



# Ensuring Sales Success

Strategic Planning for Finnish B2B Service Providers

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## **ABSTRACT**

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MONICA SISSALA:  
Ensuring Sales Success  
Strategic Planning for Finnish B2B Service Providers

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This bachelor's thesis details the research, development, and suggested implementation phases of an original sales handbook. The background of the thesis was influenced by the thesis author's work placement experience, but the thesis was written without a commissioner. The purpose of the thesis is to demonstrate a comprehensive guide for establishing business-to-business service selling, using a fictional Tampere business as an example. Academic research was conducted via literature review, and that information was further expanded upon to create the handbook's canvases.

The result of the research is a sales development handbook with accompanying worksheets that detail the process undertaken by small business owners to adopt a new sales strategy.

The last chapters of the thesis detail the implementation suggestions and possible development issues and how to solve them.

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Key words: sales, sales strategy, B2B sales, service selling

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Selling is difficult. Perhaps it is especially so for those entrepreneurs who work for the love of a skill and are therefore not accustomed to such a seemingly self-aggrandizing undertaking. Indeed, in that case, aggressive self-promotion may feel inherently contrary to the motivations one has for pursuing entrepreneurship such as a dedication to one's craft and a willingness to take risks in the name of self-sufficiency.

We are faced, then, with a paradox: micro-companies who would best benefit from an education in sales theory may also be exactly those free spirits who have shunned conventional education and white-collar employment to follow their own path. It is these artists, entertainers, or single-service providers, who are so common in Finland, that are creative, passionate, and hardworking to a fault. They succeed in business through trial and error. And yet, although micro-companies make up most of the business in Finland, there seems to be scarce educational resources designed for their needs. Commerce and trade is overwhelmingly working class, and yet strategic business theory is decidedly not.

This thesis is one answer to the dichotomy. By exploring sales theory research and handbooks written for sales representatives and large company decision makers, the foundation of sales strategy and planning has been stripped down. The ultimate aim of the work was to demystify the sales process from the perspective of a Tampere B2B service provider. The result was a handbook written for small business operators with worksheets to aid the planning process and design a unique sales strategy. The handbook is entitled, *The Sales Success Handbook: Canvases for Clarity*.

With any luck, this body of work will act as a useful contribution to the literature and can empower small business owners with relevant sales theory.

## **2 TOPIC BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Topic Relevance and Background**

The thesis topic is selling strategy and pipeline in the context of business to business service selling. The relevance of the thesis is important, but it is topically relevant in the chosen area (Finland). The relevance of the thesis can be judged by the significance of the topic in the field of business, its newness and topicality. The relevance can be shown through the topic and market background. There is enough B2B service selling to make the topic worth it, and this is a new idea that deserves to be talked about.

This thesis project is connected to such topical themes such as business to business selling, service selling, soft skills, experience economy, and international companies operating in Finland. The topic background came from my own experience as an intern in a company attempting to begin B2B service selling in Tampere. I read literature about how to create an effective sales strategy and develop a pipeline, and I became interested in facilitating the process. Although the project did not continue, that process evolved into this thesis project of developing a method for establishing business to business sales operations.

While there exists literature on sales theory and sales management, the sales development literature is mostly focused on bettering an existing strategy, market segmentation, and fine-tuning communications for the customers. Most of the handbooks are targeted towards selling personnel themselves to increase their skills and prevent many of the “pitfalls” of sales professionals, such as “farming” old prospects. Additionally, many of the strategy handbooks focus on service design, which is all very offering-centric. I wanted to create a do-it-yourself method to develop and implement a sales strategy and sales pipeline.

To make everything more clear and have a simple starting point, the thesis uses a theoretical model of a company that fits the market. This company X is selling

B2B services in the Pirkanmaa region. The company is Tampere based. The company sells communication workshops.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis project will be to create an effective standard of how sales can be managed in such a company.

## **2.2 Thesis Purpose**

The thesis purpose is an important part of the topic. The thesis topic sets the practical framework for the development objective. The role of the thesis purpose is to illustrate the background of the objective.

### **2.2.1 Objective**

The role of a thesis objective is to illustrate the actions that will be taken to meet the purpose. In this case, the objectives for the thesis project have been set cooperatively together between the thesis researcher and thesis advisor.

The thesis will be a comprehensive guide for developing both a sales strategy as well as an implementation plan for use in a corporate sales department. The thesis will consist of a sales handbook that details the necessary steps to recreate a comprehensive sales strategy through a series of worksheets that are filled out with company X as an example. The handbook and thesis will take care to cover extensively the topic of continuing corporate sales into the future. The handbook will advise companies as how to set sales goals for the next two years (in example, through 2021 and 2022) and provide a detailed step by step guide for finding leads, pitching, and managing customer relationships. The project will include in the implementation plan sales material and online presence suggestions. The objective of the thesis project is to illustrate to companies how to develop a sales strategy.

The objective of the thesis is to investigate the market's current position and develop and debut a winning sales strategy that will serve as the starting point

going forward. The aim of the project is to produce a sales handbook or other materials to deliver an implementation plan to meet sales goals for the next two years (2021 and 2022). The project will attempt to recommend step by step guide for lead generation, pitching, and managing customer relationships as well as online presence suggestions.

### **2.2.2 Research Question**

The purpose of the research question is to clearly define the problem that the thesis seeks to solve. Since the development aim of this thesis project is to develop a comprehensive guide in developing sales departments, the research question for this project will similarly center around those topics. There is no perfect or single research question, but rather a series of questions that attempt to grasp the essence of the research aim. They are as follows:

*What is an effective B2B sales strategy for an international company in Tampere? How can an efficient sales pipeline give consulting companies an advantage in B2B sales?*

These questions will serve as the guiding principles of internal development for the project, and as a measuring stick for providing recommendations after analysis of results.

### **2.3 Source Material**

Several text- and handbooks were instrumental in the research process and therefore make up a large portion of the findings. These sources, and their underlying concepts and theories, informed the sales strategy.

The textbook *Selling and Sales Management* by David Jobber and Geoff Lancaster was a primary source for definitions and examples.

The handbook *Predictable Prospecting: How to Radically Increase Your B2B Sales Pipeline* by Marylou Tyler and Jeremy Donovan served as the basis for planning a unique outreach sales campaign, which was later expanded to create the comprehensive sales strategy outlined in this work. *Zero to Hero: 7 Steps to Revolutionize Your Sales* by Greg Anyon was the guide for establishing targeted prospecting methods. The *Sales Development Playbook* by Trish Bertuzzi was crucial for understanding the best practices in managing sales within a company.

In addition to these long-form sources, the understanding of sales came from a series of lectures by Mari Helenius and Sven Rassi in spring 2019 at Tampere University of Applied Sciences. These lectures, and their accompanying presentations provided to students, succinctly outlined the basics of selling, sales strategies, and stages in the selling process. These presentations provided much of the core theory.

Design Thinking and Lean Service Creation theory also contributed to the method in which the handbook was developed.

## **2.4 Working Methods**

The project is, primarily, applied research, as the researcher seeks to solve a problem or help accomplish a task via the development of a practical and academic guide to establishing sales strategy best practices. The beginning phases of the project use an exploratory research method as relevant literature is analyzed. The project can be considered action research from the use of abductive reasoning to form a dialogue between backing theory and original findings (Academic Research Strategies, 2020).

The working method for this thesis project will be primarily action research. As with any thesis, theoretical groundwork should be laid as a base from which problem-solving methods are cultivated. To that end, secondary data will be gathered from a multitude of reliable sources to provide background and context to the issue.



The work will continue with the development of a sales strategy and the creation of a comprehensive sales pipeline, including supporting materials such as contact templates, promotional material mockups, and campaign outlines. The development of these strategies and materials will be reflected against the selected theory.

Then, the strategy will be analyzed for comprehension. An implementation plan will be recommended. The study of the concepts and analysis of results will be of a qualitative nature. The effectiveness of the strategy will be analyzed according to theories used in the thesis.

To be valid, results must be comparable, honest, and use theories appropriately. This means they leave room for others to interpret the results. (Validity and Reliability, 2020)

To be considered reliable, the results must demonstrate a degree of dependability. This is defined by an accurate description of theory and methods, and a capacity for confirmability. The confirmability can be judged by the ability of other researchers to reach the same or similar results under independent circumstances. (Validity and Reliability, 2020)

## **2.5 Thesis Structure**

After an introductory chapter and the current chapter, the second chapter of the thesis will outline the research and nature of the results. The third chapter will provide the reader with a more thorough theoretical relevance. The fourth chapter will outline the steps taken in the process to deliver a sales strategy and handbook, including project changes as they developed. The fifth chapter provides an analysis of the project and results of the data gathered. The final chapter engages the reader in a discussion of the results and provides the researcher's recommendations for how the commissioner could best proceed with the work if it were to continue. After a list of references, the appendices appear, including the sales development handbook and supporting materials.

### **3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Selling**

Modern selling is, at its core, an exercise in problem solving. In contrast to the “traditional” (layman’s) idea of sales, which centers around smooth-talking peddlers, sales in the modern age seeks to create trust between salesman and client, with the seller as trusted advisor who works alongside the consumer to find solutions to solve unique problems. (Jobber and Lancaster, 2009) Although the goal of sales is ultimately to move product, sales departments are nonetheless the living connection to consumers; the humanity in the machine. Sales professionals have a direct line to the complaints of modern consumers which allows companies to develop truly innovative solutions. It is best said that, “selling today is consultative, collaborative dialogue with focus on customer’s needs.” (Helenius, 2019) The significance in this shift is that selling at its core depends on the seller’s ability to assert themselves as an expert willing to solve a consumer’s unique problem.

#### **3.2 B2B Selling**

Business to business selling is selling products and services directly to other organizations and corporations. In business to business (B2B) selling, the customer is always other companies. The definition of B2B sales only describes the act of selling products and services to other companies; it does not indicate if the transaction is wholesale, or who is the end user. It only means that the purchasing decision is in the hands of a business owner or employee, and the product or service is not directly being sold to the general public.

There are many differences in strategy between B2C and B2B sales, which is why the distinction is so important. Every aspect of customer communication is different. For example, in B2B selling, the individual with the purchasing power is often not the end user, so their decision will be much more logic based and

not emotional as is often the case when selling to end-users (consumers). This thesis project deals solely with business to business sales.

