
CUSTOMER ACQUISITION AND PURCHASING PROCESS

A case study at TTT Technology Corp.



Bachelor's thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis was commissioned by TTT Technology Corp., a company where I am currently working. The topic of this thesis is customer acquisition and purchasing process and the theories of both are examined here.

This fall, a project started at TTT Technology, where the objective was to expand the product portfolio of the company. I am a part of this project and the preparations for as well as the launching of the project are documented in this paper.

The objective was to evaluate the process as a whole and to acquire more knowledge by comparing the theoretical aspects to the practical process. Theories of customer relationship management and supply chain management were examined closely in this thesis project.

The practical connection was accomplished through a case study; the project started with a practical training period, which is documented in this paper. The experiences of the training period as well as multiple interviews were used as data for the research.

As a result, the training period was found to have been successful and highly beneficial. The negotiations with customers are still in progress, but the project has nevertheless got off to a good start. The results of the interviews indicated that customer relations are also handled successfully at TTT Technology.

In conclusion, the project stands at an introductory phase at the moment and further progress will be made in the coming weeks and months. Negotiations with customers will take place and only after that can the success of the project truly be measured.

Keywords Customer acquisition, purchasing process, customer relationship management, supply chain management, TTT Technology Corp.

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän työn toimeksiantaja oli yritys nimeltä TTT Technology Oy Ab, jossa olen tällä hetkellä töissä. Työn aihe oli uuden asiakkaan hankkiminen ja ostoprosessi.

Tänä syksynä TTT Technology aloitti projektin, jonka tarkoituksena oli laajentaa yrityksen tuotevalikoimaa sekä asiakaskuntaa. Olen itse osana tätä projektia, jonka valmistelut ja aloitus on esitelty tässä työssä.

Työn tavoite oli arvioida prosessia kokonaisuudessaan, sekä hankkia lisätietoa vertaamalla teoreettista tietoa aiheesta käytännön prosesseihin. Asiakassuhteiden sekä toimitusketjun hallinnan teoriat ovat esiteltynä tässä tutkimuksessa.

Yhteys käytäntöön on saavutettu dokumentoimalla koulutusjakso, jolla koko projekti alkoi. Tämän koulutusjakson kokemukset sekä useat haastattelut toivat lisämateriaalia työhön.

Koulutusjakso todettiin toimivaksi ja erittäin hyödylliseksi projektin kannalta. Neuvottelut uusien asiakkaiden kanssa ovat vielä kesken, mutta projekti on lähtenyt hyvin käyntiin. Haastattelut osoittivat, että asiakassuhteiden hallinnassa yrityksessä ei ole merkittäviä ongelmia.

Yhteenvedona, projekti on vielä alkuvaiheessa ja se tulee edistymään tulevana viikkoina ja kuukausina. Neuvottelujen jälkeen koko projektin onnistuminen on paremmin arvioitavissa.

Avainsanat Asiakkaan hankkiminen, ostoprosessi, asiakassuhteiden hallinta, toimitusketju, TTT Technology Oy Ab

Sivut 42 p.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background information and objectives of study	1
1.2	Research question and research methods	1
1.3	Company introductions	2
1.3.1	TTT Technology Oy Ab	2
1.3.2	IKS Klingelberg	4
1.3.3	Rolf Meyer GmbH.....	5
2	THEORY.....	6
2.1	Customer acquisition and retention.....	7
2.1.1	Customer relationship management at TTT Technology Corp.....	12
2.2	Purchasing process.....	18
2.2.1	Supply chain management	20
3	TRAINING.....	24
3.1	Rolf Meyer, Bargteheide, Germany	24
3.1.1	Summary and relation to theory	25
3.2	Product training and customer visits, Bavaria, Germany	26
3.2.1	Printing techniques	26
3.2.2	Doctor blades	28
3.2.3	Printing process and spare parts	30
3.2.4	Customer visits	33
3.2.5	Summary and relation to theory	34
3.3	IKS Klingelberg, Remscheid, Germany	35
3.3.1	Paper processing.....	35
3.3.2	Post press	36
3.3.3	Tissue paper	37
3.3.4	Summary and relation to theory	38
4	CONCLUSION.....	38
	SOURCES	41

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information and objectives of study

The topic of this thesis was about acquiring a new customer and looking into the purchasing processes of a company, a case study with TTT Technology Corp. and its customers.

TTT Technology started a new project this fall. The purpose of this project was to expand TTT's business and product portfolio by adding new key clients from the field of printing industry. As a result of this and other key projects, for example in the metal industry, TTT headquarters in Toijala are set to become a new business centre for the IKS Klingelberg Group. This project is examined in this study.

The incentive for this project came from inside the IKS Klingelberg group, the parent company of TTT Technology. The preparations for the project included the author of this thesis undergoing training in Germany at the facilities of Rolf Meyer GmbH and then starting working as a sales manager at TTT, being responsible for selling Rolf Meyer products in Finland. Rolf Meyer GmbH is also a part of the IKS Klingelberg Group. They manufacture various products for the printing and packaging industries. The expansion process at TTT included taking over several existing customers to give them more focus and time from TTT, and entering negotiations with a few new, potential key customers, about selling them the products of Rolf Meyer.

The objective of this study was to evaluate how this project was conducted at TTT Technology and in the end result as a 'manual', which could be used as a base for similar future projects.

1.2 Research question and research methods

The main research question was how to implement a product portfolio expansion in a company. This paper examines and presents how TTT Technology started to implement this particular project.

This thesis first starts by looking into the theories of acquiring new customers from a seller's point of view and the purchasing processes from a buyer's point of view. Personal preparations for the seller are presented in a case study form. Personnel at TTT were interviewed to find out how customer relationships were managed at TTT. Theories of supply and demand chain management were looked into concerning the purchasing side of things. The theoretical part contains data gathered from various literary sources.

The key to successful negotiations either with key, or any other customers, is to get to know the other company well and especially what drives their

purchasing processes, what constitutes value for them. After having had negotiations with customers, analyses can be made to develop the relationships towards a desired direction. Value creation is also covered in the theory chapter.

Before entering any negotiations, the sellers have to prepare themselves. In this thesis the preparation phase was covered as the training part in Germany. The author of this thesis travelled to Rolf Meyer in Bargteheide on September 19 in 2011 and received there basic training on the company's products. The period also included visiting several of Rolf Meyer's customers with their sales representative in Southern Germany to see more of their products in daily use. The following week further theory training at IKS Klingelberg headquarters in Remscheid was conducted, concerning paper industry products and theory.

The research method used to gather data from the training period was participatory observation, where the author of this study observed and documented the findings. More data was gathered through various interviews and from different presentations. After all the training had taken place, the actual process of visiting the existing customers started and negotiations with new customers were commenced.

1.3 Company introductions

To give a better understanding of this thesis as a whole, at first the related companies are introduced. In summary, TTT Technology and Rolf Meyer GmbH are both a part of the IKS Klingelberg Group. The commissioning company for the thesis is TTT Technology. The part of the training for the project that took place in Germany, was in Rolf Meyer's as well as in IKS Klingelberg's facilities.

The products that are the target of the product portfolio expansion are manufactured in Germany, mainly at Rolf Meyer. TTT is then responsible for selling the products in Finland. The amount of customers using Rolf Meyer's products in Finland at the moment is about ten. The target is to add two to three big customers to that list, as well as increasing the sales of the existing customers. Due to adding a new sales manager for TTT, the existing customers will get more attention and focus, and therefore increased sales are expected.

1.3.1 TTT Technology Oy Ab

This company introduction can be found from TTT's own website www.ttt.fi.

TTT Technology Corp. is one of the leading manufacturers of high-quality customized cutting tools, wear parts and related services for the woodworking industry. Leading end-users around the world in the sawmill, pulp, plywood and veneer industries, along with major OEMs,

have relied on TTT solutions for 50 years. Currently TTT's cutting tools are annually used worldwide in over 50 countries.

TTT produces cutting tools for all machine types, makes and models. TTT's main products include chipper and flaker knives and wear parts for chippers, circular saw blades for cross cutting and ripping, knives for plywood lathe and veneer slicer, and hard-coated machine components.

TTT is located in Finland, one of the global leaders in the forest industry. TTT's state-of-the-art plant in Toijala is equipped with modern heat treatment systems and CNC machinery. Quality is assured through a certified ISO 9001 Quality System since 1993.

The company's products are marketed under TTT trademark. The triple T emblem is well recognized and associated with reliability and individuality and it has become a symbol of quality and know-how for products and services, which must deliver absolute performance even in the most extreme conditions. The logo is illustrated in Figure 1. TTT trademark is an essential part of our Tailored by TTT brand.

From September 2005 the company has been integrated into the IKS Klingelberg Group.



Figure 1 The TTT-logo, from www.ttt.fi

The company was founded in 1961 as Terätuote Oy in Toijala, the first products were chipper and veneer knives. After ten years, a sales office was established in the USA, two years later also production started in the USA. In 1975 a plant was established in Outokumpu, where flaker knives production started. Also the production of TCT Sawblades started in Toijala. In 1982 sales offices expanded to Germany and France. In 1985 Hackman became the owner of TTT and three years later the company became Hackman TTT.

