Preparing a Strategic Plan in the Finnish Markets for a Global Logistics Service Provider

Evert Kawamura
**Abstract**

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This thesis follows a project-based structure. The focus is on the preparation of a brief strategic plan for a global logistics service provider, which is expanding its’ services to Finland, along with a description of the B2B client analysis, acquisition and sales process in the commissioning company. The purpose is to set a clear strategy for this market, and to guide new employees about the sales process and methods used in the commissioning company.

The main objectives of the strategic plan are to gain new B2B clients, build stable client relationships, and to improve the commissioning company’s supply chain to/from Finland, and the best way to do this is to get order requests within this area. Describing the customer acquisition and sales methods will also prepare new employees to start working in the commissioning company. The thesis includes actual contacting done to real clients, and examples done by the author during his work for the commissioning company.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used for the thesis. Primary data was from the author’s observation during his work in the commissioning company. Interviews were conducted to managerial personnel internally from the commissioning company, and data was taken from actual conversations with the B2B clients of the author. In addition, the thesis has secondary data from various online resources, such as, the yearly reports of the Finnish Customs and company registry sites, along with academic articles and offline literature.

The research shows that there are great opportunities for the commissioning company to enter the Finnish markets. During this project, the sales methods used by the commissioning company were proved to work, and the service they offered were proven to be needed, as the author was able to gain new real clients for the commissioning company.

The main outcome of the thesis was the strategic plan, and the implementation this plan has already started. Some of the mentioned goals have already been reached, such as gaining new clients, and the commissioning company is continuing to progress further in the plan.

As another result, parts of the thesis were also deemed to be suitable for publishing in the commissioning company’s internal network as educational material. The ‘Potential Client Search and Analysis’ (chapter 3), and the ‘Client Acquisition and Sales Process’ (chapter 4) chapters are planned to be added to the company’s adaptation programme for new employees.

The commissioning company’s and the clients’ names are not shown due to a non-disclosure agreement.

**Keywords**

B2B, Customer Acquisition, Strategic Plan, Sales, Customer Analysis, Logistics, Supply Chain, Guideline
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1 Introduction

The beginning chapter is an introduction to the whole thesis. It begins with the background of the idea behind the thesis, along with an introduction of the commissioning company and moves on to the objectives and tasks that this project completes. Key concepts of the thesis are also defined, as they hold heavy importance in this project.

1.1 Background and Commissioning Company Introduction

The author initially thought of the idea behind this thesis, and it was then further developed and polished during the thesis planning course and by consulting a manager in the commissioning company. Having the presence of the commissioning company already in the planning stage was a massive help in the preparation and structuring of this thesis.

The commissioning company is an international logistics service provider. It was founded in Switzerland, where it holds its' headquarters. Currently, the commissioning company employs over 1000 personnel and is present in 18 countries. The commissioning company’s main competencies are in freight forwarding, and they have over 1100 trade lanes providing international transport services to every country. While the commissioning company’s traffic to the U.S.A and Asia are rapidly growing, their main areas of operation are in the EU, CIS-countries, and Russia. The commissioning company also offers additional services such as cargo insurance, warehousing, consultation, customs clearance, import and export (Commissioning Company 2018).

As a rapidly growing company, they have also set high goals. The commissioning company’s mission is to be a perfect partner in logistics for all those working for the development and prosperity of society and environment, and their vision is to be in the top 10 logistics service providers in EU by turnover in 2030 (Commissioning Company 2018).

To reach this goal, expansion to new countries is inevitable. While the commissioning company already has some clients in Finland, the full potential is still far from being reached and to be able to do so; a thorough plan needs to be set in place and executed. The main idea of this thesis is to set this plan in place and to start running this plan while further developing it.
1.2 Project objectives

The project objective of this thesis is the preparation of a strategic plan, focused on B2B customer acquisition and sales in the Finnish markets for the commissioning company. Examining theories applicable to these will benefit not only the author but also any person with the objectives of creating a strategy, acquiring clients and creating sales in the field of logistics services. The plan itself will be putting these theories and knowledge of what the author has learned during the working period at the commissioning company in practice.

This thesis consists of five main Project Tasks, which shall be abbreviated as PTs.

**PT 1: Examining Theories Applicable to Strategic Planning**
The first task consists of theories that apply to strategic planning.

**PT 2: Examining Theories Applicable to Customer Acquisition and Sales**
The second task consists of theories that apply to the customer acquisition and sales processes.

**PT 3.1: Analyzing and Searching for Potential B2B Clients**
This task consists of the pre-work that is done before engaging with the potential clients, and how it to do it. To successfully engage with potential clients, many things need to be done beforehand.

**PT 3.2: Engaging With Potential B2B Client Companies**
This task uses the knowledge and results of the previous PT. The author is in direct contact with the potential clients who have been found in PT 3.1, going through the engagement step by step, and reporting the results.

**PT 4: Developing a Strategic Plan**
This part goes through the most essential elements of strategic planning; mission, goals, key performance indicators, strengths, weaknesses, and the action plan.

**PT 5: Evaluating the Project Results**
The final task is an evaluation of all the previous tasks. It is not a direct evaluation of this thesis, but more of an assessment of the strategic plan, finding potential clients, and the engagement of these clients. The final PT also includes recommendations and reflections.
Table 1 below presents an overlay matrix of the PT's, theoretical framework, project management methods and the outcome of these.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project tasks</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Project Management Methods</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT 1. Examining theories applicable to Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>Desktop study Observation</td>
<td>Theoretical knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT 2. Examining theories applicable to customer acquisition and sales</td>
<td>B2B customer acquisition, outsourcing logistics, needs assessment, Modern B2B sales, Sales process,</td>
<td>Desktop study Observation</td>
<td>Theoretical knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT 2. Developing a strategic plan</td>
<td>Outsourcing logistics, B2B customer acquisition</td>
<td>Desktop study Interview</td>
<td>Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT 3. Analyzing and searching for possible clients</td>
<td>Needs assessment</td>
<td>Desktop study Interview</td>
<td>Finding contacts and correct services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT 4. Engaging with B2B client companies in need of logistics services</td>
<td>Logistics outsourcing, Modern B2B sales, sales process</td>
<td>Cold call Email inquiry (Meetings)</td>
<td>Network Experience Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT 5. Evaluating the project results</td>
<td>Reviewing all of the previous project tasks</td>
<td>Reflection, recommendations</td>
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1.3 Timetable

The goal was to finish this project during the initial 6-month period while the author was working for the commissioning company. The starting date was on week 15 of the year 2018, and the ending was planned for week 39. Table 2 below represents the plan for the timeframe of this project. PT 1-2 are the theoretical framework for this project, and PT 3 (including 3.1 and 3.2) is an actual look into the customer acquisition and sales process in the commissioning company, including real examples and dialogues. PT is the strategic plan which takes into account all the previous PT's, and it is the main product of this thesis. A concluding chapter of this project is the PT 5.
Table 2. Project timetable 2018

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Project Tasks</th>
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<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
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<td>21-38</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2</td>
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<td>29-37</td>
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<td>38-39</td>
<td>5</td>
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1.4 Project Scope and International Aspect

As the title of the thesis says, this is a strategic plan in the Finnish markets for a global logistics service provider. The emphasis is on the client acquisition and b2b sales process in Finland. Focusing solely on these aspects within a single country allows the author to include step by step details of the actual search and engagement with the clients, going along with the created overall strategy. Also, while marketing is an important aspect of sales, there won’t be a heavy emphasis on it as the main tasks are more of creating the strategy, preparation to the customer engagement, and then the engagement itself.