### **3.3 Social Selling**

Social selling is when the seller purposefully uses methods to fill and advisory role to the customer. With social selling, reputation is very important. The ultimate goal of social selling is to create an ongoing relationship in which the seller is not only an ongoing supplier but acts as a trusted consultant to solve all related problems. Although it can be argued that all modern selling takes on a social aspect, social selling is most often seen in the B2B sales context because of the ongoing relationship between supplier and client that is more common. (Tyler, Donovan, 2016)

Social selling is distinguished from traditional selling in that it focuses on helping the customer solve a specific problem to fill a need instead of attracting them to a specific product/service based on its attractive qualities. (Helenius, 2019)

Social selling is not only a useful tactic, but it is considered best practice. As such, it is a guiding principle of this project's strategy.

One of the ways social selling can be implemented is by creating contact with clients. This can be aided by the use of social media in order to keep contact with prospects and clients. Research published in 2012 proved that across industries, social media use correlated with higher closing rates in B2B sales. This study showed that use of the social capital theory to create a network of like-minded professionals helped to develop relationships, which in turn boosted sales. (Rodriquez, Peterson, Krishnan, 2012).

Therefore, in addition to using social media to connect with prospects, a winning social media strategy seeks to create a community of like-minded professionals that support and educate each other. The importance of relationship-based selling cannot be understated.

### **3.4 Service Selling**

The offering being sold can either be a product or a service. While products are tangible objects, services are intangible experiences with lasting effects. (Reinartz, Ulaga, 2008) For example, equipment repair and public speaking are both services.

This thesis focuses on service selling.

### **3.5 Sales Strategy**

The Sales Development Playbook stresses the importance of differentiation in its sales strategy definition. Great sales strategies allow sales professionals to “raise above the white noise of half-hearted prospecting.” (Bertuzzi, 2016) This brings up an excellent point; sales messaging should be not only targeted and meaningful, but engaging on a very human level.

The sales strategy cannot be developed without a thorough understanding of your customer and their need. Once need and ability to pay have been identified, a sales strategy is the process of developing a bespoke solution (or creating the illusion of a bespoke solution). By evaluating the process with a sales funnel, companies can direct their energy in the most efficient way. (Davies, 2010)

It is clear, then, that a sales strategy has many characteristics. However, at its core, it is an action plan that empowers sales departments to identify, target, and engage with potential customers, ultimately forming a lasting connection that positions them as a trusted advisor.

## **4 DEVELOPING SALES STRATEGY HANDBOOK**

This section details the process undergone to create a practical guide for establishing a sales strategy in Tampere-based business-to-business service providers. The five subsections detail an aspect of sales strategy that must be carefully explored and planned by entrepreneurs. Each of the five subsections reflect a chapter of the handbook, and explains the theory and purpose of the section. Each section is accompanied by worksheets designed to aid the creative process and explain the requirements. Company X is used as an example for practical application. The handbook, with each worksheet, is included in the appendixes.

### **4.1 Market Analysis**

The sales strategy is the methods by which sales will be pursued. However, in order to set accurate goals, one must develop a deeper understanding of the company's current position in the market. This can be done through a market analysis. According to Jobber and Lancaster (2009), a marketing audit (or analysis) can be helpful in identifying the business's current strengths and weaknesses.

Why start with a market analysis? According to Jobber and Lancaster, sales activities must complement an organization's overall strategic marketing plan. Therefore, a market analysis can serve as a starting point for the sales planning process that is the first conception of the sales strategy.

The sales planning process is a kind of "learning by doing" research in which the mission of the company is the guiding force that is realized through setting objectives that are met through strategies and tactics. Ultimately, the purpose of the market analysis is to determine the purpose of the sales strategy - what position are we aiming for in the market? Where do we fit in?

The market analysis consists of both internal and external audits. A SWOT analysis is then conducted. The internal audit includes information about the

current size and recent growth of the market; and analysis of the customer's needs, attitudes, and trends; the current marketing mix; and a competitor analysis. The external audit can include a PESTLE analysis, which includes political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors to consider. The SWOT analysis after this uses both internal and external factors to create an analysis. (Jobber, Lancaster 2009)

At that point, objectives can be defined. Objectives should answer the question, "how will we know we've succeeded?" These objectives can be expressed in the company mission statement.

This will be seen in a general marketing strategy. It is important for sales to have a marketing strategy because the two disciplines need to work together to create a common goal, especially in B2B service selling. This allows for further definition of primary selling tactics. This will ultimately be the sales strategy. A step by step list of tasks to contact customers and sell to them.

The following internal audit, external audit, and audit analysis uses Company X as an example. The worksheets in the handbook that they comprise are included in relative places to demonstrate the significance on each section to the sales strategy itself.

#### **4.1.1 Internal Audit**

##### **MARKET SIZE**

The first step in conducting an internal audit is to consider the existing market conditions. This begins with an analysis of the market's current size and recent growth.

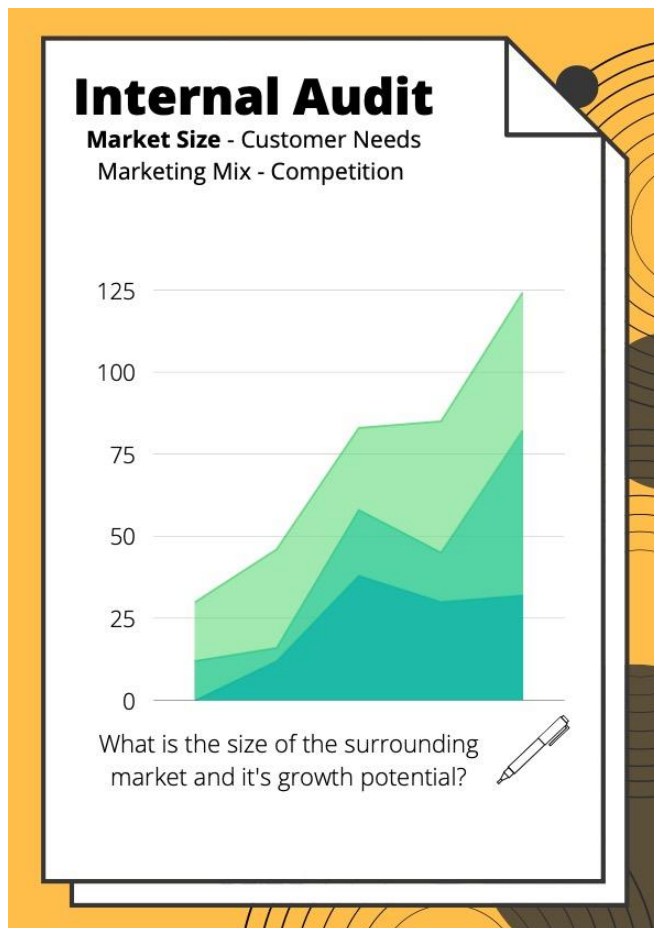
According to Statistics Finland, there are 286,042 companies in Finland (not including the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries). Ninety three percent of those companies are micro companies which employ less than ten people. Another 5.8% employ between 10 and 50 people. Only six hundred and fifty five companies in Finland employ over 250 people and can be classified as large

companies. (Yrittäjät, 2020) At the same time, almost one quarter of Finnish businesses are involved in international trade and export. (Yrittäjät, 2018) Between 2016 and 2017, the rate of foreign companies investing in Finnish businesses, through purchase or establishment, rose by nearly 20%. (Business Finland, 2018)

From this, we can see that internationalization in Finland is growing in all areas. It's growing in the rate of Finnish companies doing business abroad, Finnish companies hiring foreign-originated staff, and foreign companies establishing or purchasing Finnish brands.

Based on this data, it is clear that internationalization in Finland is more common than ever and growing rapidly. It is not a question of whether or not Finnish companies should choose to internationalize, but rather, if their company will be successful on an already global scale. Besides having superior products and processes, how can Finnish companies ensure their transition and development in the global marketplace will be a success?

As it turns out, many companies have turned to soft skills training to strengthen the sensitivity and communication skills needed to thrive in a diverse workforce.



### CUSTOMER NEEDS

Although there is not a large existing market for corporate soft skill workshops in Finland, a need can be demonstrated by proving the importance of soft skills in internationalization and illustrating a need for assistance in internationalization based on Finnish culture.

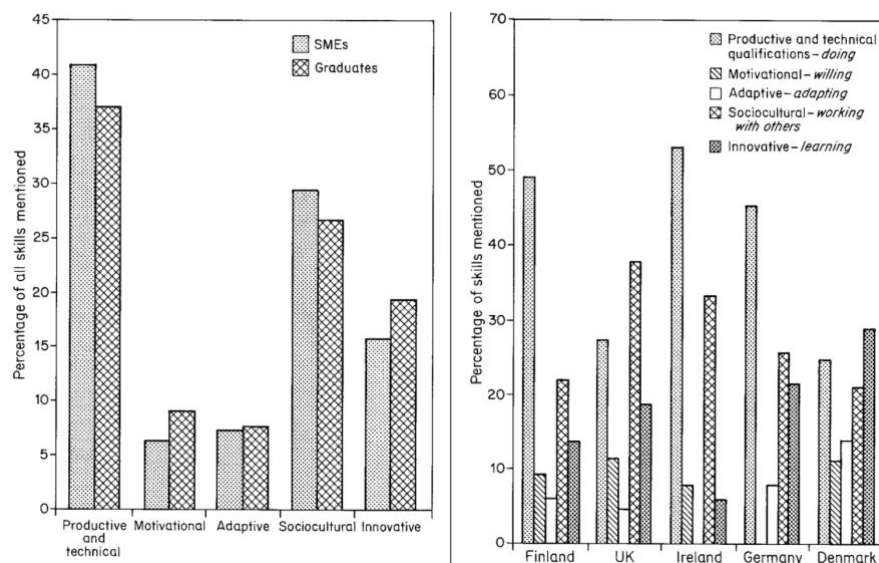


Figure 1 shows the percentage of skills mentioned over industry and countries



A study published in the *Industry and Higher Education* journal in 2000 compares the competencies that university graduates believe they possess, and skills that SME employers expect from recent graduates. While results show that employers and graduates' priorities are largely matched, it was also clear that across the five studied countries, graduates of Finnish educational institutions had skill profiles that were considerably weaker in motivational and innovative skills. The researchers proposed a hypothesis for this discretion; Finnish institutions prioritize individual expertise over teamwork strengths. (Manninen and Hobrough, 2000) These findings suggest that recently qualified Finnish jobseekers are undereducated in soft skills, although the skills are in high demand in both Finland and abroad.