In 2000 Hackman TTT became TTT Technology and by that time sales offices at France and Germany were closed. In autumn 2005 TTT Technology was sold to IKS Klingelberg Group. In 2009 the Outokumpu plant was closed and its production was removed to Toijala. In 2010 the company was awarded the ISO 9001:2008 Quality system certificate by DNV.

Currently the company employs about 170 people in its headquarters in Toijala, illustrated in Figure 2. The turnover was 15,7 million Euros in

2010. The company works very internationally, as the share of export sales is 49% and the company has continuous export deliveries to over 50 countries.



Figure 2 TTT Technology Corp., Toijala. Picture from www.ttt.fi

1.3.2 IKS Klingelberg

This company introduction can be found from www.interknife.com.

The name IKS Klingelberg stands for a globally operating group of companies, which manufactures machine knives and machine elements for the paper, wood, metal, plastics, rubber and recycling industry.

In 1863, the company was found as trading firm. The production of machine knives was started in 1908. In 1991 IKS Klingelberg GmbH emerged as an independent group, and the company has since made numerous acquisitions and establishments to gain its current status. The registered office of the group, which cultivates worldwide business relations, is located in Remscheid. The group operates production sites in Germany, Austria, Finland and China.

The distribution of the products is effected by sales representatives, affiliates, joint venture partners and agencies. Long as well as round machine knives for all existing cutting systems and almost all materials to be cut are manufactured and sold.

Continuous research regarding the further development of materials and production processes as well as decades of experience have made IKS Klingelberg, illustrated in Figure 3, a global player and one of the greatest knife specialists.

Under its umbrella more than one dozen companies in 11 countries in Europe, America and Asia and numerous marketing and service companies operate on an international basis. The IKS Klingelberg group, illustrated in Figure 4, develops, manufactures and sells machine knives for various industries.

Whereas TTT's main area is the wood industry, inside the IKS Klingelberg Group the paper division is the largest.



Figure 3 IKS Klingelberg GmbH, Remscheid. Picture from www.interknife.com

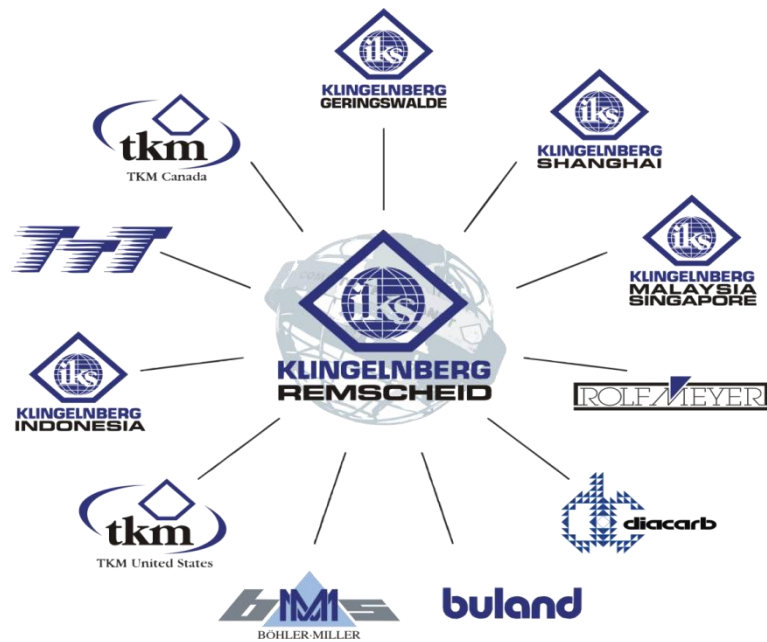


Figure 4 The IKS Klingelberg Group, from www.interknife.com

1.3.3 Rolf Meyer GmbH

This company presentation can be found in its entirety from www.rolfmeyer.de

We are a manufacturer of pre-ground doctor blades, high performance knives and replacement parts for the printing and packing industries. We are aware that we do not merely produce and sell high precision products. Our customers are searching for more and expect more:

- Trust
- Security / Safety
- Reliability

With us, not only creative and expert competency awaits you, but also a readiness to provide service, partnership and personal service.

As an international company, we concentrate on the illustration and package printing business fields. In these areas we are building on 40 years of expertise. Similar to the way in which we concentrated our efforts on German and European markets from 1970 onwards, we have developed into a global player.

We see our focus as a promising model. From this strong position, we are making advances for our customers that ensure competitive advantages. Many well-known printing machine manufacturers and internationally orientated groups of companies already trust us on quality. We want to ensure this trust for the future and to continue to grow in the market.

Since 1997 Rolf Meyer GmbH, illustrated in Figure 5, has been a part of the IKS Klingelberg Group.

Further introduction of the company can be found from the training part, chapter 3.1 of this paper.



Figure 5 Rolf Meyer GmbH, Bargteheide. Picture from www.rolfmeyer.de

2 THEORY

For theoretical background in this thesis, both the selling and purchasing perspectives were examined. Even though the commissioning company is in the role of a seller, it is vital to be aware of the factors for successful business also from a buyer's point-of-view.

For the seller's part, extensive training and preparations need to take place. In addition this paper examines the customer relationship management aspect in order to keep the customers for a long time and also to nurture existing customer relationships.

The training period is compared to the parts presented in the theory chapters and summarised to see whether the training period was successful

and accurate or whether a different training period should be conducted in the future.

Three interviews were conducted with the Sales and Marketing Director of TTT, in December 2010, March 2011 and November 2011, concerning the customer relationship management in the company. The results of these interviews are also presented in this paper to show the current situation and possible changes that are planned to take place.

In the area of customer relationship management, different terms such as customer loyalty, customer lifetime value, customer retention, customer insight and customer equity are examined.

For the purchasing process, theories of supply chain management and demand chain management are examined. Understanding the different parts that are included into the purchasing process makes the preparation work easier for the seller.

The key for successful negotiations is understanding what constitutes value for customers. It is efficient to focus on the target area that will most likely lead to good results. Understanding the role of the purchaser gives the seller better competencies for getting engaged to negotiations.

The seller has to understand the supply chain management processes and acknowledge them for both parties of the negotiations in order to offer intriguing incentives and to make the customers see the benefits in buying the products.

2.1 Customer acquisition and retention

To thrive and prosper in today's competitive business environment, whether an organisation is commercial, public or not-for-profit, everything an organisation does has to be focused on the needs of its customers – if customers do not get what they want, they will go elsewhere (Whalley & Headon 2001, 5).

Customer loyalty is of course an aspired target for all sellers, as keeping your customers is more often than not cheaper than acquiring a new one. Marketing, advertising, giving free samples and personalising your service – they all have their costs. Therefore keeping your customers once you have acquired them is preferred.

The cost of acquiring a new customer is something each sales and marketing director wants to know. This can sometimes be difficult to find out, but it has been made easier through interactive marketing. The fact remains, that replacing a lost customer is many times more expensive than keeping your old customers.

First impressions create expectations, and expectations die hard. Prospective customers making their first contact with your company should immediately decide that they are in the right place. A few glitches

later on in the relationship will be brushed aside as exceptions to the rule that the customer has invented. (Hakala 2008.)

Once you have created the relationship and created trust between you and the customer, mistakes are more easily forgiven (Tuomola 2010). Therefore the beginning and first impressions are very important for the long-term future of customer relationships.

The seller has to get to know the customer and their preferences. Some customers might value friendly and personalised customer service so high that they would forgive some deficiencies in for example costs or delivery times. The sooner you can discover what a customer values, the sooner you can deliver it and build loyalty. (Hakala 2008.)

Building customer loyalty can be conducted in several ways. The seller can offer incentives to keep the customer coming back in forms of for example giving every tenth purchase free of charge. Here again, knowing your customers' preferences is significant, so that you offer the right kind of incentives.

Customer loyalty brings benefits for both the seller and the customer. The customer can better anticipate incoming orders if he has a long experience with all his customers. The ability to anticipate demand means clear savings in for example stocks and therefore also the costs. For the customer, this can mean a steadier and shorter delivery time for each order.

Long relationships bring benefits to the practical side of everyday business. Processing orders from the same customer many times brings routine and the contact persons get to know each other. This makes the duties of all the persons working in the chain easier. Having a steady customer can also bring you a price advantage, as the customer is less likely to bargain for every purchase he makes. One-time customers might need more incentives in the form of discounts, but for steady customers a reasonable price level is easier to sustain.

Prioritising your key customers will bring you benefits but also problems. The other customers may feel neglected if they notice that other customers are being seen as more important than them. This of course varies hugely in different fields of business. Prioritising a customer in a restaurant is clearly seen by the other customers, whereas placing a key customer's order first in a production line in a manufacturing company can be more easily hidden behind various reasons. Of course, if your key customer brings in ten times the orders as the other customer, prioritising is smart and beneficial. The seller has to be aware of when and who to prioritise.

Acknowledging cultural differences is very important for sellers and for customer service. A Finn doing business with a Finn might often be quite casual, whereas if the customer comes from China, there will surely be differences. The seller cannot talk and dress the same, casual way if he wishes to be seen as a serious and viable salesman.