The international aspect of this thesis is visible throughout the project. The commissioning company focuses solely on international logistics services, so while the market area is in Finland, the sold services are all related to other countries in the world.

1.5 Benefits

The objective of this thesis goes hand in hand with the vision of growth for the commissioning company. Having a clear strategy on how to approach in a new market area and the new employees of the commissioning company having a step by step guide of the customer acquisition and sales process will undoubtedly be of great use. Also, people outside of the commissioning company can benefit just as much, if they have similar plans for creating or expanding their logistics service businesses into Finland.

Besides all the points mentioned above, the whole process of creating this thesis is a huge benefit for the author and the author’s supervisors to see the process of his work. The employment during this project is the first time for the author to be working in the field of logistics and writing down the process and the theory behind it acts as a useful framework and a way of reporting the results.
1.6 Key Concepts

**B2B Customer Acquisition**: The process of acquiring a new client. It involves finding the new client and persuading them to purchase a company’s services or products (NG Data 2018). In the B2B perspective, it means acquiring a client company instead of an individual consumer.

**B2B Customer Analysis**: Identifying customers most likely to purchase your product/service. It determines the needs of the customer, after which it is possible to specify how your product or service can fulfill these needs (ACSBDC 2018). In the B2B perspective, it is about analyzing the client company instead of an individual consumer.

**B2B Customer Segmentation**: Dividing your customers into set groups, IE; based on industry, size, firmographics, tiering, and needs (Business Dictionary 2018). In the B2B perspective, it is the companies that are segmented, instead of individual consumers.

**Modern B2B Sales**: Sales and B2B sales processes have changed a lot throughout time. The modern B2B sales process varies a lot from the traditional approaches, as the B2B buyers are more active than before. More research than ever is done from the client perspective, and the buyers know more of what is available in the market (Snap App 2018).

**Needs Assessment**: Understanding and bringing forth information that is used for solving a problem. The needs are directly linked to certain conditions of wants, and by assessing these, it is possible to rule out a lot of irrelevancy (Kizlik 2017).

**Logistics Outsourcing**: Outsourcing of logistics services is the process of when a company uses an external logistics service provider (Logistics Bureau 2017). There can be many variations of outsourcing logistics services, like having a full-package of outsourced logistics, or only parts of it, e.g., cross-border logistics or warehousing.

**Third Party Logistics, 3PL**: Shortly, 3PL means to outsource parts of a business’s supply chain management. 3PL services can be transportation, warehousing, consolidation, import/export procedures or even distribution (The Balance SMB 2016). There are many different types of 3PL companies, and the commissioning company is an integrated provider, which means that they have their assets/fleet, but also use other companies, their suppliers, for transports to fulfill their customer’s needs.
Supplier: A supplier for a logistics freight forwarder means the carriers who provide transports for the forwarder. Therefore, in this thesis, the word supplier refers only to the carriers, and not a supplier in its traditional meaning of referring to a manufacturer, distributor or a wholesaler.

Potential: The commissioning company has four different levels of defining a potential client company. These are 'Low Potential', 'Middle Potential', 'High Potential' and 'Top Potential'. The level of the potential client is determined by multiple different factors, taking into account the company’s turnover, profit, amount of personnel, history, etc. (Commissioning Company 2018).

Brief Check: A brief check is an action that can be done to a company that is inserted into the commissioning company’s internal systems. The brief check can be considered as a request by the one requesting for it, which will make the business analysts of the commissioning company check the company out, and give them a potential rating based on the four different potential levels.

ISO 9001: A certificate of quality management. Ensures that products/services provided by a company will meet the quality standards and customer's requirements. The standards for this certificate are based on several quality management principles and has a heavy emphasis on customer focus, process approach, continuous improvement, the motivation and implication of top management (ISO 2018).

ISO 14001: A certificate of environmental management. Ensures that the company meets environmental standards and that the company can follow to set up an environmental management system proved to be effective. Also provides assurance that the company and its' external stakeholders environmental impact is being measured and improved (ISO 2018).

OHSAS 18000: A certificate of health and safety management. The standards of this certificate ensure that the workplace identifies, controls and decreases risks related to health and safety (Certification Europe 2018).

ISO 22000: A certificate of food safety. Ensures that the company meets international food safety standards and has demonstrated its' ability to control food safety hazards and to ensure that the goods are safe (ISO 22000).
2 Perceiving the Strategy in B2B Customer Acquisition and Sales

This chapter presents the theoretical framework seen on the overlay matrix on page 3. The theoretical framework is important especially in sales, as it can explain how people act and behave, and what should be done – in theory, to be most effective in selling, and in retaining your customers.

However, before moving onto specific theories about customer acquisition and sales, it is better to start with a broader view, and go through a topic which can, and should, generally be used for any well thought of plan, which is a strategy.

2.1 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning has been long used throughout the history in various contexts, be it wars, doing business, or managing your finances. The strategic planning with its current modern characteristics was introduced by corporations doing business in the mid-1950’s. All the large corporations had their strategic planning systems developed during those times, and if we look at it now, even the smallest of companies usually have some strategic planning system (Steiner 1997, pp. 7-8).

![Figure 1. Strategic Planning Principles (Adapted from TAC 2016)](image)

The Figure 1 above shows the fundamental questions that need to be answered in almost every strategic plan. The process of creating a strategic plan will help answer these questions, and the goal is to be able to answer them all by the end of having a ready-made strategic plan.

So, what is this strategic planning and why do we need it? This could be quickly answered by common sense, that why would you think through and make a plan to do something before going into action, but the main points for strategic planning and why to do it are more important than that. Firstly, a strategic plan will act as a backbone and a structure for the mission it is made for. Be it increasing sales, developing a new product, or building
new facilities, as long as you have a mission, it will always be beneficial to have a strategy for it.

After knowing your mission, the strategic plan will set the direction and priorities on what to do to make it into reality. The strategy helps realize the actual tasks which need to be done, and in what order. If there are multiple people involved in this mission, it also puts everyone on the same page, and you can align everyone’s goals that need to be reached to succeed in your mission.

After realizing the goals, it needs to be understood that what are the indicators that will make you effective on succeeding in this mission. These are often used in many contexts and are worded as key performance indicators, KPI’s to be short. KPI’s can have a huge importance to find out the strengths and weaknesses of a specific objective, and it can also be used to measure the performance of a whole department or even a single employee.