What factors of Finnish culture suggest a gap in the country's soft skills and internationalization skills? Hofstede's cultural dimensions suggest that Finnish companies would benefit from professional internationalization assistance. Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, introduced in 1991's *Software of the Mind*, describes Finland as having a small power distance, as individualist, feminine, uncertainty avoiding, and long term oriented. A power distance measurement of 33 suggests that Finnish society is not built upon the understanding that power is inherently unequal. There is a larger degree of democracy and collaboration in decision making in countries with a smaller power distance. An individualism score of 63 suggests that Finnish society is individualist instead of collectivist, meaning members of society are generally expected to make choices based on what is best for themselves. They have an independent role in society and do not necessarily make decisions based on an objective societal role and the expectations that accompany it. A masculinity score of 26 qualifies Finland as a feminine society, meaning that society is not built upon gender roles that value traits such as aggression, winning, etc. An uncertainty avoidance score of 59 means that Finnish society is more uncertainty avoiding than uncertainty tolerating. The society believes in the concept of absolute truth (good vs bad, moral vs immoral). Following rules is the best way to become "good," even when the rules might be illogical. A long term orientation, with a score of 38, shows that Finnish culture is long term oriented. This means that the state of the world is always evolving and innovation is prioritized as a useful tool that

can help prepare for the future. Finland has a higher score for long term orientation than North America, Australia, India, and the few western European countries (for which there is data). The other Nordic countries share Finland's score. Finland is less long term oriented than Eastern European countries including Russia, as well as China and Japan. Long term orientation can also be a measure of willingness for social change. An indulgence score of 57 means that Finnish society is more indulgent than restrained. Finnish culture is one that places a high value on leisure time, enjoyment of life, work life balance, and having fun. Indulgent societies view enjoyment of life as morally correct, while restrained societies tend to be more pessimistic and view indulgence as wrong, while restraint demonstrates purity of mind. Most Asian and Western European countries score on the restrained side, while Northern European, English speaking, and Western Hemisphere countries are indulgent. (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010)

This suggests that Finland is a great place for skilled foreign workers, but Finnish companies are likely to benefit from soft skills training to compete in an international workforce. Finland has a very low power distance, which suggests that foreign workers can expect a lot of freedom and respect in the workplace. Finland is a feminine society, so winning and getting ahead are not societal pressures. However, Finland is a highly individualistic country, which may seem off-putting to foreigners used to a stronger sense of community. Finland, like Eastern European and Asian countries, is long term orientated and changes to worldview and society might happen quickly. This might be confusing for more traditional foreign-born workers. However, Finnish society is also highly normative, with a high uncertainty avoidance. Foreigners in Finland might experience that there are unspoken rules in society that must be followed (and might also have a hard time guessing those rules, since they are not necessarily based on any obvious tradition). Although enjoying oneself is highly prioritized in Finnish culture, self-sufficiency is as well, which might leave foreigners feeling disconnected and unable to get assistance from the group, especially if they come from a country with a large power distance or a restrained culture that views suffering as inevitable and authority as beyond reach.

Under this analysis, Finnish companies can benefit from communication, other soft skills, or internationalization training. Finnish company leaders and their employees can learn to understand the point of view of other people who might find long term orientation and indulgence confusing and contrary to the goals of an organization. It would help with the Finnish urges to strictly follow rules to avoid uncertainty and pursue independence at the cost of community. It can prep Finnish organizations to make the most of the low power distance and fun environment in an international setting.



## MARKETING MIX

A marketing mix is a collection of factors that comprise of strategy used to capture the desired market. All factors in the marketing mix are subject to strategic decision, therefore, they are all influenceable by the marketers <selling and sales management> The marketing mix was first defined by E. Jerone McCarthy as The Four P's in his 1960 book. Later, Neil Borden renamed the concept as the "marketing mix." Eventually the theory was expanded and more factors were added to become the 7 p's in the marketing mix we know today. (Tracy, 2004)

Unfortunately, individuals and companies are bound by the limits of their resources and therefore perfection is ultimately unattainable. By using the marketing mix, companies can attempt to strike a balance of quality and price relevant to their specific market niche. What features are most important to stand out and be the best? What features are limited in your unique situation? The following is the marketing mix as it pertains to Company X.

What does Price signal to customers?

Price reflects quality. Price should not be advertised, but rather negotiated on a case by case basis. Since it is a service, negotiations on price can be somewhat flexible. However, it is important to keep prices appropriately high to signal value to large companies.

What does the Product and its quality communicate to consumers?

In this case, the product is a service. It must be of the highest quality compared to other similar offerings in Finland. This can be done through skillful branding and personalization of the experience.

How is advertising being used to Promote your product?

Since there is not a large market for this service at this time, promotion should in part seek to create market interest and need by highlight the need for soft skills training and communication workshops. Successful promotion will include high-quality free promotional materials available through the website, mailing list, print-outs etc to stir an interest about the service.

Place - where and how is it being sold?

The services will be sold through inbound and outbound methods. Leads targeted for sales should be in the Tampere area for the first year to assist with the negotiation and relationship building process.

What does the Packaging signal to customers?

The marketing story must be consistent. The packaging will reflect high quality, fun, transformative experiences that open the minds and eyes of participants and bring colleagues closer together.

**Positioning - How should the public think of you?**

The ultimate aim of marketing and reputation is to cement in the mind of the public that Company X is not only the best in Finland at what they do, but also that a training or event with Company X will bring vigor, enthusiasm, and a high degree of emotional value to all participants. The practical applications of communication training should be absolutely clear to every person who learns about Company X.

**People - What relationships empower the solution?**

The experience of Company X's trainers is the biggest personnel asset to the solution. However, in this case especially, reputation is an invaluable tool. For that reason, past clients of successful training and the salespeople who keep in touch with them are an integral part of the network.

**Internal Audit Cont**  
Market Size - Customer Needs  
**Marketing Mix - Competition**

**Price** - What does the price signal to customers?

**Product** - quality and relevance to customer

**Promotion** - how is advertising used?

**Place** - Where and how is it sold?

**Packaging** - what mood does it awaken?

**Positioning** - how should the public think of you?

**People** - what relationships empower your solution?

What is your strategy for all 7 aspects, and which are the most critical for success?

## COMPETITION

A competitor analysis, including their strategies, performance, and abilities, is a crucial part of the internal analysis. (Jobber, Lancaster 2009)

A knowledge of the competition helps decision makers to determine their goals. An understanding of the market surrounding the proposed solution makes

segmentation easier - what does the market currently look like, and where will we fit into it? A thorough understanding of the competition's successes and failures helps predict future difficulties and plan for strategic superiority. For example, if the majority of the competition faces a similar problem, it clearly shows both an opportunity to plan around that struggle as well as markers to look out for.

Competition does not just include the companies in your area with similar offerings. To truly understand the competition, one must empathize with customers. How are customers currently meeting the need that the solution proposes to meet? Once the current customer journey is evaluated, you might find that your competition is not only rival companies, but rival systems, rival methods of meeting needs, or even other needs that are being prioritized.

The Harvard Business School professor said it best when he illustrated the strategic development of a new fast food product. In that case, the R&D team understood that the product should be a satisfying breakfast for a morning commuter. However, savvy professionals understand that the competition in this case was not limited to other restaurant breakfast options, but in fact included anything the customer could consume in the morning, including the option of skipping breakfast. (Christensen, 2009)

While a competitor analysis might focus solely on similar companies operating in the region, it must include the perspective of empathizing with the end user and studying their current processes. The product must be valuable enough to spur action and overcome potential apathy.

By searching Google for keywords related to soft skills trainings, (communication, workshop, corporate training, Finland, soft skills, and combinations of those phrases) competitors were found. Only the first two pages of Google were examined for possible companies, since this is a similar process used by most of Google's users. The websites of five competitors were analyzed to determine current strategy as well as potential strengths and weaknesses.

Ahjo Communications (Business ID 1054879-0) is a PR firm that does some workshops on handling media, managing social media channels, and crisis communication. The target demographic for Ahjo Communications is obviously very different than Company X, as they seem to target high-profile people and give individual coaching to insure they can best represent themselves to the public.

IMP Finland (Business ID 2432004-1) provides language, cultural, and professional communications training. This company helps clients to make an impact on an international audience. Specialities include training employees to speak and write internationally as well as assisting with specific communications challenges. The differential factor is the online presence of IMP Finland. The website is plain, dry, and black and white; it does not claim to engage attendees or spark any internal reflection that participants can apply to other areas of their life.

Richard Lewis Communications does consulting and communications training focusing on internationalization. Training courses can be purchased on three levels - core, complex, and customized - on three topics; communication, culture, and leadership. There are locations in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Oulu, Kuopio, and Jyväskylä. This company claims to have begun operations soon after the founder first visited Helsinki in the 1950's. However, the entire experience of looking at the website does nothing to inspire confidence in the company. The Finland branch appears to be a subsidiary of Richard Lewis Communications Group, but links to RLCG as well as social media pages provided on the website lead to nonexistent accounts. Upon further examination, the company was found to have declared bankruptcy on 26 August 2020 (According to the Finnish Business Information System).

The Knowledge Academy Provides courses in a wide variety of professional topics in over 190 countries. They also provide on-location trainings in Finland. The course catalog is extensive, mainly focusing on specific concepts such as Agile, Kanban, Kaizen, and Lean, or software such as Excel, Java, and Adobe. There are business skills trainings which include sales, leadership, and communications among many others. Overall, this company seems

comprehensive and helpful. However, this company does not reflect the soft skills values that Company X uses to define its market niche.

Communicaid offers many online courses, with the possibility to receive in-house training in Finland. The training focuses on teaching about Finnish culture and living in Finland to international professionals arriving for work. Although the workshop is taught by a Finnish person, the company itself does not seem to be local. Instead, the originally London-based company works as a network, with offices and trainers spread across the globe. This is different to Company X's business model, which should include the benefit of a long-term relationship with the trainer and sales representatives.