The characteristics of today's customers are rather different from those that were obtained when many current business models were first developed. Customers are supposedly better, and in many cases, more widely educated. They have the opportunity to be better informed, and are often more aware of their moral, civil and legal rights. (Whalley & Headon 2001, 12.)

For example comparisons between competing suppliers are easy and quick to make thanks to the modern information society. A quick online search will give customers valuable information for comparing flight tickets, restaurants' prices, furniture etc. Suppliers have to be aware that customers are more aware than before and this makes convincing customers more difficult.

When beginning a relationship with a customer, key contributions have to be assessed. Whalley and Headon (2001, 30) present four key contributions, which the organisations should identify: opportunity for growth, regular cash contribution, chance to 'add value' and a direct relationship.

Opportunity for growth is obvious, there has to be a future for the relationship for it to be beneficial for both parties to start working together. Certain business transactions may be profitable even when they are a one-time occasion, but in general a profitable long-term relationship should be the target.

Regular cash contribution brings stability and enables the selling company to run its businesses. Stable cash flow creates security and possibilities to try new things and even maybe take some risks elsewhere. When a company has a trustworthy partnership in place, it sets the standard for other customer relationships and gives more leeway for other areas of concern in the organisation.

A chance to add value is a great motivator for both parties. For the seller it could mean adding additional service alongside the core product. For example providing maintenance services could bring benefits for the seller and the customer. For the everyday transactions, adding value brings more repetition and the relationship deepens. The customer can count on the services if he knows the supplier and trusts him already with the core products.

A direct relationship is always more easier to handle than one with several middlemen. There is obviously less bureaucracy and processing matters takes less time and effort from everyone. A direct relationship also is more personal and trust is easier to gain. In case of mistakes there are of course less stakeholders to take the blame, but direct relationships are based on honesty and when successful can be much more beneficial than more complicated relationships.

An organisation's competence is instrumental in establishing customer trust (Whalley & Headon 2001, 86). Trust then again brings stability and safety. Trusting your employees helps to convey that trust further to the customer through the interface of your company. If the customer perceives competence and fairness in the everyday business processes, trust is slowly built. But as in many other cases, trust can be lost more easily than it is built.

Nowadays, customers are demanding that organisations fully understand their individual needs and desires and expect the seller to tailor their offerings using the appropriate product, message and channel (Whalley & Headon 2001, 43). When a seller can perform according to these wishes, he has 'customer insight'.

Whalley and Headon (2001, 43) further present, that organisations need to understand their prospective and existing customers in terms of their motivation to buy (e.g. needs and desires) rather than their performance probabilities (e.g. size, market share, potential spend).

Collecting information for these purposes is called analytical CRM. This information is then used to help making important decisions on ways of managing customer relationships. Having that extra information is important for decision makers, as they can then safely decide how to approach a given customer or whether to shift focus to another customer completely.

How a customer sees and values the supplier is important information for the supplier. It helps the company to form its plans and act in time to change its strategies. There are various criteria how the supplier can be evaluated; reliability, responsiveness, competence, accessibility, courtesy, communication, credibility, security and knowledge are some of them (Whalley & Headon 2001, 77-79).

The company needs to be reliable; reliability leads to customers depending on the supplier. Reliability is achieved through doing things right from the very beginning and not dipping in form. The company also needs to be responsive; the willingness of the organisation to provide accurate and personalised service to customers.

Organisation has to have competence, which means having the required amount of skill and ability to perform on a steady high level. Having good access gives customers possibilities to contact the supplier easily. Courtesy and communication mean being in contact with the customer in a friendly and respectful manner, but also using a language that the customer understands and listens to.

Credibility involves trustworthiness and is also built through communication. Security includes actual physical safety as well as confidentiality in business. Having knowledge of the customers and their preferences enables the supplier to answer their wishes successfully.

Knowing the true value of one's customers is important. One measurement of value is called customer equity. Whalley and Headon (2001, 70) describe customer equity as the sum of brand equity and relationship equity.

Brand equity is obviously desirable for every company. Having a strong brand gives you credentials and a strong foothold in the markets. A recognised brand conveys an image of the physical goods that the company offers, that brand or image is the first thing customers link to the products when they think of the company. A specific, distinguished brand is a way to differentiate and be noticed in the markets.

At the core of brand equity is the commitment to deliver against the promise of value made to the customers. Actively managing and reinforcing this promise is vital to remaining relevant to and valued by customers. (Whalley & Headon 2001, 70.)

Relationship equity is the value of the individual customer experience. It is seen in every contact between the company and the customer, each of these contacts have an effect on the relationship equity, therefore each contact represents an opportunity as well as a threat.

Showing the company's efforts and meeting given promises will strengthen the relationship. Every time the customer experiences something that he values, the danger of losing the customer diminishes through customer loyalty. Then again, giving the customer bad experiences increase the risk of a competitor stealing the customer.

Different companies can have different points of focus, others value the brand equity and others the relationship equity. Ideally, the company should show commitment to customers and to its brand and focus on customer equity. That is, focusing on both brand and relationship equity in parallel in order to maximise the customer equity that enables long-term success.

Another way to summarise customer equity is the sum of market share, customer share and customer lifetime value. Maximising customer equity can therefore be reached by increasing the number of high-value customers, selling more to each of those customers and extending the length of each customer relationship. Customer equity is measure for valuing the long-term relationship between an organisation and its customers, and the profitable growth this relationship is likely to generate for the company. (Whalley & Headon 2001, 72.)

Past purchase behaviour helps predict the future results. Focusing your marketing and CRM efforts to the right customers brings savings in costs. Customers that have bought recently, buy often and make the largest purchases are the ones that are worth focusing on (Whalley & Headon 2001, 81).

Key account management is a technique that aims to build and maintain a portfolio of loyal, key accounts. This is done by dedicating resources to the individual care and maintenance of the key account. (Whalley & Headon 2001, 87.) Like with customer categorisation, this helps to allocate resources more efficiently and increase the effectiveness of the sales organisation. Defining key accounts varies greatly between organisations. The factors that affect the decisions include customer size, purchasing history, strategic circumstances and prestige.

The development of a key account relationship happens slowly. At the beginning, it is treated with care and the relationship requires the basic trading transactions such as order processing. As the relationship evolves, both parties start to trust each other more and more and get to know the operating means of the other party. At this stage already a short-term future can be predicted. In the next stage long-term plans can be made and both parties start to invest more and more into the relationship. In the end, both parties completely trust each other and they innovatively develop the relationship further with creativity as the two organisations are integrated, and communication happens through many different interfaces instead from the key account manager to the purchasing manager.

2.1.1 Customer relationship management at TTT Technology Corp.

In today's modern information society, losing customers is easier and it happens quicker. If sales representatives do not visit their customers on a regular basis, they can be sure that the competitors have visited them and suddenly the orders stop. Nurturing relationships is key to keeping customers happy and the orders running.

The crucial aspect of any successful relationship strategy has to be based on the quality of the customer-supplier interface. This requires that the sales force, technical personnel, customer service or anyone else from the supplier, has to be adept in a range of soft skills, from neurolinguistic programming, information processing and questioning techniques to report writing, telephone techniques and information gathering. (Whalley & Headon 2001, 62).

Keeping customers happy leads to success in the long-term. A customer having done a purchase but left unhappy is not going to return. Customers remaining satisfied with their purchase after the transaction has taken place will spread good word and return with another purchase in the future. Every organisation should embrace such strategies, but implementing them requires various techniques and measures, thus resulting in great differences between companies.

The following interviews were done to find out how customer relationship management (CRM) was implemented and performed at TTT Technology.

Antti Tuomola worked as Sales and Marketing Director at TTT Technology until his retirement at the end of year 2010. The following

interview was conducted on 22nd of December 2010 for the purposes of investigating customer relationship management at TTT.

Q. How do you identify potential customers?

A. Most of the potential customers are already on the radar and we are aware of them. We are trying to find new customers all the time and of course the new customer has to fit a certain profile and our products must be suitable for the customer. After that we will give a presentation of our products. There are not many totally new potential customers so they are rather easy to control.

Q. Do you select or categorize your customers based on customer suitability or importance?

A. Yes, practically categorizing customers to A, B and C categories based on their importance and size. There are a few really big customers that are of great importance to TTT. The size of the categories is divided roughly so that 20 percent of our customers are in the A-category and those customers account for about 80 percent of our sales.

Q. How do you get to know your customers' profile, expectations and preferences?

A. When profiling a customer, already then it is discussed what is on the table, what is needed and what is offered, so that when a deal is made the expectations and preferences are already known. Basically the company has the same to offer to each customer so the expectations do not vary a lot.

Q. Do you use IT applications to facilitate your CRM? If so, what do you use it for? How well the system fulfils its purpose?

A. We have an Excel-based register of customers' equipment and their purchasing behaviour. Also we use SAP that can show the purchasing history of each customer. These are adequate and the system functions well. A more broad system, including personal data could possibly be good, possibly integrated to the SAP system in the future. These systems are used to monitor purchasing behaviour, not so much CRM, so there is some need for that still.

Q. What kind of value does your company offer to your customers?

A. We are always trying to bring in added value for the customer, not just offering only the product. In a way combining the "software" with the "hardware". This in practice means either guidance on the usage of the product and providing maintenance and maintenance counselling, or modifying the product and offering tailor-made products to suit all customers' needs.