It is also important to realize the resources and tools you have available to create an effective strategy. A scope needs to be set within the available resources, and after this, it is possible to create an action plan for your strategy. The action plan will tell what to do in practice to realize the strategic plan.

2.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT – short for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – are important factors to consider in the strategy. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors within the company, while opportunities and threats are external factors. Being able to identify these in the strategic plan is crucial, as it can map possible future moves and what needs to be improved.

To carry on a SWOT analysis, you need to concentrate on each of the factors separately. The order you do it does not matter, as only the end product will be of value. It is crucial to understand that the strengths and weaknesses are internal factors and that the opportunities and threats are external. Understanding the scope will make it easier to identify these factors.

To start off with the strengths, a very effective way is to list down characteristics of your company. After having a list of these characteristics, some of them will most likely be strengths. You can also think of additional positives, such as what are the advantages of
your company, what is unique to your company, and what does your company do better than their competitors? Answering these questions will already result in a good base for your company’s strengths (Pearce 2017, 25.).

Weaknesses are quite the opposite to the previous internal factor. To find out your company’s weaknesses, you can try asking questions such as what processes could be improved in your company, which areas of your company are not successful, what makes you lose out in sales (Pearce 2017, 25.)?

Moving on to the external factors, you can make use of the internal factors that you already may have thought. When considering of your opportunities, you may ask questions such as what opportunities may arise from your strengths and weaknesses, what kind of trends there are in the market you are targeting, what opportunities can you think of in these market areas (Pearce 2017, 25.)?

The second external factor, threats, are the factors that can make your opportunities fail. You should ask questions such as who are the competitors in the market, what are the possible technological or governmental changes that could occur, and what are your main obstacles (Pearce 2017, 25.)?

While there is an infinite amount of questions you can find out to figure out your SWOT’s, answering these basic questions will set a useful framework for figuring them out. The SWOT analysis can play a crucial role in your strategic planning process, as it can make it a lot easier to pinpoint out your point of focus.

2.3 Client Search

The preparation of a list of potential clients is good to be done before starting the contacting, and the search of these potential clients is referred to as a potential client search. This part will be telling how and where these potential clients can be found. While there are thousands of different databases and websites to search for new potential clients, the focus here will be on where to find potential clients in need of transports. This is because of the commissioning company’s industry, and the services which they provide (Commissioning Company 2018).
2.3.1 Customs Database

The customs database is the surest and most accurate way to search for clients who have needs for international transports. These databases are not publicly available, but instead, they need to be purchased. For certain countries, the databases are not available at all. They show the volume, weight, consigner and the carrier of the goods, which means that based on the database, you can accurately tell that a specific company is transporting a certain amount of products past the border of another country. A good example could be the Finland – Russia border; the database would show companies who transported goods from Finland to Russia, or from Russia to Finland, and would give the knowledge that this specific company has cross-border traffic. This information is precious, as it will make contact to the client a lot easier, as the provider will already know the trade lane and volume of goods being transported and can use it as an advantage on their first contact to the potential client (Commissioning Company 2018).

2.3.2 Media

Online (and offline) media are also valuable sources of information in the client search. By reading the news, you can get to know of companies which transport, or have had cross-border transports, and even about the companies' plans. As an example, you can find an article of a company investing in a new plant/factory in another country, which in most cases mean that they will need to transport a lot of materials to this new site, and in many cases, they will need goods from different countries transported in there (Commissioning Company 2018).

2.3.3 Company Registry Websites

Company registry websites are one of the best sources for finding potential client companies. These sites will often tell a lot of information about companies, e.g., industry, turnover, profit, number of employees, do they import/export, etc. These websites are the ones where it is often easiest to find information from, as they are public. Some company registry websites allow you to sort and list the companies based on their size, profitability, and industry (Kauppalehti 2018).
2.3.4 Word of Mouth

While the number of potential clients found by word of mouth might not be that huge in volume, they usually have the best perspective of becoming a real client. This information can be gained from friends, co-workers, existing clients and through any network that a person can have. Also, having someone you know recommending a potential client company will significantly increase the odds of future co-operation.

2.4 Client Analysis

The main idea of a client analysis is to find information about them and to examine the clients who would be the most probable to buy your services or products. The more you know about your clients, the better your understanding of them will be. A thorough client analysis can make the chance of having a successful contact considerably higher. This part will be focusing on what information is essential for a logistics service provider to know about their clients.

During the analysis, the potential clients are being profiled by various factors such as their geography, size, industry, and financial status. It is important to know the operating country of the potential client, so the right approach can be taken when contacting the client. It is also worth noting that many companies appreciate having a contact in their native language, so having a local person contacting the company is usually the best choice. The industry of a company is just as important as the geography, as knowing this will let you know which types of goods are being transported, and what mode of transport will be the most probable option for them.

2.5 Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is mainly done for two main purposes, which are to design a product/service/program which will address those needs, and to evaluate current products/services/programs, which needs do they meet or should they meet (Davidson 2005, 2.)

Needs assessment always begins with the analyzation of clients/suppliers (Authur 1993). In this phase, research about the target is conducted to find out what their needs are, and this is the most time-consuming phase, as the information is not often readily available. Sometimes even the target does not realize their own needs, and this is where a good salesperson can shine, and make them understand their needs by offering them tailored services/products to make them realize their own needs. The needs assessment is an
important process for a salesperson, as it is a lot easier and more effective to sell something to someone whose needs are already recognized. It also means that any time and resources won’t be wasted in the sales process to a target who would not be in need of what is being offered.

The needs assessment is done individually to each company which has been selected from the various sources. Before the initial contact with the potential client, assessing their needs can be done in multiple ways. One of the best methods is to check out the potential client’s websites, as it often will have information about their business written. Many of the potential client’s websites have listed their operating countries, retailers or partners, which can be an instant sign of them having regular cross-border shipments. If a goods manufacturer operates, e.g., in Finland and has retailers in Germany and Poland, it can be a clear indicator that the goods are being shipped from Finland to the countries of these retailers.

2.6 Modern B2B Sales

B2B sales in the modern context has evolved from merely a company offering something to the other, and the client company making a purchase. Nowadays, mainly due to digitalization, clients have a large amount of information available, and they can compare multiple prices and read reviews within just minutes of searching online. Having a large amount of data can sometimes even be confusing to the client, which is why relationship marketing also is playing a substantial role. Being able to add value that goes beyond the price and offering products/services that exceed the expectations is the surest way to create sales and attain growth (Gartner 2017).

Being able to differentiate from competitors is also important, as it can be the only way to gain real clients in addition to relationship marketing. In the case of logistics, there are tens of thousands of logistics service providers, and it is crucial for these companies to differentiate from others to grow.