Clients can also meet their needs in other ways, including through free training through Business Tampere and startup accelerators as part of a mentorship program. The goal should be to communicate that it is not specific skills, teachable anywhere, that brings value to the participants but the experience of the training itself.

While these companies have more experience, and from their finances it seems like they function with varying degrees of success, there remains a gap in the marketplace. All of these operators, especially the three that operate exclusively in Finland, ironically lack the skills to communicate their benefit through marketing. Their websites are confusing or do not inspire trust, and the message in the communications is focused on their experience and benefit of their trainings, and not on the experience itself. There is a room for a competitor whose strategy is more in line with the experience economy; by seeking to connect personally with each attendee and inspiring them to learn about themselves in a memorable and emotionally engaging experience, Company X can differentiate themselves as a market leader.





#### 4.1.2 External Audit

The PESTLE analysis is a method of analysis which considers political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors in the macro environment of a potential business opportunity. The history of the PESTLE (or PESTEL) analysis is complex. The acronym began as ETPS in Francis Aguilar's 1964 publication *Scanning the Business Environment*. Since then, the acronym has developed over time until PESTLE was introduced some time in the 1980's. (Frue, 2017)

The political macro economic factors determine the extent to which a government may influence the economy as a whole, or the industry in which the new business will operate. For example, the government may impose international tariffs or industry-specific taxes with the potential to change the revenue generation of an organization. For this reason, fiscal policy is important to analyze before attempting to begin a new organization. (Pestle Analysis, 2020)

In the case of company X, Finnish tax must be carefully considered. Because communications workshops are not included in tax-reduced or tax-exempt status, all services are subject to a value added tax rate of 24%. (Vero, 2020)

The economic factors of the macro environment in which the organization will operate indicate changes which may have long term effects. These can include inflation or unemployment rates, which may in turn affect pricing strategy and supply and demand models.

The effect of the Coronavirus Pandemic has greatly effected the health of Tampere's event industry according to an article published by the City of Tampere. (Pesä, Heinämäki, 2020) Already by the end of March, at least 1 500 events had been cancelled. One proposed reason was a disruption in the supply chain due to quarantine measures. Additionally, there was a ban on gatherings of more than 10 people that lasted through much of the spring. This is certainly something for Company X to take into consideration.

Social factors may include current purchasing trends, the statistical makeup of the surrounding population, and seasonal factors such as holidays.

Luckily for Company X, Finnish companies are ready to spend on company wellness as it is generally seen to improve employee satisfaction and efficiency.

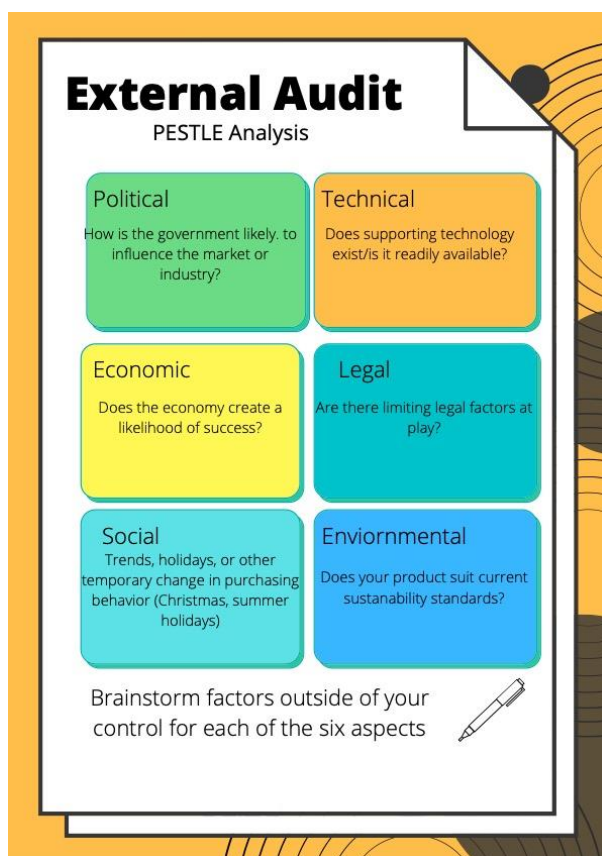
A technological evaluation requires an understanding of the role technology will play in a solution's implementation. Tech-heavy sectors such as medicine and IT services require a deep understanding of the technology which makes their services possible. The underlying infrastructure and its availability in the region is crucial to future success.

Company X, on the other hand, requires little more technology besides basic computing for record keeping, net-based communications (email), and interactive presentations (PowerPoint). However, it should be noted that since one of company X's target customers are tech companies based on their higher than average rate of foreign employees and shareholders, strategic planners at

Company X would be wise to follow global trends in the technology industry and track its progress in Finland.

Evaluating environmental factors in an external audit is a fairly new and not universal practice that was likely correlated with the recent popularity of sustainability as a business practice. There are no unique environmental aspects of Company X's business. If requested, a paperless approach may be adapted.

There are no unique legal aspects which influence Company X.



#### 4.1.3 Audit Analysis

An audit analysis helps companies to contextualize the information gathered in the internal and external audits. This can be done with a SWOT analysis.

A SWOT analysis can help organizational management to visualize an environment's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A SWOT

analysis can be a useful tool in sorting aspects of an internal and external audit into the context of internal vs external factors. (Jobber, Lancaster 2009)

However, it is crucial to keep in mind while using this tool that a SWOT analysis will not give new information. In this case, the SWOT analysis is a method for conceptualizing the information gathered in the internal and external audits. The goal of a SWOT analysis in this case is not to gather new information for the market analysis. The purpose of this type of analysis, then, is to analyze existing information in a unique way to aid in the next step of the decision-making process.

For Company X, the audit analysis is as follows:

Strengths - A strong position, innovative market niche, and culturally relevant idea will help succeed in the market.

Weaknesses - Limited resources in a beginning company means that competition with larger firms is fierce.

Opportunities - A large and growing international market in Tampere means ever-growing potential customers.

Threats - The market for communication training is not well-established in Finland so success is hard to gauge. There is a responsibility on Company X to make customers aware of their need for service, which is always challenging. The Coronavirus Pandemic is cause for concern as it threatens the entire event industry in Finland and may potentially continue to limit the practical needs of in-person training sessions with group sizes federally mandated.



## 4.2 Marketing Objectives

Marketing objectives will help illustrate the purpose behind each action and create tactics tailored to reach realistic goals. The marketing objectives will follow the MOST format - mission, objectives, strategies, and tasks. (Fat Media, 2019) The MOST format is very similar to the planning process found in Helenius's sales strategy development guide of "objectives, strategies, and tactics". (Helenius, 2019) The picture below shows Helenius's planning process and the proposed link between objectives, strategies, and tactics.

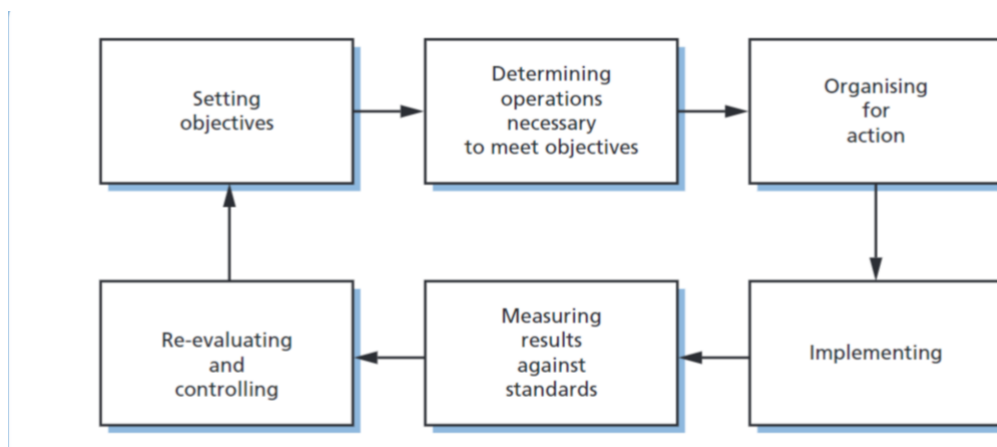
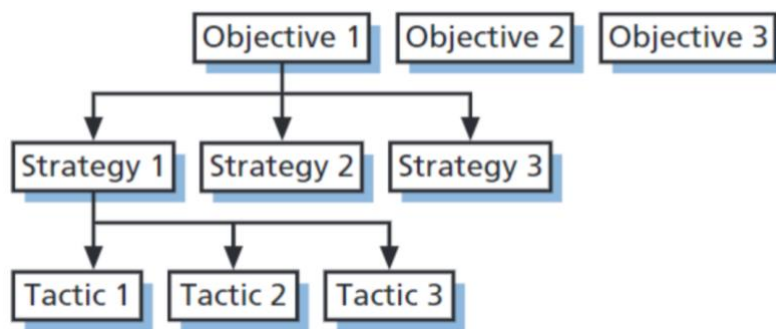


Figure 2 shows the planning process



**Objectives: Where do we intend to go?**

Types – each requires its own strategy

**Strategies: How do we intend to get there?**

Several may be evaluated but only one employed

**Tactics: What is the precise route to be taken?**

There may be several tactics for one strategy

Figure 3 shows the link between objectives, strategies, and tactics

The planning process will empower the development of an outreach strategy. Company X is trying to become the premiere provider of communications trainings in the Tampere region, and eventually the whole country. In this case, the company's value proposition is to bring value to customers through increased efficiency and understanding in communications between a multitude of proven methods. This brings value to the customer by increasing cooperation and trust between employees and clients, leading to less conflict and greater satisfaction. The revenue goals will develop over time as sales skills and experience grow. The ultimate goal for 2021 is to consistently bring in 3 000 euros per month. This is based on the operational budget for Company X. The goal for 2022 is to establish a market position to become the top provider of communications training in the Tampere region by 2030. In 2022, this will include growth. Therefore, the revenue goal for 2022 is to consistently achieve at least 8 000 euros per month. This figure will allow for growth in hiring services needed to expand operations. Therefore, the planning process can be illustrated in the following way:

Objectives

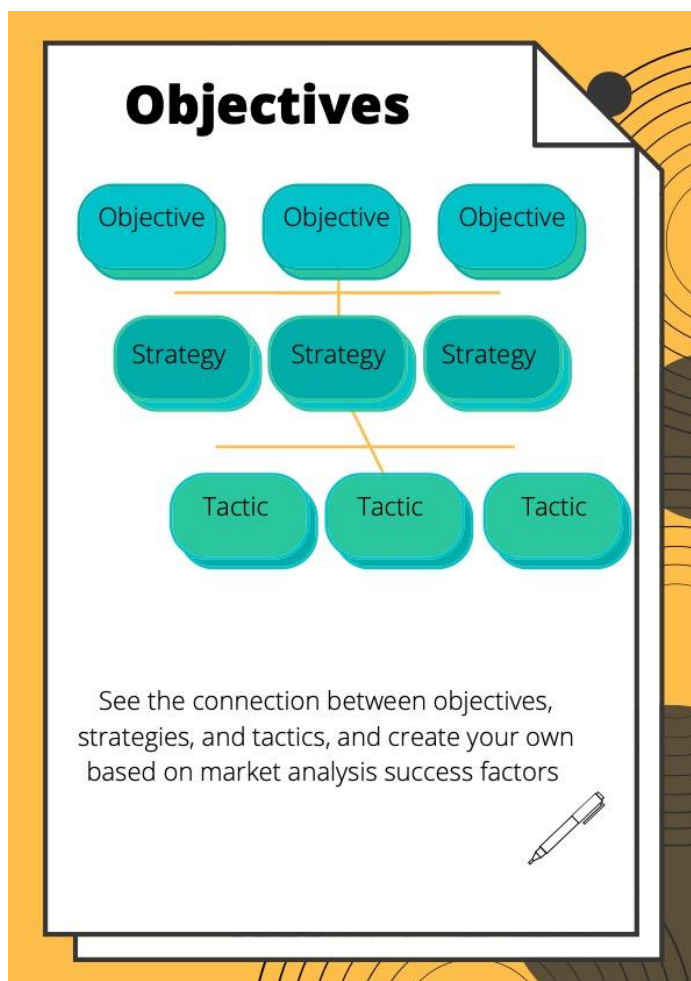
Company X wants to be the premiere provider of communications training in Finland.

### Strategies

Possible strategies include establishing a few high-paying partnerships with select companies, targeting as many companies as possible for lower-cost training, or targeting by industry or size of organization.

### Tactics

Designing a structure of products to be more simple and appealing to the customer, which helps spur clients towards a decision. Overhauling online presence to cement the positioning helps with the goal of establishing image and reputation. Creating appropriate marketing materials to provide potential clients with information during the sales process shows competency in the field of communications.



### 4.3 Outreach Strategy

Sales is divided into inbound and outbound lead generation. Both are included in modern selling and include relationship building but are two separate approaches that should be balanced. However, this project's sales strategy will focus on outreach sales.

The goal of market segmentation is to clearly define the target market from which the seller will attempt to generate leads. The purpose of this practice is to maximize the return of investment that goes along with generating leads and putting prospects through the sales pipeline. Since this is a dynamic strategy, the market segmentation should be updated throughout the year and when there is a change in offering or market conditions.

Market segmentation has a few goals: prioritizing a key amount of target companies to sell to, to keep the seller engaged and not overworked; ability to identify which target companies are potentially the most return for the least effort; identify prospects' needs to ensure marketing efforts prove the product can meet those needs; and create stability in the sales process by focusing on one target group.

The market segmentation will include industry, size, revenue, location, position of the purchaser/decision maker, client base of the prospect, purchase history, and urgency in finding a solution to the problem.

In the Sales Handbook Zero to Hero, the author includes methods to identify the decision making structure of an organization. This is essential information for negotiation, but not for market segmentation. (Anyon, 2010) The sentiment is also in Helenius's 2019 slides, when market and customer analysis cover all mentioned aspects.

The market segmentation analysis for Company X is as follows:

#### **Industry**



Target industries with high rates of foreign employment, including universities/education and IT.

**Size**

The size of the company can be small, if their work relies on communication. Medium or large companies may be better suited for internal communication development services.

**Decision maker's position**

Identify if there is someone who is charge of "employee wellbeing" or "talent retention" or "team skill development." This is likely to be the HR person although they may have a unique job title. This can be determined by looking at the roles of all team leaders, for example on the website or on LinkedIn.

**Purchase history**

Ideally, potential clients will have a history of spending money on employee wellbeing.

**Current solution**

Potential clients may or may not have a current solution to to this problem, but ideally are willing to try many things in the area of employee wellness.

**Revenue**

Customers must have enough revenue to spend on things like employee development.

**Location**

With the covid situation, it is entirely possible that there might be a demand for online trainings. However, Pirkanmaa region is enough to start. Then expand to big cities where there are larger companies - Helsinki, Turku, then later smaller major cities. Rovaniemi, Espoo, Vaasa, Jyväskylä, then even smaller towns like Hämeenlinna, Lahti, etc.

**Customer base**

Company X should target companies with a growing customer base. This will help ensure that companies who seek Company X's services can pay the high sums associated with quality services.

### Urgency in finding solution

Ideally, customers feel a sense of urgency that prepares them for immediate purchase.

Market Segmentation	
Industry	What is your potential client's ... Revenue
Size	Location
Decision maker's position	Customer base
Purchase history	Urgency of finding solution
Current solution to problem	Other

### Customer types

Based on the market segmentation, customer profiles can be created. Customer types are a useful tool in identifying potential prospects because they help decide a realistic manifestation of the ideal qualities found in the market segmentation.

The customer types for Company X are as follows:

Name: Yearly Orientation Group

This group consists of international university programs who are interested in yearly recurring communication and cross-cultural workshops, for example for incoming exchange students.

Name: Internationalizing Company

This group includes large IT firms who have noticed an increase in hiring international talent in recent years, but need assistance in integrating them into company culture. Training would likely be large scale and last several sessions for trust building.

Name: All In This Together Company

This group includes companies which highly value talent retention and takes a holistic approach to working life. These customers are looking to improve their employee's soft skills in a fun and engaging way to aid their high industrial performance.

**Customer Types**

Name	Name	Name
Defining feature	Defining feature	Defining feature
Defining feature	Defining feature	Defining feature

Based on the market segmentation, identify features that qualify a potential client as a strong candidate

#### 4.4 Sales Strategy

The sales strategy is the term used to describe the tactic by which commitment by the potential client is escalated until a sales agreement is reached. The ultimate purpose of the sales strategy is to close deals, however it is a multi-step

process and allows for the possibility of unsuccessful deals to be reintroduced into the sales process at a later date.

The sales strategy is a process that salespeople lead prospects through. (Jobber, Lancaster 2009) It consists of a pre-approach, approach, negotiation, and after-sales process. The aim of each step is to bring qualified prospects through to the next stage. (Rassl, 2019) This can be achieved through a “call to action,” or a small commitment asked by the sales representative of the prospect, which demonstrates the prospect’s willingness, ability, and interest of the service. That means, however, that the sales strategy is a more drawn out and dedicated process than simply cold calling a potential client and proposing a deal. The call to action must be an appropriate but escalating level of commitment as the stages advance.

In the pre-approach stage, sales representatives should gather information about their prospect and empathize with their needs. Regardless of whether the prospect’s name arrived through inbound or outbound lead generation methods, ideally they fit more or less into an ideal customer profile. This information will help tailor sales materials such as presentations, brochures, or videos. The goal in this stage is to establish a positive working relationship that eventually elevates the representative to the role of trusted advisor. (Tyler, Donovan, 2016) At this stage, there is no call to action for the prospect.

The approach stage is when the representative first makes a connection with the prospect. This can be by phone (most common with inbound leads), email, meeting, or a multitude of methods. Predictable Prospecting suggests a several-week multi-touch campaign for securing a connection with an outbound lead that will lead to a negotiation. However in practice, the specifics of an approach are due largely to the ambition, dedication, and personal working style of the sales representative. While multi-touch campaigns are proven by Tyler and Donovan to be more effective than single-method voicemails and emails, it is up to the discretion of the representative and their company how much “chasing” should go into a prospect.

The approach stage points towards the ultimate goal of securing a commitment from the prospect which confirms their interest, ability to pay, and willingness to move forward with a solution. A common example of this is a date set for a negotiation meeting with the expressed desire to learn more about the solution with the intention to buy. The ultimate goal of the approach stage is not to coerce or bully the prospect into switching providers or agreeing to a trial period. It is the foundation of a future working relationship and should be treated appropriately.

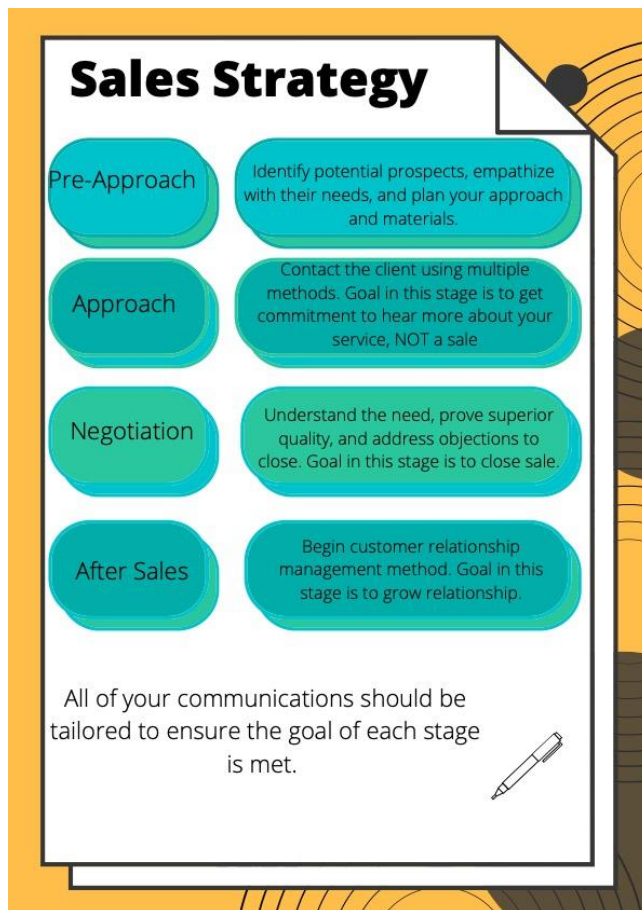
The process of vetting a potential client for interest, ability to pay, and readiness to commit is known as “qualifying” the prospect. Qualified prospects express an eagerness to learn more about a service or solution. Qualified prospects will agree to a negotiation with the intent to purchase. It is however entirely possible that prospects in this stage will be reluctant to answer calls and emails. They may directly state that they are not interested and do not wish to hear about the offering. In that case, it is in the sales representative’s best interest to learn more about why cooperation is not possible at this time. (Tyler, Donovan, 2016) There are limitless answers to this question. Perhaps the employee being targeted for communications does not have decision making power over this purchase and feels uncomfortable continuing the interaction. Perhaps the company has a long-standing contract with the sales representative’s competitor. Perhaps there is an inability to pay, or a similar financial strain which prevents the decision maker from taking any risk at this time. Or perhaps the timing simply isn’t right, and the prospect cannot devote time and energy to exploring a new supplier relationship. In any case, many limiting factors which disqualify a prospect are subject to change over time. The prospect’s contact information should be kept by the sales representative, and the opportunity should be revisited at a later date. If circumstances have changed after several months have passed, the sale may be attempted again.