Q. How do you encourage long-term customer relationships?

A. We don't have any "bonus-system" for our customers, but when we succeed in creating a good relationship, the customers see the advantages of doing business with us. The goal is that both parties win.

Q. What constitutes quality in your customers' eyes? (Basic, linear, attractive.)

A. This is a difficult question in this field of industry and with these products. Basic quality could be the quality of the product itself. Linear and attractive quality would then be the quality of our service that would include delivery time, sticking to promised delivery times, dealing with complaints and the general communication between us and the customer.

Q. What is your personal role in maintaining customer relationships and enhancing customer loyalty?

A. I have been working in this job for a very long time now and I have maintained customer relationships for a long time. The relationships are long and many of the customers we have had for a long time. That creates trust. When there is trust, mistakes are more easily forgiven. Mistakes at an early stage of forming a relationship can be very detrimental, and that is why we are on a better situation than newcomers. The basic rule is "keep your promises", if you lose that, you are done.

After Antti Tuomola's retirement, Timo Kanerva was appointed as the new Sales and Marketing Director at TTT. The following second interview was conducted with him on 18th of March 2011 to continue the interviews regarding CRM at TTT.

Q. How are after sales relations handled with the customers?

A. As our products are mainly consumable goods, a sale is usually followed by another sale in the future, so we are in continuous contact with our customers. This way all pre-sale and after sale relations are handled with continuous communication via telephone and email.

Q. What kind of marketing does your company use to attract new customers?

A. We attend two major fairs every other year (LIGNA, Hannover & Puuja Bioenergia, Jyväskylä) as well as some smaller fairs on a yearly basis. Besides the fairs we have three different ways of selling our products: through retailers, through agents and direct sales. Retailers are responsible for attracting new customers and they can advertise the way they want.

Q. What is the relation between finding new, potential customers and maintaining already existing customer relationships? Which of those do you consider more important?

A. Both of these are of course important, but we have a fairly established clientele. Basically we know 99 percent of potential customers and there aren't really unknown potential customers. Experience is the key to maintaining existing customer relations.

Q. How do you handle customer feedback and complaints?

A. Once a week we hold a meeting between the sales and production departments where we can discuss possible customer feedback and complaints. Also every month the sales department holds a meeting where these matters are again discussed. If we get a complaint, a reclamation document is filled and this is one way of our quality control. We also have

an ISO certificate for our quality control. Of course after every complaint we try to find out the reason for the complaint and fix it.

Q. Is the CRM of your company centralised only for one person or are there several people involved?

A. We have divided our customers to different sellers in our sales department by industries, like for example pulp and veneer customers have different contact persons in our company. In some cases one seller is responsible for one bigger customer.

Q. What is your personal role in maintaining customer relationships and enhancing customer loyalty?

A. I personally do not have any direct relations to specific customers, my job is mainly to enable our sellers to perform their tasks. I take part in negotiations and whenever there are larger problems. I work in close contact with all sellers to develop our performance. I also attend to any customer events and I visit our customers personally rather often.

To conclude, CRM applications at TTT are seen as adequate and no immediate actions are planned to change the situation one way or another. A more personalised customer data records would be useful, but at the moment the issue is not a pressing matter. According to Timo Kanerva (interview 23 November 2011), there is no need to implement new applications as the current system works fine. The products that a certain customer purchases do not vary greatly. For example a customer that has a certain saw machine will continue to purchase the same knife that fits in to the machine again and again. Customers do not suddenly change the product that they purchase.

TTT has acknowledged the need to prioritise A-level customers and appoint them with enough time, effort and focus when needed. With roughly 10% of their customers resulting in 80% of the turnover, this is of course logical and reasonable. Keeping these customers happy is vital for the company, and measures might have to be taken in the manufacturing side sometimes to prioritise these customers. This should be done as it would be more harmful for the company to make a bigger customer unhappy than a small customer. Sometimes even losing a small customer in order to appease the needs of a key customer can be the right thing to do in business sense.

However, Mr. Kanerva (interview 23 November 2011) was adamant that the smaller customers are important as well, and the line between the different categories is not set in stone. Customers can move between the different categories and the key is to understand the different situations. It is not profitable to create a bottleneck to production for a small order to a small customer when that disrupts the production for the larger orders. When the situations are reasonably well assessed, prioritising can be done in the right time and place.

Also, the different 'categories' and the desire to service different customers varies greatly with the economic situation. When the trend is

upwards, the smaller customers tend to be left in the shade as one has the opportunity to be more picky. When the trend is downwards, basically all customers become A-level customers as every single order is welcome.

Having steady A-customers that have a long history of purchasing from TTT helps to estimate and predict the business cycles better and more accurately, as the purchasing behaviour of customers in the field is fairly steady and repetitive. Having a good and steady C-customer is also important, as often for the smaller customers the margin for profit is larger. The potential for future growth lies within the B and C categories, as transforming the smaller customers into A-customers is always possible.

As Whalley and Headon (2001, 81-82) have described, the factors that matter in purchase behaviour are recency, frequency and monetary value. At TTT, the A-customers can be described to have all these three 'RFM'-factors. These customers are interested in news from the supplier, are willing to develop the products and also have good lifetime value.

These customer categories and RFM-factors are a form of dedicating key accounts. Key account management is prominent also at TTT, and strategic decisions weigh also when allocating these nominations. A required amount of time and effort will be put to projects when they are decided to be implemented.

Effective partnerships with customers rely upon alignment between an organisation's culture and the nature of demand from its customers. In particular, their customer-facing people need the skills and flexibility to understand resource/relationship management and the freedom and back-up to deliver according to expectation. (Whalley & Headon, 17.)

At TTT the whole sales team works together to satisfy the customers' needs. Customer service persons are for many customers the face of the company, and even though the responsibility lies with the corresponding sales manager, the customer service people need to have good skills and flexibility in order to make the business work smoothly and to enable independent working.

Each customer is different, and this has to be taken into account when tailoring the services for each customer. Acknowledging the cultural aspects as well as the importance of the customer help the sales team to make the relationships between customers last. All the time the value of the work has to be remembered, spending too much time on work that's value is small is neither productive nor developing anyone.

Customer retention might be mitigated by awarding first-time orders and this may create focus around bringing in new customers as opposed to keeping customers (Whalley & Headon 2001, 18). At TTT there are no bonus systems for clients or sales people that would create this incentive. As there are basically no unknown new customers in the industry, no

awarding of first-time orders is needed. For some cases, free samples for first-time orders are offered.

Also at TTT, the responsible persons per customer are appointed so that there are not many different people from different departments of the organisation communicating with the customer creating confusion. Organising the sales organisation to be efficient and in the end effective is key to enhancing the working environment. At TTT the division of tasks is rather clear.

At TTT, the four customer contributions presented by Whalley and Headon (2001, 30) are also assessed. Potential customers need to possess possibility for growth, and that has also been taken into account before starting the expansion of the product portfolio. Regular cash contributions have to be in place and budgeting tools help evaluating this situation on a daily basis.

A chance to add value has been certainly noted, when supplying tailored services for several customers. For example knife sharpening and maintenance services are being offered for many customers at TTT. Direct relationships are generally preferred. When it is sensible, agents or retailers are used for example in a given country or area (e.g. Chile).

As according to both Tuomola and Kanerva, most potential customers for TTT are known or 'on the radar', innovative marketing skills are not really necessary. Advertising through various channels is not worth the costs. Attending the major fairs in the industry present great opportunities to meet customers. In these events existing relationships are enhanced but as well new relationships can be formed. Customers that attend the fairs have already shown a clear interest and are willing to listen to presentations. In form of placement, fairs are the perfect place and time for forming new relationships.

In the years that do not have the big fairs, TTT advertises in various magazines of the respective fields. The most visible aspects are launches of new products, for these events the fairs are a great opportunity to increase visibility in the markets. (Kanerva, interview 23 November 2011.)

Bringing technical as well as customer quality to TTT's customers has been taken into account also. The core products need to have precise technical quality first, before additional services can bring customer quality. Holding on to promised delivery times and offering maintenance are customer quality and are needed in order to satisfy customers' needs and keep hold of the profitable relationships.

The value of branding has also been understood and appreciated at TTT. The TTT brand is quite strong, and that has been a great help to enduring the economical situations of the last years. Especially in Russia, brand loyalty is great and TTT's position is very strong there. Russian customers in general buy brand products, and TTT's knives are one of those. The

difficult times in the industry have not affected TTT's brand notably, as the image is still strong. The forming of the strong brand has been a side product to TTT's core business. There has been no projects directly linked to brand developing, but long history of expertise and producing quality has created the strong brand for TTT. (Kanerva, interview 23.11.2011.)

2.2 Purchasing process

Purchasing, or procurement, is a strategic process for the development of a sound production set-up and an effective supply base so as to achieve logistics productivity (Bhatnagar 2009, 55). Purchasing can refer to many things, like for example the procurement of raw materials, office supplies, machinery or maintenance.

In order to reach efficiency, the highest possible turnover of investment must be obtained. Purchasing must be done so that manufacturing and other departments can work continuously without disruptions, a clear objective is to maintain the flow of materials. In order for a manufacturing company like TTT to make sales, purchasing of raw materials must be done cost effectively. The purchasing department can also offer insight to for example changes in raw material as they have contacts and expertise on the attributes of different materials. This can give the company an advantage over its competitors.