2.7 B2B Customer Acquisition and Sales Process

B2B customer acquisition is a long process with the purpose of eventually leading to the customer making a purchase. It has several steps, and in theory, always follows the same order.
The first stage of this process is to scope companies into ones that can be potential clients. This means that you won’t use any resources to market your products/services to companies who would not be in need of what is offered. These potential clients are also called leads and are selected by researching and finding companies which fit the way the seller is doing their business. The last stage of this process is to transform the potential clients into real clients. (Klaassen 2016, 8.) Everything between the first and last stages is variable and can differ profoundly depending on the company, industry, and salesperson, as there is an almost infinite amount of different sales techniques and products/services that are being sold.

The B2B customer acquisition and sales process differ heavily from the B2C sector, as the amount of turnover from each sale and the expertise of the B2B client are often a lot higher than in B2C. B2B clients will often want precise details of the product/service being offered, and the purchases are not based on a whim. If the salesperson is not able to answer technical, specific questions, it will often give an image of unprofessionalism, which will draw away the B2B client. This means that B2B sales personnel need to have a high knowledge of the product/service they are offering, essentially being experts in their field. In addition to this, B2B sales with high turnover often will need approval from more than just one employee from the organization being targeted, meaning that the salesperson and the product/service will need to interact with multiple people, and not only one. Due to all of the factors mentioned, it means that the time spent contacting a B2B client will often be a lot longer than in B2C, and the sales process will also require contacting the same client multiple times, instead of a single contact (Lake 2009).

Another significant difference in the B2B sales process compared to B2C is business standardization (Åge 2011, 1582.). B2B clients, also known as buyers, usually have a standardized purchasing process which is defined by their industry and their company. If a company is a frequent buyer of a specific product/service, it will be most effective to have the purchasing process standardized. In the case of a manufacturer, they would often have a standardized way or purchasing their supplies and materials. If they take care of the deliveries of their goods, they would also have a standardized way of buying transportation services. In practice, it means that for a specific product/service, the purchase process would follow a certain procedure. A good example would be inviting multiple service providers for a tender, going through the tender results, and choosing partners based on these results.

Also, one aspect of B2B sales should never be overlooked – this is called personalization. This refers to the informal business category of a sales process and takes into account
the personal relationships of a salesperson or a service provider. While personalization is not often talked about and it is not a topic that is being taught heavily on business education, such as in universities, it is possibly one of the most critical aspects of the B2B sales processes. Having family members, friends, ex-colleagues or acquaintances in an organization which you want to become your client will very highly increase the odds of it happening, especially if they are in a managerial or executive role. In practice, a salesperson with an extensive network of personal relations can often be more effective in the sales job itself. From the buyer’s point of view, it’s pure behavioral sciences – people will prefer to work with someone who they already know and trust, and maybe even have experience of working with them before. Personalization has it’s own pro’s and con’s as when a buyer bases their decisions based on personal relations and previous experiences, it can draw the buyer away from new contacts and even possible savings and better experiences with providers who they don’t yet have a stable relationship with (Åge 2011, 1584.).

Sales can also be categorized into two different categories, which are the active sales and passive sales.

Active sales refer to the process of the sales personnel contacting the client and offering the client the products or services being marketed. Being proactive in active sales is an excellent way to make the client remember your presence, but being too active can also drive the client away. It is always good to stay in touch with your client, and making contact with them at the correct time can often result in the client making a new purchase.

Passive sales refer to the process of the client making new orders without the salesperson contacting the client. This will usually happen if the client has more needs for the service/product that they have already bought, and they were satisfied with the quality of what they received. Creating passive sales with a bad product/service is very unlikely to happen, as clients will want to stay away from the bad experiences. Having steady passive sales is the ultimate goal of each salesperson, as it allows them to concentrate on clients who want their services and are willing to buy it without using time on the active sales process.

2.8 Performance Measurement

An essential part of sales is to be able to measure the performance. The metrics of how performance is measured can differ depending on the company and industry, but two metrics are similar for all companies – Amount of turnover created, and the amount of profit created.
Anderson & Oliver (1987, pp. 76-77.) contemplated the performance of sales as the evaluation of sales personnel, based on their sales outcomes and their behavior. Some examples of the sales outcome metrics could be revenue, profit, new clients acquired, while examples of the behavior metrics could be time spent with the client, number of client contacts, time management, market industry, territory, etc.

These metrics are very useful for both the salesperson, business intelligence personnel, and the managers to understand how a salesperson is performing. Having a lot of customer contacts but not much sales may not necessarily mean that the salesperson is not performing well, but it can also mean that there is some fault in the product or service being offered. By having these metrics and looking at the results, it is possible to develop either the salesperson or the product/service that is being sold.

Most big companies use different CRM systems for performance measurement, which can track the entire sales process, including the sales personnel, client, and other employees who were part of the process, such as operative and financial employees. These systems play a huge role in tracking the performance of a company’s employees, and they often offer fact-based analytics which can show information such as pricing effectiveness and sensitivity in addition to the key metrics (Oracle 2018). Some CRM systems automatically convert the metrics into visual graphs, which makes it easy to see and understand a certain type of action done by an employee or any stakeholder for the company.

A crucial part of performance measurement is also having regular discussions with the management. If there is a sudden increase or decrease in sales, it should come with an explanation from the salesperson, for the management to understand the reasons behind it. While the metrics may show how a person or product/service performs, it does not necessarily show why it performs in a certain way (Zallocco & al. 2009, pp. 598-600.).

2.9 Key Performance Indicators

A popular way to measure performance is through key performance indicators, often abbreviated as KPI’s. Implementing these KPI’s for each employee can significantly improve their performance, but most importantly, they will provide measurable, quantifiable data of how a business or a person performs. As it was already mentioned before, there are two types of indicators: outcome metrics and behavior metrics. Having KPI’s from both of these two types will be a good way of measuring performance, and the way you reach this performance outcome.
While there are many performance indicators, KPI’s should be reflecting only on the core activities of a person or a business. This means that depending on position, the KPI’s often differ. As an example, for a salesperson a suitable KPI could be ‘Amount of turnover created’, and for a customer support person it could be ‘Amount of cases solved’.

When choosing KPI’s, it should be noted that it needs to be something measurable. The KPI’s also often are tied to the goals and objectives which a business or an employee may have. To take the best effect of KPI’s, they should be measured over time, as it helps realize their effectiveness. After maintaining your KPI’s for a more extended period, it can be easy to see if the business, person, product or service is improving in the activities. It also makes it easy to compare personnel who hold the same position and can indicate that who are the best performers within an organization. (Weber & Thomas 2005)
3  Potential Client Search and Analysis

While the commissioning company has their business intelligence department which does a big part of the potential client search and analysis, a lot of it is also left for the sales personnel to do. This chapter shows how this search is done, how the companies are profiled, and what kind of information is necessary when analyzing the companies. A real case example is also included.

