on asiasta.

Vastaaminen kyselyyn kestää 5-10 minuuttia, ja sen kautta saan arvokasta tietoa tutkimukseeni. Kaikkia vastauksia käsitellään luottamuksellisesti, eivätkä yrityksen tai vastuuhenkilöiden nimet sisälly työhön. Kysyn näitä tietoja yksinomaan omaan käyttöön, ja tiedot poistetaan, kun opinnäytetyö on valmis. Olen kuitenkin sisällyttänyt kyselyyn vaihtoehdon anonyymistä vastaamisesta.

Olen valinnut opinnäytetyöni kohderyhmäksi suomalaisia pieniä ja keskisuuria yrityksiä, sekä itsenäisiä toiminimiä ja yksinyrittäjiä. Jokaiselle kyselyyn sähköpostinsa liittäneelle toimitetaan linkki julkaisuun sen ilmestyttyä. Toivon vastauksia vielä tämän viikon aikana.

Kiitos jo etukäteen osallistumisestasi!

Ystävällisin terveisin,  
Teemu Reinikainen  
Turku

<https://www.webpolsurveys.com/S/5988DC05FFDA298B.par>

## Questionnaire

Kysely pienille ja keskisuurille yrityksille koskien telemarkkinointiin vastaamista - kysely keskittyy ulkomailta tuleviin telemarkkinointi-puheluihin

1. Onko yritykselläsi toimintaa tai asiakkaita ulkomailla? \*

- Kyllä
- Ei

2. Kuinka usein vastaanotat puheluja telemarkkinoijilta? Huomioi myös kotimaiset. \*

- Useita kertoja päivässä
- Kerran päivässä
- 2-3 kertaa viikossa
- Harvemmin

3. Kuinka usein vastaanotat puheluja ulkomaisilta telemarkkinoijilta? \*

- Useita kertoja päivässä
- Kerran päivässä
- 2-3 kertaa viikossa
- Harvemmin

4. Kuinka paljon arvioit käyttäväsi aikaa viikossa telemarkkinoijien kanssa asioimiseen/puheluihin vastaamiseen? Huomioi kaikki. \*

- 0-15 minuuttia
- 15-30 minuuttia

- 30-60 minuuttia
- 1-2 tuntia
- Enemmän

**5.** Kuinka monen saamasi telemarkkinointi-puhelun arvioit olevan kansainvälisiä puheluja? Silloin numero on kansainvälinen ja kielenä puhelussa jokin muu kuin suomi. \*

- 0-25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- 75- %

**6.** Kuinka monen vastaanottamistasi telemarkkinointi-puheluista arvioisit suoraan liittyvän siihen yritystoimintaan mitä teidän yrityksenne tekee/toimialanne on? \*

- 0-25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- 75- %

**7.** Onko telemarkkinointi-puhelu koskien yritystoimintaasi johtanut kohdallasi kauppaan tai sopimukseen? \*

- Kyllä
- Ei
- Useasti

**8.** Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen Kyllä tai Useasti, täsmennä ole hyvä.

- Ostin/tilasin yritykseen jotain hyödyllistä (esim. vakuutus, ammattikirjallisuus)

- Ostin/tilasin jotain spontaanisti (esim. liikelahjat, henkilökunnan koulutusta)
- Tilanne epätydyttävä; lasku/tavaraa tuli, vaikka et mielestäsi sopimukseen sitoutunut

**9.** Kerro alla mitä sinulle on telemarkkinointi-puheluissa tarjottu. \*

1000 merkkiä jäljellä

**10.** Puheluissa tarjottujen sopimusten/tuotteiden selkeys \*

- |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |   |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |   |
| Tuoteinfo on selkeää  |                       |                       |                       |                       | Ei jää varmuutta hinnasta tai sopimuksen kestosta |

**11.** Puhelun kielen selkeys \*

- |                                 |                       |                       |                       |                       |   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1                               | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |   |
| <input type="radio"/>           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |   |
| Puhe selkeää, termistö hallussa |                       |                       |                       |                       | Puhe on epäselvää, myyjä ei taida termistöä |

**12.** Lopuksi sana on vapaa. Kerro mietteistäsi koskien tätä kyselyä tai sen aihepiiriä. Jos heräsi kysymyksiä, ole hyvä ja meilaa ne osoitteeseen [teemu.reinikainen@edu.turkuamk.fi](mailto:teemu.reinikainen@edu.turkuamk.fi)

2500 merkkiä jäljellä

**13. Vastaajan tiedot.** Voit halutessasi vastata anonyymisti, kunhan vastaajan asema yrityksessä selviää. Yritysten nimiä ei julkaista. Kiitos kun käytit aikaasi tähän kyselyyn vastaamiseen! \*

Etunimi	<input type="text"/>
Sukunimi	<input type="text"/>
Yritys / Organisaatio	<input type="text"/>
Asema yrityksessä	<input type="text"/>
Sähköposti	<input type="text"/>