Purchasing the right quantities is a source of saving in costs. The purchasing manager must be aware of the costs that are tied in stocks so that he can purchase the right quantities of materials. The timing of the purchase, as well as the source must be chosen carefully as well. A competent purchase manager is also aware of the market prices so that he does the purchases for a competitive price and provides a foundation for the company to make profit.

At TTT, the timing of the purchase is often dictated by the SAP-system in use. Raw materials have safety stocks and warning limits, when the limit is reached, the system notifies the purchasing manager to purchase more of the raw material. For products where the demand is constant and easily predictable, the process can be highly automatized.

Methods of purchasing are many. Market purchasing refers to purchasing for example because a considerable rise in market prices is in the horizon. Then the purchase is not made to meet a specific need from inside the company. Speculative purchasing can be done when the purchasing department works closely with the sales department. If the sales indicate that a need for higher than normal amount of material is to be expected, the purchasing manager can anticipate this. Actions like these require coordination with top management and are special occasions. Purchasing strictly by requirement means that no purchases are made before a specific need arises. This form is done at TTT for special raw materials that normally are not used.

Globalisation has brought with it numerous advantages and opportunities, but also threats and more competition. A purchaser must be aware of all the different aspects in today's competitive business environment. Few companies can operate on a completely domestic environment; almost always there are international factors to consider.

Supply and demand are often found abroad, and even if working on smaller scale and in domestic markets, there are often at least international regulations to be followed. For example EU regulations affect small entrepreneurs in Finland even if their customers and suppliers are all Finnish.

Companies that take into account global opportunities can increase the value they offer compared to competitors who aren't as aware of their surroundings. Globalisation has brought many benefits and it is down to the purchaser to grasp the opportunities.

Political factors play a part in every country. All countries are unique and working internationally can be highly complex and bureaucratic experience with different tariffs and trade agreements. The possible benefits still outweigh these challenges and getting to know legislations of different countries helps this process immensely.

Monitoring political climate is important for purchasers to be able to avoid disasters. For example the current situation in Europe is very challenging and unsecure and for example doing business in Greece is not the most sought-after solution at this moment.

Different labour laws and regulations and other aspects can account for extra costs for companies, but failing to comply with them can also directly create bad publicity for a company, which can be more detrimental for business than just extra costs.

Doing business with countries using a different currency can become very difficult. For example the USD rate to the Euro has been fluctuating and is very different now than what it was a year ago. If the seller is in Euro zone and they keep their price for a given product the same as it was one year ago, the buyer from the United States has to pay more dollars, as the exchange rate is weaker for the dollar. The fluctuation of rates can create situations where misunderstandings easily happen, which also has been the case several times at TTT Technology.

With the implementation of the Euro, it is easier for purchasers to compare prices between countries. This is a good thing for the purchaser, but for sellers it can be either way. If a seller's product is cheaper than the competitors', he enjoys the situation. If a seller's product is superior through quality but cannot compete with the price, the situation is different.

Understanding different cultures before being in contact with them is also vital for successful businesses. Business etiquettes vary massively

between countries and different ethical norms and values are to be taken into account.

2.2.1 Supply chain management

For many companies their strategic focus lies with integrating the different business processes in their supply chain, this is called supply chain management (SCM). SCM can also be defined as “the management of upstream and downstream relationships with suppliers and customers in order to create enhanced value in the final market place at less cost to the supply chain as a whole” (Christopher 1998).

Another definition is that “a supply chain is a networks of facilities and distribution options that performs the functions of procurement of materials, transformation of these materials into intermediate and finished products, and the distribution of these finished products to customers (Bhatnagar 2009, 1).

In TTT’s case, the supply chain would include the purchase of the raw materials from a given supplier, transportation of the raw materials to the plant in Toijala, manufacturing the finished product through a production line, packing and delivering the finished product to the customer. In addition, marketing and planning activities can be included to the chain as well.

Reducing costs is always desirable for a company and creating value for customers enhances the company’s competitive edge. Correct management of your supply chain therefore is integral for companies to make growth possible and to increase profitability.

In order to make the organisations different departments work together effortlessly, supply chain needs to be managed. The sales department might have a different view on things than the manufacturing department, but they all need to work together and make compromises for the organisation to be successful. Coordination between the departments or organisations is needed.

As customers are the focus of marketing, a shift has taken place from only talking about logistics to talking about supply chain management (Bhatnagar 2009, 2) and this has also become a viable source of competitive advantage. Therefore, SCM integrates all the business processes in an organisation’s value chain that transform a concept into product and take it to the market.

In managing supply chains, decisions that are made can be either strategic or operational (Bhatnagar 2009, 3). Strategic decisions are in line with the whole organisation’s strategy and carry long-term effects whereas operational decisions focus on the day-to-day activities and have a more immediate effect.

Bhatnagar (2009, 3) presents five key areas where decisions have to be made in SCM: production, inventory, location, transportation and information. In every area a decision must be made whether to aspire for responsiveness or cost efficiency. The decision to move towards either responsiveness or efficiency must be in line with the organisation's whole business strategy; all of the different decisions must be in line with each other as well as the strategy.

Production decisions can be for example what products will the organisation provide or will there be a shift of focus so that a certain product group will no longer be manufactured. At TTT with the integration to the IKS Klingelberg Group, these kind of decisions have been made so that the benefit of using another production sites in the Group have been utilised to the maximum. Production decisions are made already when a plant or a warehouse is built. If a production site has a lot of empty space, it is not efficient but then again that product site can meet fluctuating demand better when they have space to manoeuvre.

Inventory decision include both raw material stocks as well as stocks of finished goods. Having a clear understanding of the short-term future is vital in order to have the right amount of stocks of raw material. These decisions have to be made together with the sales department; as for example at TTT some customers are promised a certain delivery time or a bumper stock of finished goods. Knowing when and to whom these kinds of promises should be given requires coordination between the departments in the organisation. As with production, also in inventory decision have to be made whether the organisation aims for responsiveness or efficiency. Additional stocks help answer a sudden peak in demand, whereas idle space in a warehouse costs money and reduces efficiency.

Location decisions can include for example the stock and storage locations; should the storage be at the manufacturing site or at a site that is close to the largest customers or even at a customer's site? The most efficient location must be found in order to provide a smooth product flow to the customer. As well as deciding the geographic location, it must also be decided what action take place where. In some cases it might be more efficient to have a manufacturing site elsewhere and an assembly site closer to the customers. The cost of labour in a given country can be big factor when deciding where to set up facilities. Here efficiency might be met by centralising the organisation's activities into one place, and responsiveness met by decentralising.

Transportation decisions include for example the choice between airfreight and sea freight. If a customer is promised a certain delivery time but the production has not been able to keep to the promised times, a faster mode of transportation can be chosen in order to meet the delivery time. Of course these decisions again require a huge amount of coordination between companies and in order to avoid extra costs the cheaper mode of transportation will be chosen whenever it is justified. For example with certain customers or certain individual deliveries, a fine can be agreed on

if the delivery time is not met. Again, responsiveness is met through faster means and efficiency with lower costs. Truck transport brings a different kind of responsiveness, as they are not the fastest but they can deliver products to the doorstep of the customer, whereas planes and ships only get to the airport or the dock. Electronic transport is the fastest way, but can only be used on certain products.

Information decisions include for example the coordination between sales, production and logistics departments. Every department should have the necessary information available in order for them to complete their jobs effortlessly. For example changes in enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems need to be done carefully, so that important information concerning production reaches the people that it concerns. Information is used to organise the daily activities in the other four areas as well as planning and anticipating for the future demand.

The sum of these decisions will define the capabilities and effectiveness of a company's supply chain. The things a company can do and the ways that it can compete in its markets are all dependant on effectiveness of its supply chain. (Bhatnagar 2009, 4.)

The key to make the right decisions and where to align the company is understanding the markets the company works in. What kind of customers are being served, what are their preferences and how they value responsiveness and efficiency. Factors that have an impact on the final strategic decision include the variety of products, the quantity of products, the service level required, the response time customers will tolerate, the price of the product and the desired rate of innovation in the product (Bhatnagar 2009, 17-18).

Today companies' supply chains are more and more integrated. This has lead to many companies having to decide what is their core competence and is there a possibility to outsource other activities? For example a manufacturing company could have previously had their own trucks but nowadays use only forwarding agents. At TTT there is one TTT-truck still used for delivering the products to customers or certain shipping points.

Nowadays responsiveness to customers is the way of developing supply chains (Bhatnagar 2009, 13) as the demand varies greatly. Efficiency in producing one-size-fits-all products is no longer the norm it once was and vertical integration is not that common.

In any given supply chain there is some combination of companies who perform different functions. There are companies that are producers, distributors or wholesalers, retailers, and companies or individuals who are the customers, the final consumers of a product. Supporting these companies there will be other companies that are service providers that provide a range of needed services. (Bhatnagar 2009, 14)

Unlike the supply chain, the value chain flows from the customer (Bhatnagar 2009, 24); it is the customer who gives value a meaning.