In the search for potential clients, the commissioning company uses its’ websites, customs databases, media, word of mouth, search engines and company registry websites. The author found it the most effective to search for clients via company registry websites, and Kauppalehti’s “yrityshaku” was found to be the most effective site to search on. Appendix 2 can be seen as a reference of what this company registry site looks like, and it was deemed to be the most effective as it has a way to sort the companies based on their size, financial status and amount of turnover created abroad. All these are very valuable information for the potential client analysis, and it saves a lot of time and effort when this information is accurate and readily available from the same platform as where the potential client search is being done on.

The commissioning company also makes good use of their websites, as it is possible to request transport from there. After receiving a request from the websites, the request is forwarded to a person responsible for the sales or transport in the market area or industry.

3.1  Potential Client Profiling

The commissioning company is profiling the potential clients based on their operating country, industry, and level of potential.

The level of potential gives a good understanding of how valuable the potential company can be for the commissioning company. As already mentioned in the first chapter, there are four different levels of potential; low, middle, high and top. In most cases, top potential clients will be the best companies to have partnerships with, as they usually have the biggest volumes in international transports and will potentially create a massive turnover for the commissioning company. However, the potential level can’t always be trusted, as sometimes there can be false information by the analytics department, and even a low potential client can have more needs for international transports than a potential client listed as top potential.
Table 3 below shows the way the commissioning company profiles the potential client companies.

Table 3. Commissioning Company’s Potential Level Profiling (Commissioning Company 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top</td>
<td>with a high probability, the annual turnover with the commissioning company will exceed 1 million euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>with a high probability, the annual turnover with the commissioning company &gt; 100 000 euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>with a high probability, the annual turnover with the commissioning company &gt; 10 000 euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>with a high probability, the annual turnover with the commissioning company will not exceed 10 000 euro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Case: Real Example of a Potential Client Analysis

The following case is a real example of how the author did a potential client analysis, of a client found through one of the sources mentioned above. In this case, the example is a step-by-step introduction to the client analysis, which includes the initial search, evaluation and research, initial contact and the results.

The author searched for potential clients using a company registry website, which in this case was Kauppalehti’s yrityshaku. The author sorted the companies based on the top companies of Finland which do export, and the website provided a list of 232 companies with over 0,5 million turnover and had over 30% of their turnover based on international trade. By filtering the companies on the requirements mentioned above, the author already knew that these companies would have needs for international transports and regular international shipments, excluding certain service companies, such as software development companies.

The author made a sales list based on Kauppalehti’s yrityshaku, and included the top 100 export companies which could be potential clients for the commissioning company. The main requirements for companies added on this list were that the decision making unit was in Finland and that they had regular international transports.
The author picked a prospective company on the list, with a turnover of over 300 million euros and had over 60% of their income from international trade. This company shall be referred to as Company Y from now.

After selecting the Company Y, the author searched for more information about them via the internet, and a good amount of information was available from their website. A good thing on their website was that they had listed their personnel, so finding the decision maker in logistics was not hard. Now as the author knew the company, their turnover, the goods that they transport, amount of international trade and the logistics decision maker, it was enough information to list them as a potential client into the author’s workplaces internal systems. After inserting the company into the internal systems and doing a “brief check” on company Y, it was listed as a “High Potential” company.

The next phase was to do the initial contact with Company Y, and the chosen method was a cold call. The author called the general number of the company, to confirm that the person listed in their website as the logistics manager was the decision maker for Company Y’s logistics and if he/she was available. The answerer confirmed that the information was correct, and switched the call to this person. However, the logistics manager did not answer the call. The author tried calling the logistics manager almost every day for two weeks, and finally, the logistics manager answered the call. The call started with an introduction of the commissioning company and asking for the possible needs for transports of Company Y, and because of the good, and perhaps even the lucky timing of the phone call, the logistics manager received the call positively and made a request for a quote for two different transport lanes. The call was ended by the author receiving the request for quotes and contact details of the logistics manager, and with a promise to get back to him/her as soon as the request for quote has been processed.

This example can be considered as a good one, as in most cases the potential client will not request a quotation on the first initial contact. The advantage that the author had was that he had done a thorough analysis of the Company Y before the initial contact, knew the products being transported and had an estimation of the volume. After the initial contact with Company Y, the author knew the exact volumes, and which trade lanes Company Y had needs for transports in, and received a real request for quotation from the decision maker for logistics. While this example went a bit beyond the client analysis phase as it included the also the initial contact with company Y, it showed that the client analysis phase worked out well and the initial contact was successful because of a good analysis.
4 Client Acquisition and Sales Process

This chapter focuses on the actual client acquisition and sales process of potential client companies which have gone through the initial client analysis phase. While the process is unique for each company and has many variables, it mostly follows a similar structure for all companies in their profile group. This means that the process mostly differs for companies from different industries and sizes.

Generally, the client acquisition and sales process in the commissioning company starts either with a phone call or an email to a selected potential client from the sales person’s sales list. The most used method in the author’s commissioning company is by cold calling.

4.1 Main Methods of Client Acquisition and Sales

There are two main methods of client acquisition and sales. The first method is making the sales via a request for quotation, and the second method is made via a tender. The methods which are used often depend on the size of the client company and the urgency of the need for the transport. Smaller companies, or companies which don’t have large volumes of transportation, usually don’t conduct tenders. Bigger companies with large volumes of transportations will have a tender in most cases.

4.1.1 Sales via Request for Quotation

Sales via a request for quotation are almost always for individual spot transports, which means that the order is done for just one single transport. This is the fastest process of making sales, as it only includes the client requesting a quote, and the salesperson answering the quote with the price prepared by the operations department and the salesperson. If the client accepts this price and makes the order, the sales is considered to be started.

The whole sales process doesn’t end until the service has been completed and the client has paid for the services, and even after the payment, the post-sales part begins. Many smaller companies always make a separate request for quotation for each of their transportations, but some want to secure contracts for a more extended period for a set price for several transports.
4.1.2 Tender

Tenders are usually conducted by bigger companies which have multiple lanes they need transports on. Simply, receiving an invite for tender means the same thing as receiving an invitation to bid or make an offer to what is being requested.

When a large company is conducting a tender, they usually invite multiple companies to take part in the tender, and then they will select the companies which have the best prices. There are often 1-3 rounds in a tender, depending on the size and policy of the company. Having multiple rounds in a tender allows the participants to adjust their prices to a more desirable level for the client, however, sometimes prices are also increased between rounds.

4.1.3 Cold Call

In most cases, the contact details for the decision maker of logistics is not publicly available, so most commonly the client acquisition and sales process are started by calling the general number/reception of the potential client company. While talking to the receptionist/switchboard, it is important to introduce yourself and the company briefly, ask if they would be open for possible co-operation and ask who is the decision maker for logistics.