The negotiation stage of the sales strategy is a conversation between two parties who share a similar goal: to bring maximum value to the potential client while establishing a long-lasting professional relationship. The goal of the negotiation is to close a deal that brings value to both parties, immediately and over time. This is an opportunity for the sales representative to begin the process of establishing themselves as an asset to the client. By taking an advisory role, the

sales representative may be granted more access and influence over time. (Tyler, Donovan 2016) It is the responsibility of the sales representative during the negotiation to ensure that the potential client needs are met, their objections are reassured, and all questions are answered. A successful negotiation may include the use of presentation, prototype, or other visual/informational materials to ensure features of the offering are clear and agreed upon. Especially when selling services, the representative plays an essential role of balancing client needs with providers' abilities. The ultimate goal of a negotiation is a sale. This might be expressed through contract, purchase, or other agreement.

At this point, a sales team's work is not done. The after sales process concludes the sales strategy pipeline. This stage dips into the realm of customer relationship management. Customer relationship management is an essential function necessary for preserving hard-won client relationships. (Jobber, Lancaster 2009)

In practice, customer relationship management methods vary from company to company, across time and departments. Generally, larger companies use customer relationship management software to keep a channel of communication open with past customers through newsletters, special offers, and other messages. A more aggressive approach will depend on the specific goal and strategy of the company in question. Alternative approaches might focus on strengthening the bond with the company's most profitable customers through social events such as lunches, galas, and golf outings.



#### 4.5 Sales Funnel

A well-founded sales strategy can help a company develop their unique sales funnel, or step by step guide to prospect identification, communications, negotiation, and after-sales. The proposed sales strategy for a company in Tampere producing soft skills workshops for corporate clients is as follows:

The main tasks involved in the pre-approach are to generate quality leads and plan an approach. Company X ideally has a reputation in Tampere and an attractive online presence which encourages visitors to get in touch. The leads that willingly give their personal information for future contact are known as inbound leads. Outbound leads can be found through a variety of methods including referrals, trade directories, independent online search, or even rented lists or third party calls. However, rented lists and third party cold callers (telemarketing) are rarely received positively by prospects <predictable prospecting> Company X in this case will focus outbound lead generation on referrals and an in-house list compiled from ongoing research of trade directories

and online search methods. Prospects will be chosen on factors illustrated by the market segmentation and customer types.

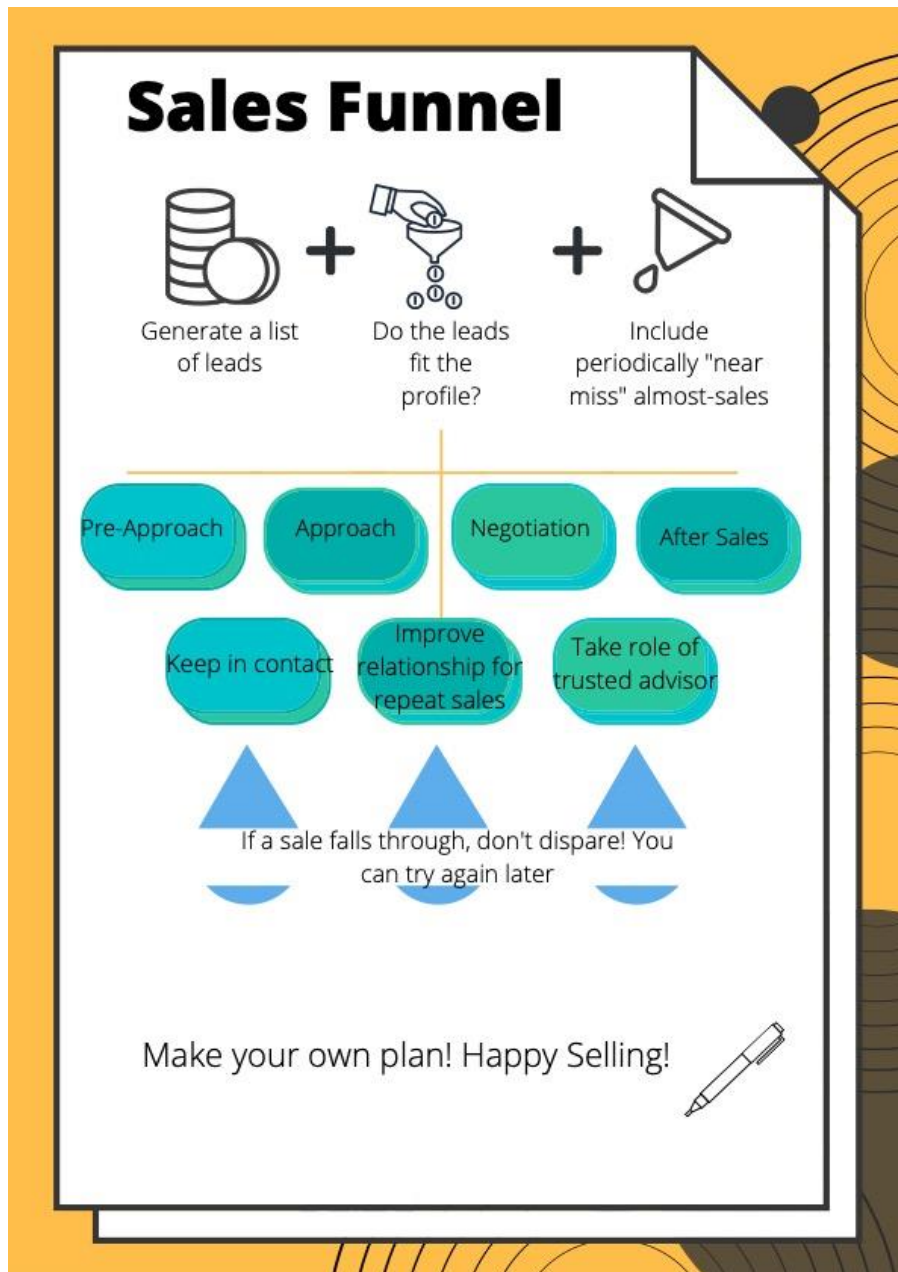
Another strategic choice that will vary from company to company is the volume of new prospects that are targeted, as well as on what basis (weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc). Company X has set monthly sales goals based on their goals, chosen tactics, projected market success factors, and abilities. For example, Company X has a 2021 sales goal of consistently earning 3 000 euros per month. Some of this will be from new sales, and some perhaps from recurring events, for example, a trust building workshop as part of a client's yearly employee retreat. It is a strategic decision, then, how to ensure that the monthly sales goals are met. Company X will examine their average sales conversion rate - the rate at which prospects eventually sign contracts. Assume that the rate for Company X is currently 5%. Assume that executives at Company X have determined that a minimum of 1 500€ per month should consist of new deals. Assume that the average first-time purchase for Company X's largest demographic earns the company 750€. Therefore, Company X should aim to sell at least two standard workshops per month. With a conversion rate of 5%, Company X should contact a minimum of 40 new prospects to meet sales projections.

The approach step for Company X would involve a tailored outbound campaign. Predictable Prospecting outlines many excellent multi-touch outbound campaigns. In essence, a successful and efficient outbound campaign should be built around a few features: it should be personal, it should utilize multiple contact channels, and it should be spread across several days. One example in Predictable Prospecting even goes to 13 business days. Outbound campaigns should be designed with the purpose of qualifying prospects.

Company X's negotiation strategy is to reassure quality, answer questions, and inspire confidence in the upcoming training session. Sales representatives are armed with materials including testimonials, evidence of past success, and fresh ideas based on the client's pain points. Discussion about price should be open and flexible - clients should feel confident that they can achieve a solution that fits their needs regardless of budget size.



Company X's after sales program includes client and participant feedback, inclusion in an optional mailing list, and a close relationship with the purchaser. The goal of the after sales stage is to ensure that Company X's sales representative is aware of events, conferences, and social happenings hosted by the client, and is prepared to offer tailored services at every turn.



## **5 IMPLEMENTATION**

This portion of the thesis is specifically to guide potential companies in the implementation of the suggested methods. This section gives views and suggestions in more specific terms. The aim of this section is to illustrate how companies can successfully integrated the proposed methods with other pre-existing operations in the same company.

One of the most important assets to a sales department is obviously the sales team. The necessities required to establish a sales team must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Many companies, especially small companies that are most often seen in Finland, are already selling their services in some form or another. Some companies may even have dedicated service staff on hand.

The need to hire or retrain staff depends on the structure of the company in question. The amount and duties of existing employees, the history of selling in the company, and how dramatic of a shift the new venture is will all contribute.

Other contributing factors will be practical implementation of new working methods and budgeting.

### **5.1 Workforce**

Some questions to consider regarding sales workforce expansion and training include:

- Are you building a company from the ground up, or are you introducing a new method of sales to an established product?
- Is your staff taking on additional responsibilities, working smarter vs harder, or are you onboarding new employees?
- What is the role of the company's current employees? How do they spend their time in an average week?