Supply chains are usually depicted having a flow from the supplier to the final customer, whereas value chain has an opposite direction of flow, because the value of a given product can be different to different customers. By meeting the given requirements for the customer, that value occurs.

In business-to-business context, there are three different forms of value that occur: technical, organisational and personal value (Bhatnagar 2009, 25). Technical or resource value is the core of the offered product, for a thirsty man a glass of water has technical value regardless of the source or any other consideration. Organisational value is built upon the context of the exchange. A brand image may build that value, like for example in TTT's case in Russia; the brand strengthens the organisational value of the product. Personal value is created through the personal relations and aspects in the exchange process. An example of personal value added is trust in relationship, without knowing in full detail the competitors' products' attributes, a purchaser perceives the products he buys from a trustworthy supplier more reliable.

This way of integrating demand and supply processes is also called Demand Chain Management (DCM) (Jüttner, Baker & Christopher 2004). Such an integration between customer-facing and supply functions seems mandatory in today's marketplace, where customers benefit from having real-time access to their accounts, making real-time changes in their customised product configuration and communicating their individual service requirements (Jüttner et al. 2004).

As supply chain management tries to find answers on how to efficiently matching supply with demand, it does not answer the question 'what does the customer perceive as valuable'. Therefore, supply chain efficiency in itself does not increase customer value and satisfaction. Whereas supply chain management focuses on efficient supply, and tends to be cost-orientated, marketing is more concerned with revenue by focusing on the demand side of the company. Evidently, together, they determine the company's profitability. (Jüttner et al. 2004.)

In SCM, much of the recent debate has centered on the ability of the supply chain to be either "lean or "agile". Lean supply chains on the one hand focus on doing "more with less" by reducing waste through inventory reduction, lean manufacturing, and a just-in-time approach. A lean approach is said to be suitable for markets characterized by predictable demand, high volume and low requirements for product variety. Agile supply chains, on the other hand, are designed for flexibility, emphasizing the supply chain's ability to respond rapidly to changes in demand, both in terms of volume and variety. The market conditions in which companies with agile supply chains find themselves are characterized by volatile demand and high requirements for variety. (Jüttner et al. 2004.)

In today's markets, understanding the customer's situation and responding effectively to differing needs through the coordination of marketing and SCM can be a source of superior value creation (Jüttner et al. 2004). As

SCM has traditionally been internally focused and marketing externally focused, the combination of these two creates balance between efficiency and responsiveness.

3 TRAINING

3.1 Rolf Meyer, Bargteheide, Germany

The training began on Monday the 19th of September at Rolf Meyer's production facilities in Bargteheide. The programme started with an overall introduction to Rolf Meyer by Anette Wissel, a junior sales manager and also the sales representative for Scandinavian countries, and was followed the next day by tour through the production facilities by quality manager Holger Rodewald.

The company was founded in 1970 by Rolf Meyer in Bargfeld-Stegen. One year later own production started at the location. In 1977 the company moved to new production rooms in Bargteheide, where the company is still located. In 1986 the number of employed people reached 30 persons.

In 1997 the company was taken over by IKS Klingelberg –group. In 2002 the number of employees reached 100 people. In 2005 Rolf Meyer became the “Preferred Supplier” for Tetra Pak, which is still the biggest customer for Rolf Meyer. In 2009 the administrative buildings were enlarged and for the first time the company had 125 employees.

Rolf Meyer's customers vary from OEM's such as KBA and Manroland, to various producers, biggest of which is Tetra Pak. The different markets where Rolf Meyer's products are used are:

- Gravure printing - publication printing
- Rotary offset - illustrating printing
- Rotary offset - newspaper printing
- Packaging industry

The product range of Rolf Meyer is diverse. The largest share of sold products is a doctor blade that accounts for about 50% of all products sold by Rolf Meyer. Other products are spare parts for printing industry, such as for example cutting knives, jaw and tucker blades, folding pins and grippers.

At Rolf Meyer there are some differences in working procedures compared to TTT. For example when customers want to know the situation of their order, sales people fill the necessary information to an excel-file from where production managers can everyday see what orders customer enquire about. Then every day the production managers give their answers to the same excel-file and so every day sales people get an answer from production with updated information about orders' situations. At TTT this is mostly done over the phone or email.

Different sales managers are appointed different sales areas geographically. Every sales team (“an Island”) has two persons and each team has some area for which they are the sales representatives, for example a sales team for Scandinavian countries. Then whenever one person is out of the office, there is one person who can fill in for him or her without problems. At TTT the sales organisation is divided by both geographically as well as by industries, e.g. sales manager for pulp industry and a sales manager for sawmill industry.

At Rolf Meyer the budgeting is done similarly to TTT using Business Warehouse –application. Sales overviews are also very similar to each other, with possibilities to show statistics geographically or by sales managers.

The production line for the spare parts starts from receiving of the raw material to laser cutting, grinding of thickness and width, milling and finally to quality inspection and shipping.

All doctor blades are thoroughly checked and inspected. They are first checked with a microscope to find any possible flaws. Before packing the blades to a box, every metre of doctor blade is checked by hand to ensure that only good quality is shipped onwards from Rolf Meyer.

Also a new optical machine is set to be installed to the grinding machine during the autumn of this year to further improve the quality inspections. This is done to make a change in strategy; instead of noticing mistakes and flawed products, the focus shifts to not producing the flawed products in the first place.

The production line has got its current look through working really closely with customer Tetrapak. For example the storage location of raw materials has been changed by the initiative of Tetrapak.

3.1.1 Summary and relation to theory

The main purpose of going to Rolf Meyer was to introduce the people that would be working together in the project to each other. Seeing also the manufacturing processes brought good insight of the products. Knowing the people responsible for the quality of the products and the processes behind the quality gives the seller more and more capabilities to establish customer relationships.

Like with the visit to IKS Klingelberg in Remscheid, it is beneficial for both organisations when the people working together know each other and are familiar with the working processes inside both organisations. A sales representative of TTT that knows how people work at Rolf Meyer can better anticipate for example how long it takes to get an answer regarding the delivery time of a certain order. Having some idea enables him to give the final customers always some kind of answer based on his own estimates immediately.

3.2 Product training and customer visits, Bavaria, Germany

The product training started on Wednesday the 21st of September and was conducted by Franz Schauer, a sales representative and technician for Rolf Meyer. He introduced and explained the different printing techniques as well as the product range of Rolf Meyer.

3.2.1 Printing techniques

Rolf Meyer provides a wide range of products for three different printing styles: offset, rotogravure and flexo printing. Offset printing is divided into heatset and coldset and Rolf Meyer has various spare parts to assist in these processes. Rotogravure printing is used for both illustration and packaging printing. Flexo printing is used mainly for packaging.

Offset printing is the most commonly used printing technique and it has multiple variations. It is mostly used for printing newspapers, magazines and books. In offset printing the printed image is transferred from a printing plate first to a blanket or offset cylinder and then to the paper. The process is based on a chemical reaction with oil and water, where the printing area on the flat printing plate absorbs the ink and the non-printing area absorbs the water. The process is illustrated in Figure 6.

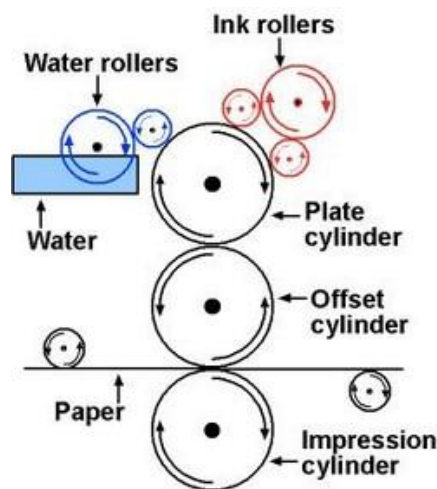


Figure 6 Offset printing technique, from www.odeecompany.com

This way the printed image has clear lines and the quality of the image is good. Compared to for example rotogravure, offset printing is cheaper. Offset printing provides good quality and is also suited for larger quantities.

The printing machine can be fed either individual sheets of paper or webs of paper. Sheet-fed printing enables many different sizes being run through the same press. Web-fed offset printing is better suited for larger volumes like for example newspapers, as it is much faster. Web offset is again divided to heatset and coldset presses. In heatset presses there are dryers that dry the ink so that you do not get ink on your fingers when you read for example a magazine. Heatset also provides better, more accurate

quality than coldset. Newspapers are pressed using coldset method, and you can notice that your fingers can be stained by the ink from the paper as there are no dryers in the machine. For both presses also different kinds of paper are used, coated paper for magazines and a more porous surface for newspapers.

Rotogravure printing is the technique best suited for the largest volumes and the highest quality demands. In rotogravure the printed image is engraved to a copper cylinder that transfers the image to the paper. The image is engraved to the cylinder using diamond heads or a laser. The copper cylinders are also added a chrome surface to bring wear-resistance to the cylinder. Rotogravure is almost always web-fed. The product range of rotogravure is very broad from small labels of drinking bottles to large wood laminates and also to packaging. The process is illustrated in Figure 7.