4.2 Real Dialogue Example With the Receptionist

A real example of an actual conversation via cold calling done by the author to a client company of the commissioning company (translated from Finnish to English):

Receptionist: “Mrs. X from company Y, how may I help you?.”
Author: “Good morning, my name is Evert Kawamura from the company A”.
Receptionist: “Good morning.”
Author: “I represent the Swiss freight forwarding company A, and I’m calling to discuss about possible co-operation regarding your company’s international transports. Could you please help me, I’m trying to reach the person responsible for these transports.”
Receptionist: “Please wait a moment… The person responsible for this is our logistics manager, Mrs. B, would you want to receive her contact details or do you want me to switch the call to her?.”
Author: “Thank you a lot for the information, could I please have her contact details? Receptionist: “Of course, her direct phone number is X, and her email address is X. She is available today until 4 PM.”
Author: “Thank you very much for the contact details, I will be contacting her in a bit.”
Receptionist: “You’re welcome.”
Author: “Have a nice day and thank you for the phone call. Goodbye!”
Receptionist: “You have a nice day as well, bye!”

This example of the first contact can be considered as a success, as the companies are not always open to sharing information of the decision makers via call, and will sometimes advise writing an email to the companies general email address.

As a salesperson, everyone will encounter many unsuccessful contacts. These are a part of the everyday life for a salesperson, and it is essential to know that they will inevitably happen and not to get discouraged by them. It is also important to act professionally even if the client would be rude because as a salesperson you are not only representing yourself, but also your company for whom you work for.

Below will be a real example of an unsuccessful contact made by the author via phone (translated from Finnish to English):
Answerer: “Company X.”
Author: “Good morning, this is Evert Kawamura from the company A.”
Answerer: “Hello.”
Author: “I represent the Swiss freight forwarding company A, and I’m calling to discuss and possibilities for co-ope…”
Answerer: “We don’t want anything.”
Author: “I understand, however, I’ve heard that your company has regular transports to Germany and we are very strong within this area. Could you please tell me how you currently arrange these transports?”
Answerer: “I told you that I am not interested! “hangs up the call.”

This example can be considered as an unsuccessful contact, as the answerer was not interested and willing to share any information at all. These unsuccessful contacts can happen for various reasons, which can range for the answerer just having a bad day, the answerer merely being rude, the salesperson and the answerer not having a mutual understanding and in some cases, companies won’t want to discuss business matters over the phone with people they do not know.
4.3 Real Dialogue Example With a Decision Maker

The next step is to give a cold call to the actual decision maker, with the contact details received from the receptionist earlier. When talking with the decision maker, you need to be ready to have some more technical details of the transports and the capabilities of what is being offered. Logistics managers have often worked for tens of years in the field of logistics and usually, have excellent industry knowledge. Below will be the actual conversation with the logistics manager of company Y (translated from Finnish to English):

Logistics manager: “Mrs. B.”
Author: “This is Evert Kawamura from the company A, good morning.”
Logistics manager: “Good morning.”
Author: “I was recently in contact with your company and received information that you are responsible for your company’s international transports, correct?”
Logistics manager: “Yes, this is right.”
Author: “Great. I represent the Swiss freight forwarding company A, and I’m calling to discuss about possibilities for co-operation with your company. If I understood right, you have constant exports to Germany and Poland. These trade lanes are one of the strongest ones for us, and I believe our offering would match your needs very well.”
Logistics manager: “That is correct. We also have some transports to Sweden and South-America. What type of transports does your company do?”
Author: “We can do all types of transport, groupage, full truckloads, express deliveries, container transports, heavy and oversized…”
Logistics manager: “We do mainly oversized deliveries, as our products are too big to fit into a standard trailer. Could you send more information about your company by email?”
Author: “Of course. I’ll send you an email with my contact details and a presentation of our company, where you can find all the details about our company, services, and references from other companies.”
Logistics manager: “Ok, great. I’ll be contacting you again if we have needs for your services.”
Author: “Great. Thank you very much for the phone call, and I’ll be waiting for your contact. Have a nice day”
Logistics manager: “Have a nice day, bye!”

Within a week of this conversation, the logistics manager of company Y called the author and requested an oversized delivery. The request was received and processed, and the logistics manager made an order through the author to the commissioning company. This
was a very successful contact, and it was also the first sales deal that the author had closed for the commissioning company.

4.4 Real Example of a Tender Process

The following example is a real scenario of how the commissioning company participated in a top potential clients tenders and received a nomination, becoming partners with the client and them becoming a real client. The company used in this example is a big global holding group with a turnover of over 7 billion euros. The company shall be referred to as ‘Company Z’ from now.

The first contact with the company was done via email, with contact details found from LinkedIn. The recipient forwarded this email to the tender organizers of Company Z, and the commissioning company then got added to their tender process. The company arranges yearly tenders, and the commissioning company took part in their next tender a few months after the first contact to Company Z.

This particular tender had over a hundred different trade lanes, and it had two rounds. Feedback was received after each round, and the prices could be adjusted after the first round to be more competitive in the second round. The difference of these two rounds was that for the first round the commissioning company gave prices to as many lanes as possible, but for the second one, the commissioning company focused only on the most potential lanes.

Shortly after the end of the second round, Company Z informed about the results. The commissioning company had been nominated for one lane and started receiving spot orders for this lane. After some time of successfully delivering the spot shipments, Company Z began to give regular orders to the commissioning company, and in 1 year, the fruitful partnership had already produced over 1 million in turnover of the transportations (Leushyk 10 July 2018.).

4.5 Post-sales

For the commissioning company, post-sales play an equally, or even a more important role, than pre-sales. The aim is always to make long-term partnerships with clients, and clients for logistics service providers will almost always start off with smaller orders, moving onto bigger regular orders after being a partner for some time already (Leushyk 10 July 2018.).
Asking for feedback and references can also be very effective in not just improving the relationship with the client it is being proposed from, but also in gaining trust and new clients through the feedback and references that is received. Good feedback will almost always attract new clients. However, negative feedback will draw them away.

4.6 Performance Measurement in the Commissioning Company

The commissioning company uses an advanced CRM system to measure the performance of its employees. It can show fact-based analytics on one’s performance and provides easily understandable graphs for monitoring it.

Figure 2 below shows an example of the analytics provided by the CRM system of the commissioning company. This one is a behavior metric, contacts with customers. The figure shows analytics for May, and the number of contacts with customers can be seen for each day of the month. The peaks often happen during the middle of the working week, while the slumps of zero contacts are at the weekend when the employee is not working.

Figure 2: Contacts with Customers Metrics (Oracle BI 2018)

Figure 3 below shows an example of a sales outcome metric, contact to quote conversion, provided by the same CRM system from the commissioning company as in figure 2. The
reason it is classified as a sales outcome metric is because it shows direct results based on a certain action. In this figure, it shows the number of contacts, and how many of those contacts resulted in the customer requesting for a quote. 7000 contacts resulted into 1000 quotes, which means the conversion rate from contacts to quotes is roughly 14.3%. The figure also shows the number of loads done from the quotes give.

Figure 3: Contact to Quote Conversion Metrics (Oracle BI 2018)
5 Strategic Plan for the Finnish Market

This chapter outlines the general strategic plan for the Finnish markets. The strategic plan builds a solid framework on what needs to be done, how it should be done and what needs to be taken into account before moving on further. The strategy is structured in an easy-to-understand way and goes through all stages step by step.