Jobber and Lancaster propose an equation for calculating the amount of sales representatives needed in a company. Essentially, this equation involves multiplying the number of customers by the call frequency for each customer group (grouped by profit), and dividing that by the annual call rate relative to working weeks per year.

For Company X, we can assume for example's sake that each of the ideal three customer groups naturally falls into a profit-based customer group. For the equation we will assume that the total annual workload for Company X is 36 000€ per year, an estimate based on the 2021 goal of 3 000 € monthly. If we assume that each salesperson in Company X is expected contact 50 leads week, and estimate 43 working weeks in a year (accounting for holidays, etc), we are left with 1,6 sales people. At that rate, the business model is sustainable with one full and one part time employee.

When it comes to hiring, there are several schools of thought. One popular method is to use specific aptitude tests to check for suitability as a salesperson. (Tyler, Donovan, 2016) Of course this is a useful strategy especially if you are going for the cheaper option of hiring less experienced sales representatives. This does not however diminish the importance of providing the sales team with everything they need, from competent management to reliable technology to encouraging benefits.

In practice, this means balancing the salaries, development measures, and results of the sales team.

The most common forms of compensation can be described in three methods: salary, commission, or salary with commission. Sales Development Playbook strongly discourages automatically choosing the cheapest salary option. It disrupts company culture and ultimately preps the sales team to move on to more lucrative positions with competitors. A more wise suggestion includes keeping the compensation plans open communication and empowering employees to feel that they are in charge of their own destinies. (Bertuzzi, 2016)

The Sales Development Playbook also highlights the importance of viewing the onboarding of new employees as a process, not an event. Onboarding new employees - or potentially in this case, adapting a new working method - should be an ongoing process that is seen as an opportunity for identifying the best in each candidate's future journey with the company. (Bertuzzi, 2016)

## **5.2 Budget**

Every action undertaken by a company must be empowered by the budget. Possible costs in this case include advertising, market research, marketing, lead generation, etc. Striking the right budget is a challenge in any case, but compounded by the realities of uncertainty when implementing a new working method.

The budgeting should always be appropriate to each action in relation to the future monetary benefit expected from the action. For example, the budget for sales materials should be based on several factors with the idea that the return of investment will be additional sales.

Setting appropriate quotas for sales representatives is one method to get a better idea of available profits for budgeting in the long term. Computer software is a useful method for estimating sales over time.

## 6 DEVELOPMENT

Success in selling is clear when well-defined goals are consistently being set, the market is expanding, market share is growing, and revenue is stable. However, there are possible issues that can arise for companies looking to implement a new sales strategy.

If companies are suffering from a low sales conversion rate, it is worth a second look at the market segmentation and targeting methods. The sales strategy is a roadmap to success, but it is entirely possible that there would be missing pieces or incorrect assumptions which lead to long term failure. Going through the steps and examining every aspect for possible failures is crucial to the development of the project over time.

If a problem is found with the amount of clients that are committing to a sale, or sales conversion rate, the project itself must be validated. Is there a strong market need, and is the solution practical and economical enough to challenge competitors? Is targeting being done correctly, or is there ambiguity regarding the communication between provider and prospect? And finally, is there possibly a problem with the methods used by sales representatives in pursuing their goal?

If all of these have been checked, company leaders should analyze the sales pipeline from the prospects' point of view. Where in the pipeline are sales being lost? Are there aspects of customer service that should be improved? Are customers rushed through a negotiation and ultimately unhappy with the service provided? Or are satisfied customers of certain customer groups ignored after services are rendered, thus leaving a huge pool of potential repeat customers in the cold?

The experience of sales representatives should also be analyzed, as the employee experience will greatly impact the efficiency of a company. Concerned company leaders should find non-threatening ways to get honest answers from their employees, even if it means bringing in a nonpartial third party. Are employees empowered to make sales, or do they feel resentful at what they deem as a lack of fulfillment or encouragement? This might come from company

culture, a limiting compensation plan that fails to reward excellence, or any other issue which may shift salespeople's focus away from their task.

## DISCUSSION

Organization brings clarity to all operations, and selling is no different. By planning for success, companies of all sizes can empower themselves with the information needed to profit in a competitive global marketplace.

This thesis, as well as the accompanying sales handbook, draws upon a multitude of influences and strategically combines the similar suggestions found across publications to simplify and clarify underlying sales theory. This information is expressed in a useful form – in this case, the handbook's canvases.

The trends present in the Finnish marketplace, as well as factors related to Finnish working life such as culture, presented a need for the B2B service – namely, communications workshops. The market was validated and segmented with an internal and external audit, and the most important factors from those and their potential influence were mapped with an audit analysis. From this information, specific tactics were chosen to help achieve strategic objectives. The customer was identified and the problem was analysed, and this information was applied to a sales strategy model. The sales strategy and its contributing factors were illustrated through the sales funnel for a “big picture” outlook on the future sales decisions.

Further suggestions continued in the thesis, detailing the implementation and development strategies potential company leaders can use when applying the handbook's method.

As with all changes, there is an initial investment required before long-term benefits can be seen. However, the purpose of the thesis and handbook is not to simply increase sales for small business owners – it is a guide for existing businesses to fundamentally change their strategy to focus more intensely on securing sales. For those who have proven their service's validity and market influence, it is a roadmap to the next stage of expansion. By understanding not only the service, but its place in the market and its unique value position, more clear goals can be set and achieved. Success is more likely when there is

purpose – a deep understanding of where the company is going, and why/when decision makers can expect results.

Investment in sales strategy and planning as well as a change in company structure to support the long-term goals allows business owners to take the fate of selling big into their own hands.



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## APPENDICES

The Sales Success Handbook

# The Sales Success Handbook

Canvases for Clarity  
by Monica Sissala



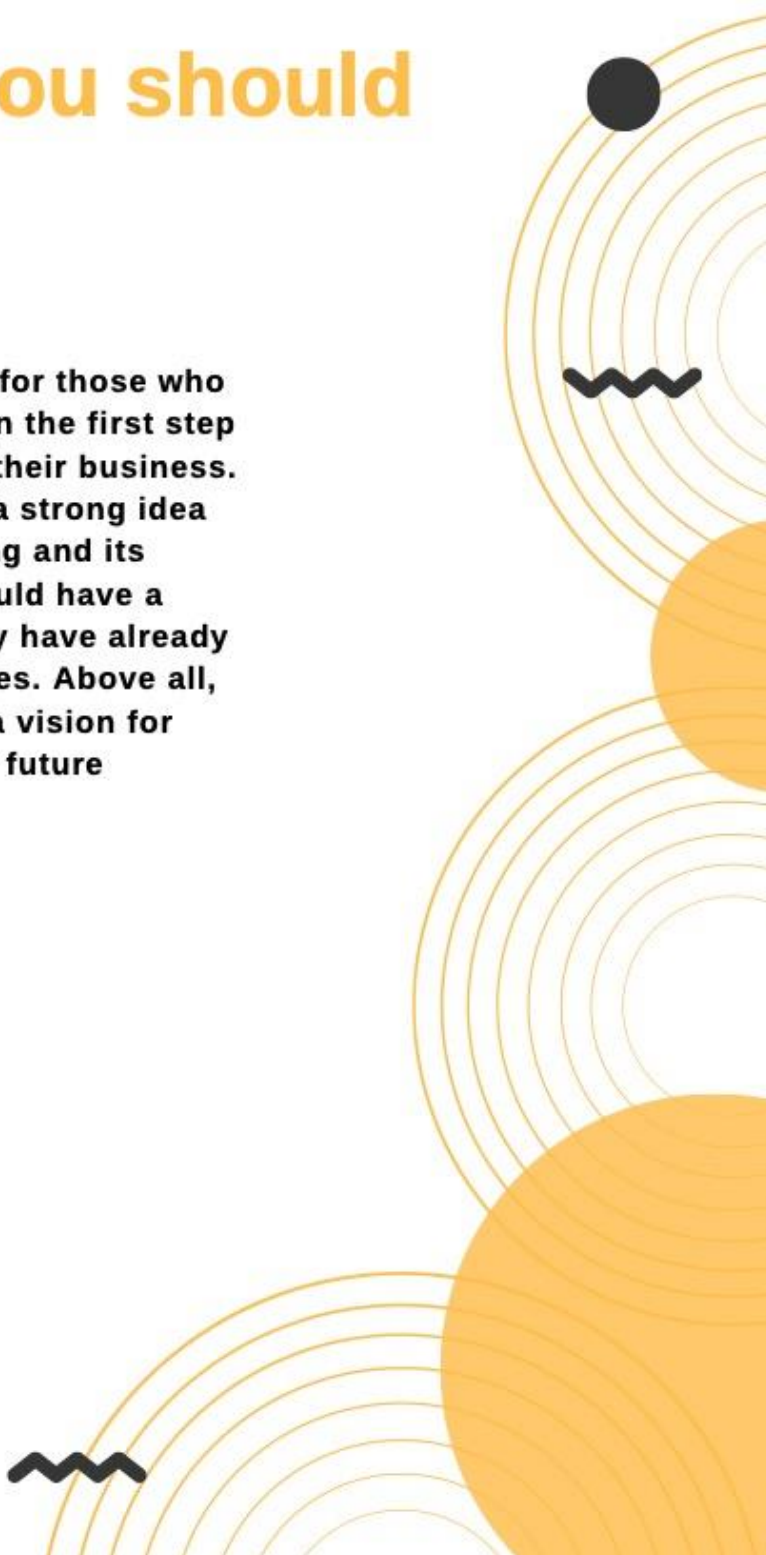
## Who it's for

**This handbook is useful to you if you have an established business or validated business idea but need an extra push to enter the world of sales. Maybe you are quickly discovering that your passion for your product does not translate to sales competency and know-how. This handbook offers worksheets to help you make sense out of sales and design your own strategy and pipeline. This handbook works best for B2B startups offering services, but many principles of sales stay true no matter who you are or who you sell to! The strategies pertain to an outbound sales approach.**



# What you should know

**This handbook is for those who have already taken the first step into establishing their business. You should have a strong idea about your offering and its benefits. You should have a budget and ideally have already began making sales. Above all, you should have a vision for yourself and your future success.**