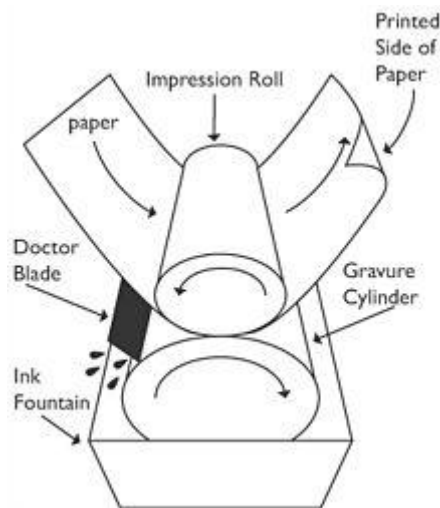


Figure 7 Rotogravure printing technique, from <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Rotogravure printing has always one printing station for one colour, in between there are dryers and this requires more energy. The gravure cylinder with the engraved image is rotating and gathering ink to its small, engraved cells, then a doctor blade scrapes all excess ink off the cylinder before the image is pressed to the paper. Using rotogravure creates large fixed costs, and therefore it is best suited for large volumes, from 80 000 pieces to millions of copies.

Flexography or flexo printing is mainly used for packaging industry. In flexo printing a flexible rubber plate transfers the image to the paper. Ink is first transferred from the ink roll to an Anilox roll that absorbs ink evenly due to its microscopically small cells. A doctor blade then removes the excess ink before the ink is transferred to a rubber flexo printing plate. Impression cylinder applies pressure against the plate cylinder and with the pressure the ink is distributed correctly and accurately. The type of the Anilox roll determines the image that is pressed to the paper.

Flexography's advantages are that the image can be printed onto various materials such as foil, not only paper. Also the range of usable inks is

wider. Flexo printing is often used in the food industry, then it is vital that the ink is not in touch with the food. This is often done so that another layer of foil is added onto the foil that has the printed image. Flexo printing is also cheaper and more easily modifiable to every assignment. Nowadays the printing quality in flexo printing has improved enough so that it has become a competitive alternative. The process is illustrated in Figure 8.

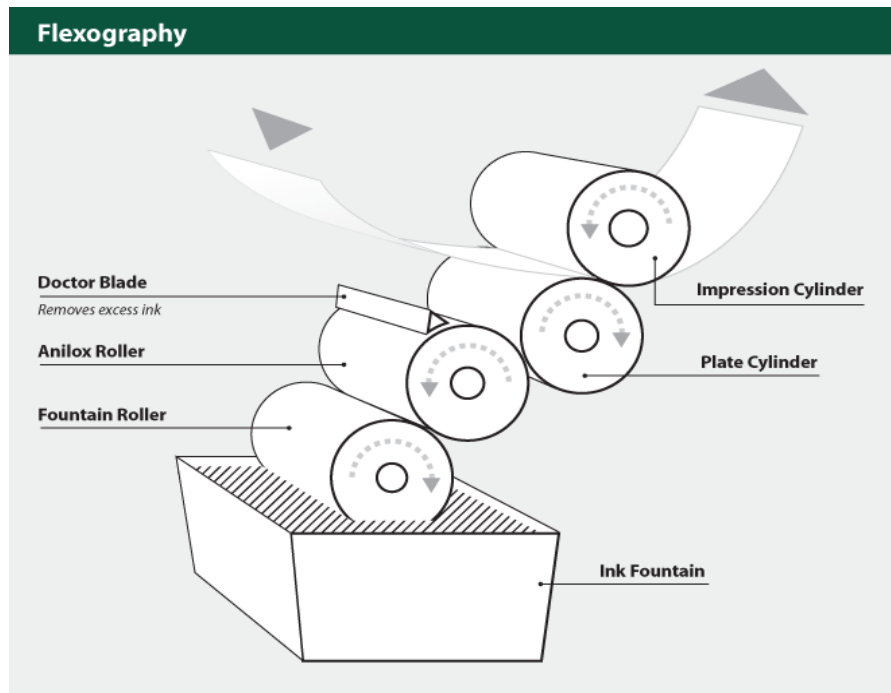


Figure 8 Flexo printing technique, from <http://pds18.egloos.com>

3.2.2 Doctor blades

Doctor blades can be made of several different materials (MeyerPrint, OptiPrint etc.) and to several different tip designs (stable, flexo etc.). Each material and design has different advantages.

MeyerPrint is the standard material at Rolf Meyer. It is optimised in purity as it has only maximum 0,003 % sulphur and it also has a high amount of chromium (0,3 – 0,4%). It is used as the standard material because it has proven to be up to Rolf Meyer's specifications and it is reliable.

OptiPrint is a development of Rolf Meyer. It has five times the chromium content of MeyerPrint and it can have up to 50% longer lifetime. Also this material has proven to be reliable and have a clean wipe. Its advantages include a homogeneous and burr-reduced doctoring process, it allows for a lower blade pressure, less breakage and cracking, optimised quality and the microstructure of the blade allows for a longer lifetime.

PowerPrint is an alloy steel that provides good resistance against wear, toughness and also smooth doctoring where standard materials do not give

consistent results. It is great for tougher jobs and it has proven to be exceptionally good for publication gravure and packaging printing.

NiroPrint is a stainless steel that is resistant to corrosion and is therefore very well suited for water based and aggressive inks or coatings.

MegaPrint is not a raw material per se, it is from the standard material but it has a special ceramic coating that results in a better lifetime and printing quality. It is available in pre-ground, stable and FlexoTip design and it produces a very high constancy of quality and a very smooth surface especially at the contact zone. This enables quick start-ups. MegaPrint's advantages in illustration printing are reduced pin lines, less streaking problems and a high lifetime for "long run" jobs like catalogue printing. For packaging printing MegaPrint provides also less streaking problems, higher printing quality especially in half tone and a high lifetime with abrasive inks like for example white or gold. A close-up image of the MegaPrint is illustrated in Figure 9.

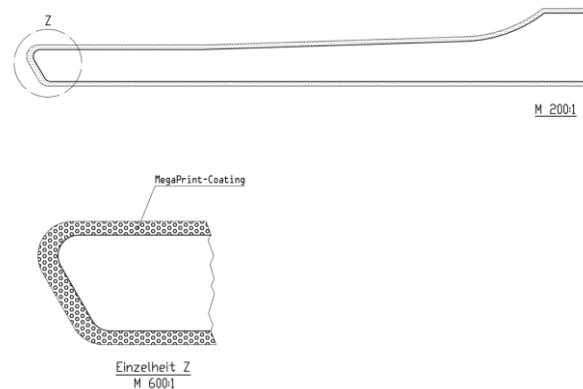


Figure 9 RMB MegaPrint, from www.rolfmeyer.de

RMB DuroBlade is a special ceramic coating blade that is specifically developed for flexo and related printing industries. It is a product that is completely additional to the doctor blade range from Rolf Meyer and it is available in stainless steel and also the basic material. The blade is invented and produced by BTG Switzerland. DuroBlade has extremely high wear resistance, it needs lower blade pressure and less handling and it has a constant wiping quality through the whole blade lifetime. DuroBlade therefore brings customers higher productivity, reliability and quality.

Different tip designs are made to have an answer to customers' various problems in the printing process. Rolf Meyer's standard tolerances are as follows:

Straightness	maximum run out of 1 mm over 3 m
Blade thickness	+/- 0,005 mm
Edge thickness	+/- 0,005 mm / - 0,000 mm
Edge width	+/- 0,1 mm

The pre-ground or lamella tip design can be produced in various tip sizes meeting the customers' requirements. Tip thickness is held within very tight tolerances to ensure a consistent contact zone and to keep tonal values as standard. A close-up image of the tip is illustrated in Figure 10.



Figure 10 Lamella tip design, from www.rolfmeyer.de

FlexoTip is a fairly new tip design that is designed especially for Flexo chamber systems. Its smooth and perfect contact surface produces long runs and high quality in printing. Its advantages are added safety, as it is not as sharp as other designs, easiness in handling as it is identical from both sides so you do not have to turn a long doctor blade around, less back doctoring and less scoring lines. The flexo tip is illustrated in Figure 11.

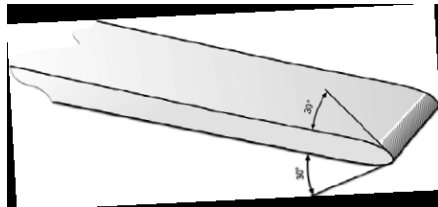


Figure 11 Flexo tip design, from www.rolfmeyer.de

FlexoTip includes a special ESP treatment that can be added also to lamella and stable tip designs. A doctor blade that has had an ESP treatment is different for the naked eye. ESP's advantages are a burr-free contact zone and less burr formation during printing because of the higher quality of the lamella surface. ESP also enables a clean print immediately after start-up, which leads to less wastage of ink, paper and time. Also the doctor blade requires less pressure, which leads to less wear and a longer blade lifetime.

3.2.3 Printing process and spare parts

Rolf Meyer also offers a wide range of products to every step of the printing process; these products are called spare parts. All spare parts can be customised according to customers' wishes and also in various materials that offer differing advantages like price or lifetime.

For the first stage of the process, the feeding, Rolf Meyer supplies cut-off knives, illustrated in Figure 12. These knives must work reliably as any malfunction would cause huge problems to the rest of the printing process and also huge costs. The cut-off knives cut the paper web whenever the roll is about the run out. Within a second, a new roll is started with as low amount of wasted material, time and money as possible.