5.1 Mission

As it is already mentioned in the company background in the first chapter, the commissioning company’s mission is to be a perfect partner in logistics for all those working for the development and prosperity of society and environment. The mission of this strategic plan goes along with the overall plans of the commissioning company. For the Finnish market specifically, the mission is to attract new clients, offer competitive services, improve the supply chain, having satisfied partners, build relationships and maintain them, and to establish the commissioning company’s position in the local Finnish market.

5.2 Goals

The commissioning company’s goal and vision is to be among the top 10 logistics service providers in EU by turnover in 2030. The realization of this goal requires a significant expansion and increase in turnover, so expanding to new countries goes hand in hand with it. The main goals for the Finnish markets are to build stable relationships and to improve the supply chain to/from Finland. The goals also include increasing brand awareness, gaining new real clients, to gain new top potential clients.

5.3 Key Performance Indicators

The key performance indicators for this plan are very close to the author’s own KPI’s which were defined during the author’s work in the commissioning company. The author’s KPI’s are shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: KPI’s of Focus Market Sales (Commissioning company 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qty of contacted new customers per day</th>
<th>Qty of contacted new customers per month</th>
<th>Conversion Contacts to Quotes / Qty of Quoted customers</th>
<th>Conversion Quotes to Orders</th>
<th>Meetings per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Table 4 has two outcome metrics and three behavioral metrics. The quantity of contacted new customers per day, the quantity of contacted new customers per month, and meetings per month are all behavioral metrics as they can explain how, or what was done to achieve results. Conversion Contacts to quotes and conversion quotes to orders are outcome metrics, as they are the direct outcome of an action.

Two more main KPI's that were defined for this plan are: the amount of turnover created, and the amount of profit created. It is important to be able to measure the actual turnover which has been created, as otherwise a sale worth 1000 euros could be seen as an equal to one worth 5000 euros. For the latter KPI, a sale creating 300 euros in profit can be worth more than one creating 200 euros of profit, even if the total turnover would be higher in the smaller profit sale.

5.4 SWOT Analysis

Figure 4. Commissioning Company SWOT Chart (Commissioning Company 2018)
Figure 4 above shows the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the commissioning company in the Finnish markets. The above data was gathered by consulting the commissioning company’s managers and employees, and with the authors experience working for the commission company. Each part will be more thoroughly explained in the subchapters below.

5.4.1 Strengths

The commissioning company holds several strengths in logistics. They have a broad set of comprehensive services related to transports. They can deliver with all modes of transport, road, air, sea, railway, and the combination of all these. They have a 98.6% client satisfaction rate, can also do customs clearance, import, and export support, and is present in 18 countries with multilingual customer service. All cargo handled is also secured by a Swiss insurance company for up to 3 000 000 € for each insured event. They also hold several certificates, such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 and ISO 22000 (Commissioning Company 2018).

5.4.2 Weaknesses

The main weakness of the commissioning company in the Finnish markets is that it is an emerging market for them. This means that the company is relatively new in this area, and they don't hold offices in there. Being new in a market area also means that the experience in that area is not high. Its’ brand awareness is low within this market area, and the commissioning company also has scarce personnel focusing in these markets, as the author is currently the only native in these markets. The commissioning company also does not have a high amount of suppliers within the region.

5.4.3 Opportunities

The opportunities for the Finnish markets are enormous. A lot of exports and imports are done to/from Germany, Russia, and the Baltics, where the commissioning company has a strong presence. The figure 4 below shows the exact percentages of exports based on countries.
As Figure 5 shows, Germany, Russia, and Sweden are the countries where most of the Finnish exports are going to. The commissioning company's trade lanes to Russia and Germany are strong, which gives them an excellent opportunity to attract Finnish companies who export their products.

Imports are also equally as important as exports, and the figure 4 below shows the exact percentages of imports to Finland based on countries.
As figure 6 above shows, Germany, Sweden, and The Netherlands are the most popular importing countries to Finland. As Germany is the clear number one in both exports and imports, this gives the commissioning company good opportunities. There is also a clear need for the services provided by the commissioning company, based on the author’s experience on customer contacts. Given enough time, there could be possibilities to become one of the top forwarders in Finland on lanes where the commissioning company has a strong presence.

5.4.4 Threats

Main threats are the big forwarding competitors, such as DHL, Schenker, and DSV. Based on the author’s experience, most companies wish to use a forwarder they know by name or have some previous experience. The commissioning company is also a relatively new player in the Finnish markets, which means that they might not be able to provide the standard quality of services due to the low knowledge within the market.

5.5 Action Plan

Putting together all the before mentioned points, to reach the goals, first steps to do is to hire someone who is native to these markets and has some business knowledge in logistics. Based on multiple employee’s opinions of the Finnish market, managers of Finnish companies prefer to speak in their native language on matters regarding business, especially when trying to sell something to them. The author is one of the personnel native to the Finnish markets who was hired for this task.

Next is to prepare a list of potential clients to be contacted, ranging from low potential to top potential. The sales list is made by the business intelligence unit of the commissioning company, and by the personal search of companies doing international business. The search is mostly done online. Before contacting the client, it is also important to research the potential clients as much as possible, to learn beforehand which types of goods they transport, how frequently and possibly also their trade lanes.

After having potential clients who to contact, the next step is to start engaging with them. The method for this will be mostly by cold calling the potential client companies, finding out their decision-making unit and the personnel who are responsible for their transports. After receiving the correct contact person details, the actual sales process will start by talking to them, finding out the potential clients’ actual needs and trade lanes used. Once
the needs are clear and they are within the commissioning company’s capabilities, the author will start to offer their services. It is important to conduct the conversation professionally and confidently, as the next step after the call in most cases will be to continue the discussion via email and sending a presentation of the commissioning company. Leaving a good image during the phone conversation will make the potential client much more likely to request for a quotation, or to invite the commissioning company to take part in their tenders.

After receiving a request for quotation, the next step will be to prepare the potential clients an offer. This is done by contacting the commissioning company’s operational side, which will check availabilities of transports for the requested lane. Once the availability to offer the requested service is confirmed, the operational side will give a price, which will be check for its profit margin. If the margin is ideal, then the price will be forwarded to the potential client. The profit margin can also be adjusted if needed. In the best scenario, the potential client will accept the offer given, and make an order to the commissioning company.

In the case of receiving an invite for a tender, it will involve either contacting the commissioning company’s tender division, operational division, or both. The tenders also include the financial department, as the pricing made for tenders often contain fixation for rates for an extended period, along with post payments. In these tenders, the potential client will most likely request prices for multiple different trade lanes, which will be prepared by the tender division or the operational division. It takes more time than preparing a price for a single trade lane, but also has better opportunities, as the tenders are almost always done for long-term contracts, which will secure multiple transport orders for the time the tender nominations are active for.