# Market Analysis

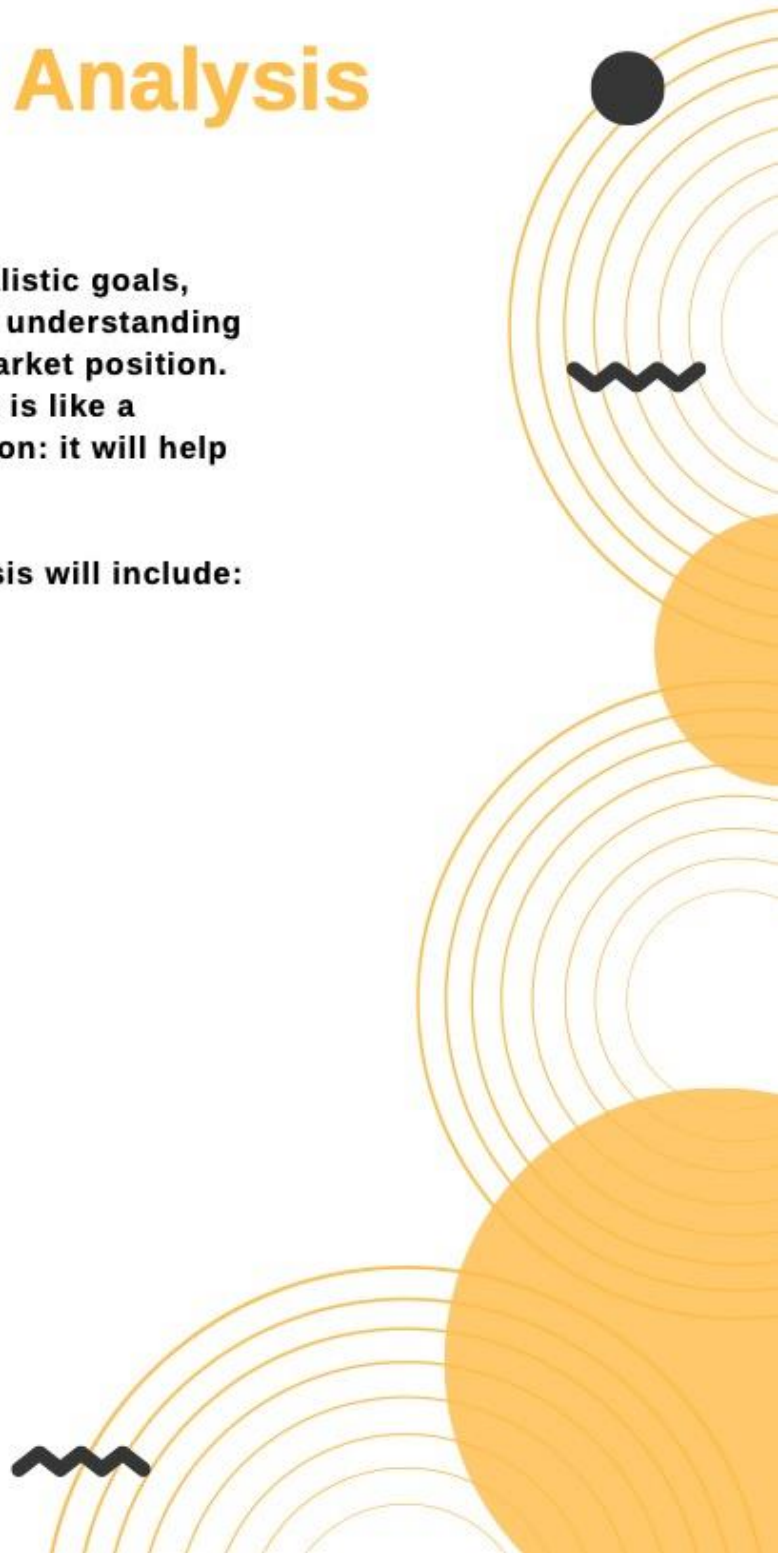
**In order to set realistic goals,  
you must have an understanding  
of your current market position.  
A market analysis is like a  
compass's direction: it will help  
you find North.**

**The market analysis will include:**

**Internal audit**

**External audit**

**Audit analysis**

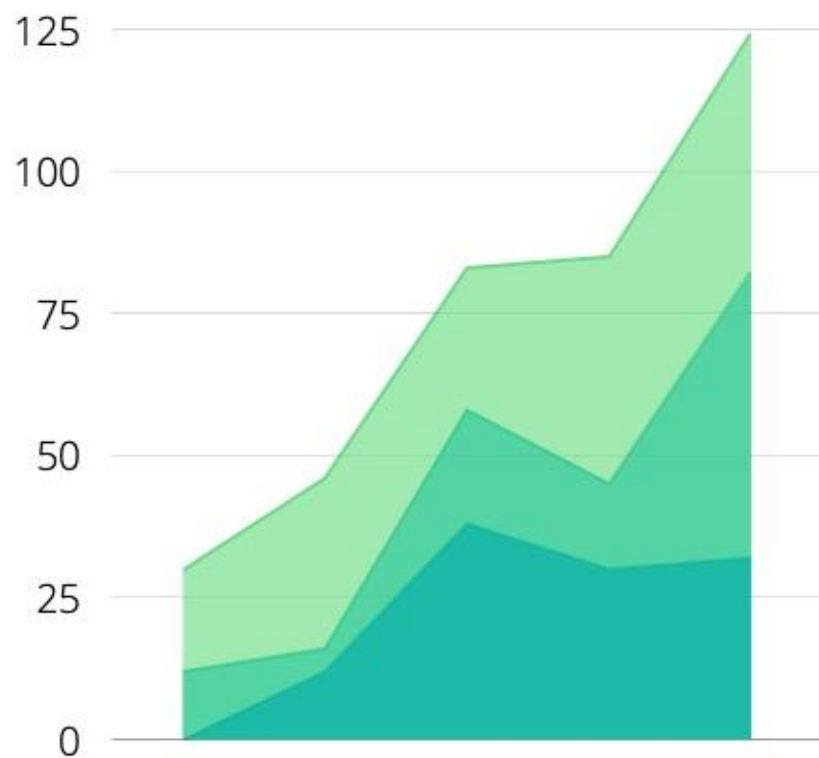




# Internal Audit

Market Size - Customer Needs

Marketing Mix - Competition



What is the size of the surrounding market and it's growth potential?





## Internal Audit Cont

Market Size - **Customer Needs**

Marketing Mix - Competition



What are the unmet needs that will drive customers to your service?



## Internal Audit Cont

Market Size - Customer Needs

Marketing Mix - Competition

**Price** - What does the price signal to customers?

**Product** - quality and relevance to customer

**Promotion** - how is advertising used?

**Place** - Where and how is it sold?

**Packaging** - what mood does it awaken?

**Positioning** - how should the public think of you?

**People** - what relationships empower  
your solution?

What is your strategy for all 7 aspects, and  
which are the most critical for success?



## Internal Audit Cont

Market Size - Customer Needs

Marketing Mix - **Competition**



How are potential customers currently meeting their needs?



# External Audit

## PESTLE Analysis

### Political

How is the government likely to influence the market or industry?

### Technical

Does supporting technology exist/is it readily available?

### Economic

Does the economy create a likelihood of success?

### Legal

Are there limiting legal factors at play?

### Social

Trends, holidays, or other temporary change in purchasing behavior (Christmas, summer holidays)

### Environmental

Does your product suit current sustainability standards?

Brainstorm factors outside of your control for each of the six aspects



# Audit Analysis

## SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Opportunities

Weaknesses

Threats

Use insights from the market analysis to prioritize



# Marketing Objectives

**In order to set plan future actions, you must understand how your objectives can lead to real results. The following worksheet can help with that. Keep in mind the purpose of your business: what is its vision, value proposition, and revenue goals? Brainstorm objectives and ultimately design tactics to help you reach your goals.**





# Objectives



See the connection between objectives, strategies, and tactics, and create your own based on market analysis success factors



# Outreach Strategy

**Much of the success of selling comes from the ability to identify and get in touch with the perfect client. The next worksheets will help you to define your market segmentation and identify potential clients in your area who fit that description.**





## Market Segmentation

What is your potential client's ...

Industry

Revenue

Size

Location

Decision maker's position

Customer base

Purchase history

Urgency of finding  
solution

Current solution to  
problem

Other

# Customer Types

Name

Name

Name

Defining  
feature

Defining  
feature

Defining  
feature

Defining  
feature

Defining  
feature

Defining  
feature

Based on the market segmentation,  
identify features that qualify a potential  
client as a strong candidate



# Sales Strategy

**Your sales strategy will be your guide to using the tactics defined in the marketing objectives. The sales strategy includes the steps you need to keep in mind when approaching potential clients. It serves as a series of landmarks on your journey. In every interaction with a potential client, you should seek to move them to the next step in the sales strategy. If this cannot be done, they are not prepared to purchase and probably cannot be convinced. In future chapters we will discuss how to manage disqualified prospects, but first, explore the sales strategy.**



# Sales Strategy

## Pre-Approach

Identify potential prospects, empathize with their needs, and plan your approach and materials.

## Approach

Contact the client using multiple methods. Goal in this stage is to get commitment to hear more about your service, NOT a sale

## Negotiation

Understand the need, prove superior quality, and address objections to close. Goal in this stage is to close sale.

## After Sales

Begin customer relationship management method. Goal in this stage is to grow relationship.

All of your communications should be tailored to ensure the goal of each stage is met.





# Sales Funnel

**Every aspect of this handbook comes together to form the big picture of your sales operations - your sales funnel. The sales funnel can help you visualize the sales process. Think of it like a machine: when you input leads chosen based on your customer types, the sales strategy works as parts or methods to create sales using your planned tactics. The result is a range of clients whose business will help your company reach its full potential while protecting it from market weaknesses and competitor threats.**



# Sales Funnel



Generate a list  
of leads

+



Do the leads  
fit the  
profile?

+



Include  
periodically "near  
miss" almost-sales

Pre-Approach

Approach

Negotiation

After Sales

Keep in contact

Improve  
relationship for  
repeat sales

Take role of  
trusted advisor



If a sale falls through, don't dispare! You  
can try again later

Make your own plan! Happy Selling!



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