After having an order completed for a client, the after-sales part begins. Long-term customers are always preferred and developing a good relationship with the clients is vital to receive more orders. Making regular visits to the clients, checking on the client and their needs monthly, sending them holiday greetings and news about the commissioning company will keep them interested and the clients won’t forget about their presence.
6 Conclusion

This chapter presents the outcome of this project, also looking into the whole process with reflections of what was learned and future suggestions.

6.1 Thesis Process

The whole process of this project was incredibly smooth. A timeline of 6 months was planned, to ensure that as much data as possible could be gathered, without stressing too much about deadlines. The author was working full time as a sales specialist for the commissioning company during this project, meaning that while a major part of the data was gathered during work time, the actual phase of writing everything down was mostly done on the author’s free time out of work. Even though there were certain timelines allotted for certain PT’s, all of the PT’s were further edited outside of the timetable allotted for it. This was because the author was continually learning while working for the commissioning company, coming up with more knowledge and information to write down.

The commissioning company provided great help during this project. As the author was the only person working on the project, his managers, supervisors, and colleagues were always ready to help when needed. The author’s direct manager was a part of the project planning from the beginning, and going through the process at regular intervals proved to be very useful. While the author was the only person working on this project, ideas from the commissioning company were provided the whole time.

6.2 Outcome

The outcome of this thesis is the explanation of the client search and analysis, along with the client acquisition and sales process done in the commissioning company. A strategic plan was prepared, and there is no separate product which is done outside of this thesis.

Chapter three and four by themselves can be used as a guide to explain how the processes are done in the commissioning company. The advantage for the author was that he was working full time for the commissioning company during this project, which allowed him to insert real examples and actual dialogues done with clients in Finland.

A brief strategic plan was developed for the Finnish market area. While the commissioning company had some ready goals and missions, having it concretely written down will set
down the structure of movement for the future. The implementation of the strategic plan was already started during this project, which means that a part of the action plan was already started before finishing this project. Some of the goals were already reached during this project, such as hiring personnel native to the Finnish markets, preparing a list of clients to contact, engaging with potential clients and acquiring new real clients from Finland. The commissioning company will make use of, and continue with the implementation, of the strategic plan which is created.

6.3 Recommendations for Improvement

While the commissioning company is ready to start their customer acquisition and sales in Finland (as it was already proven by actual results by the author), there are still some processes that need to be improved. One of the big weaknesses they have is not having offices in Finland, and this proved to be a major inconvenience for the author. Clients often asked that where are the commissioning company’s Finnish offices or why is the call not from Finland, which sometimes may have raised some suspicions. According to the author’s experience, the pickup/trust rate from international calls is considerably lower than domestic calls. Thus, opening a subsidiary in Finland would be a big, positive step for the commissioning company.

The number of suppliers in Finland was also low, which meant that the author often ran into cases of receiving a request for a quote, and not being able to fill this need because of the lack of capacity for the transport. There was also no Finnish speaking personnel in the commissioning company’s operational department, which can make communication with Finnish suppliers hard. The recommendation is to hire a Finnish speaker in the operations department to improve relations and gain new suppliers from Finland.

The author also recommends the commissioning company to join the Finnish Freight Forwarding Association, FIFFLA. Currently, there is no information of the commissioning company available from Finnish third-party source, which can cause a lack of trust for potential clients. Joining the Finnish Freight Forwarding Association would not only generate confidence, but also every potential client would see that the company would meet the strict Finnish freight forwarding standards. It would also make the commissioning company appear in the list of member companies, and generate more search results from search engines.
6.4 Reflections on Learning

During the preparation, development, and implementation of this project, a lot of new knowledge was acquired both for the author and the commissioning company. Combining the author’s knowledge of the Finnish market area, and the commissioning companies expertise in logistics was a success.

The author himself did not have any experience of working in the field of logistics before this project, and during the project, he learned crucial information about all transport modes, certificates, and technical details related to logistics.

The author also learned to speak comfortably to the executive level personnel from potential client companies, learned to use CRM systems and to prepare, develop and implement sales plans. The author also learned to cope well in an international company outside of his home country, with people from multiple different countries.

Learning where to find new potential client companies and how to successfully analyze these companies also proved to be a valuable new skill. Acquiring information of the most used import/export countries with factual data is also valuable, both for the author and the commissioning company.

The learned theory of this project also proved to be of great use for the author’s work, and the best part of this project was to be able to put the learned theory into practice. Learning to gather precise data from a company and gather them into the strategic plan in the form of a SWOT analysis also was a first time the author did it in practice of an actual situation.

6.5 Self-evaluation

The preparation, research, development and writing process of this thesis was a fairly lengthy project, with all of the points mentioned above chapter 6.4 learned. The outcome differs slightly from the original plan, which means that the original plan could have been further improved before the start of this project. However, there can always be unexpected changes to any project, which can’t necessarily always be considered negative.

The project was able to be completed within the allotted schedule. While it did not go perfectly along with the planned schedule, it was finished ahead of the set deadline. The process of the writing was smooth, and there weren’t any slumps or much stress during the completion of this thesis.
The author also benefitted a lot from the consultation of his supervisor in the commissioning company, as he was able to help and improve the structure and to provide a lot of information and ideas to be written down. The consultation of the thesis advisor from Haga-Helia also proved to be very effective, as the advisor helped to structure the whole thesis in a more easily readable form, and gave the author good pointers in the view of someone who does not have inside knowledge of the commissioning company. The author reacted to all suggestions and made appropriate changes.

The strategy was already initiated during the writing of this thesis, and it has proved to be of use. Actual results and some of the goals have already been reached, however, the commissioning company and the author are still far away from achieving all the desired goals.

The author will without a doubt benefit from all what was learned during this project and will use the knowledge in his future tasks and plans. Doing this project has left the author and the commissioning company with a positive mind.
References


Oracle BI 2018. Internal Oracle CRM. Sales Business Intelligence.


Appendices

Appendix 1: Permission to use Kauppalehti’s company registry screenshots in this thesis

From: "Alma Talent Tietopalvelut" <tietopalvelut@almatalent.fi>
To: "event.kawamura@asstra.com" <event.kawamura@asstra.com>

History: This message has been replied to and forwarded.

Hei!

Ystävällisin terveisin
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Kaikki media, tieto ja koulutus, joka vie lajhakkaat seuraavalle tasolle.

Lähettäjä: event.kawamura@asstra.com
Luontpalvutamäärä: 30.07.2018 10:00:03
Vast.ott.: kl.asiakaspalvelu@almatalent.fi
Alhec Lupa käyttää kuvakaappauksia Kauppalehden yrityshaun lopputyössäni
Tunnus: 738815
### List of export companies (Kauppalehti 2018)

**Translations:**

**Sija =** Ranking  
**Yrityksen nimi =** Name of the company  
**Kotipaikka =** City  
**Liikevaihto =** Turnover  
**Nettotulos =** Net Profit  
**Ulkom. Liikevaihto =** Turnover abroad