Figure 12 Feeder: Cut-off knife, from www.interknife.com

In the printing phase, various doctor blades are used. The details, materials and their differences are explained in the previous chapter.

Length cutting means cutting the paper web longitudinally into narrower slices of webs, using circular knives, illustrated in Figure 13. These lines are then lead on top of each other, and this way for example a newspaper starts to take its final form.



Figure 13 Length cutting: circular knives, from www.interknife.com

For cross cutting, Rolf Meyer provides various cutting knives as well as perforation knives and cutting bars, illustrated in Figure 14. Customisation of the cross cutting knives can lead to less trimming later on in the process chain.

Knives can be also made from S1-material, which offers up to five times higher lifetime for the knife. Using this material, the setting of the knife becomes even more important.



Figure 14 Cross cutting: various knives, from www.interknife.com

Rolf Meyer can also offer its own patent, SurePerf for the cross cutting phase of the printing process. SurePerf reduces drastically the wrinkles that are created in the folding process. SurePerf is recommended when the machine sizes are higher than 32 pages from the web.

For the folding and guiding phase there are multiple products used. Movable and fixed jaw blades, tucker blades, guide bars, folding pins and gripper and support plates are all part of the process, illustrated in Figure 15. Folding pins are mainly used in offset heatset printing, and gripper plates in rotogravure.



Figure 15 Folding and guiding: jaw and tucker blades, from www.interknife.com

High quality is the main aim in the trimming phase as the product is nearly completed at this stage. For example the three way trimmer knives, illustrated in Figure 16, require a high life time as well as the cleanest cut for the front, head and tail cut to ensure high quality end product. All products are manufactured strictly by the OEM tolerances.

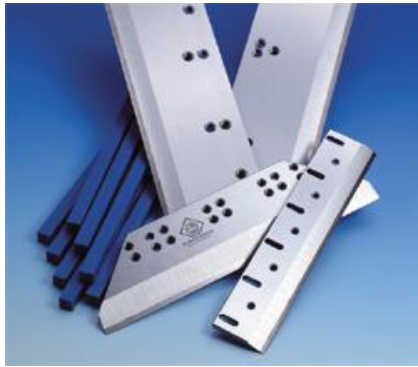


Figure 16 Trimming: three way trimmer knives, from www.interknife.com

For packaging companies, foil cutting knives and perforation knives are also available for the packing station phase. Products can be made either according to customers' wishes or the machine manufacturers' specifications.

To ensure maximised customer satisfaction, the repair and service has to be of excellent quality. Repaired products are promised the same quality tolerances as the new ones. Also for circular knives there are several different finishing processes, like for example the New Wave finish that makes the knife's lifetime longer.

3.2.4 Customer visits

The customer visits took place on the 22nd and 23rd of September and served as a mean to show the products in daily use at the different customers' plants.

The first of the customer visit was to Donaukurier in Ingolstadt, a local publishing house. The printing technique in use at their plant is offset coldset as they are printing newspapers. Their printing machine uses Rolf Meyer's products and includes the feeding of the web and designing of the printing plates to the finished newspaper. Seeing the machine in full action helped better realise the functions of the products than just studying it in theory. At Donaukurier they also use CMYK colours (cyan, magenta, yellow and key).

The second visit was to Manroland in Augsburg. Manroland is one of the biggest OEMs in the industry and their plant was appropriately very large. They manufacture cylinders for the printing machines. The cylinders being out of the machine helped to get a better picture of for example the folding and guiding process and seeing the jaw and tucker blades attached to the cylinder. The storage for spare parts at Manroland is quite extraordinary; it is fully automatic, only robots pick up the products from the shelves and the size of the storage is enormous (50x30x20 metres).

The third visit on the 22nd of September was to Schattdecor in Thansau, close to the Austrian border. They are a manufacturer of decor paper. That is paper that is printed to resemble wood or some other material. Their

products are widely in use for example on laminate floors, wall panels, kitchen worktops and so on. Their plant is very modern, the entrance building is really posh and they even have their own small artificial lake. They use rotogravure printing as they use a special paper and special inks that require the use of copper cylinders and also because they need to have the best quality, which rotogravure provides.

The next day the first visit was to Appl in Wemding. Appl is a magazine-printing house that uses offset heatset technique; they are one of the largest offset heatset printing houses in Europe. Their plant has great access to the production, for example showing the changing of the roll in the feeder stage. The change started with speeding the new roll to the same speed as the old one and only then cutting the old one and immediately starting with the new roll. The change happens in a second so that there is as low amount of waste as possible.

The second visit was to U.E. Sebald in Nuremberg. They produce large amounts of catalogues and magazines using the rotogravure technique. At their plant they also engrave the cylinders themselves. They use several diamond heads to engrave the cylinders to save time, packaging companies do not need to use several heads as they have more time. They also had a large cylinder stock where there were cylinders in many different sizes. The copper cylinders have a thin layer over them that can be removed after use, so that they do not have to make a completely new cylinder every time. Their printing machine is very large and has a very large folding station in the end, as the magazine has to be folded many times.

The final customer visit was to R. Bayer in Veitsbronn. They are a flexo printing company in the packaging industry. In flexo packaging printing there is not just one machine that has all the different stations and phases in it, but several different machines as the volumes are smaller and there is greater diversity in the products. They had many different Anilox rollers on show, although without microscope they all look the same to the naked eye. A printing plate is manufactured also there, one plate per colour. At R. Bayer they print up to eight different colours instead of the normal four. Hygiene is very important at packaging companies, and visitors have to wear a protective jacket and also a cover hat. As the printed ink cannot be in touch with food, another layer of foil is always planted over the ink so that the ink is in the middle of two layers of foil.

3.2.5 Summary and relation to theory

This training period brought invaluable experience and knowledge of working with the products in printing industry. In order for the seller to be convincing and successful, obviously he has to have great knowledge of the products he is selling.

The theoretical training on the printing and packaging industry brought good basic level knowledge of the industries and the products. Trying to learn everything within a week would be impossible, so therefore another,

similar training period in the future is likely. After working with the Finnish customers for a while, gaining more insight and experience, then a more detailed training period will be more beneficial.

The focus of this training period, as well as Rolf Meyer's business actions in general, was the doctor blade. That is the main product group of Rolf Meyer, and also the main product group in the expansion project. Seeing the products in use at Rolf Meyer's customers brought the theoretical training into practical use.

The key is to find out the real reason behind customers' problems. After that, it is possible to offer the solutions to the problems. According to Mr. Schauer, most often introducing the FlexoTip doctor blade is a solution that the customers have not met before and are interested in trying. It brings several benefits and is different from the solutions the competitors can offer; that brings competitive edge to Rolf Meyer's products.

In packaging industry especially, there is opportunity for good growth. That is a necessity in order for it to make sense in putting effort into the project. Like Whalley and Headon (2001, 30) implied with necessary key contributions in beginning customer relationships, the same opportunity has to be present in the industry the customer relationships are in. Starting a project with great hopes in an industry that has no possibility for growth is just not good business.

3.3 IKS Klingelberg, Remscheid, Germany

On September 26th the training continued at IKS Klingelberg headquarters in Remscheid. For this training period also other members of the sales office at TTT took part: Laila Tamminen, Julia Nemets and Nicholas Lindroos.

This period lasted three days and was conducted by the IKS paper division's director, Thomas Huhn. Product and sales managers Jochen Wingsch, Udo Middendorf and Thomas Kister were responsible for the actual training sessions, that were followed by meeting people in the paper division and seeing their working habits similarly like was done at Rolf Meyer's facilities.

3.3.1 Paper processing

The paper processing begins with wood taken from forest to the wood yard. In the wood yard the wood is being cut to logs and then debarked. The next phase includes sawing, cutting and chipping before the pulp mills. The pulp is then transformed into sheets and the pulp bale is then taken to paper mills.

Pulp Bale or fresh self-made pulp is cooked in boilers. Then it becomes the basic raw material for paper. Other properties like chalk, corundum,

titanium oxide and others make the final recipe of the paper. The fibres of the pulp are micro ingredients for the paper.

The process in paper mills goes as follows: forming, pressing, drying, sizing, winding, converting and rewinding. For each phase there are different knives supplied. In the first phase for example tail-cutting knives are used and in the sizing phase side trimming knives are used.

In the paper mills there are also doctor blades used for cleaning the cylinders, but these doctor blades are different from the ones used in printing. These doctor blades can be made from plastic and the tips are not so fine as in printing.

In the winding phase the mother roll is cut into reels either for direct shipment to for example printing houses or to be converted into sheets. Different guillotine systems are used in waste reel handling, to split damaged or waste rolls so that they can be recycled into the pulping process. Knives used in this part of the process are illustrated in Figure 17.



Figure 17 Knives for sheeter machines, from www.interknife.com

3.3.2 Post press

The post press department in Remscheid works together, and also in a way in competition, with Rolf Meyer. In many printing houses the post press phases are inside the same printing machine, so Rolf Meyer provides these spare parts also together with their printing products. The doctor blades for printing are manufactured only in Rolf Meyer's facilities.

The different phases of the printing process were explained earlier together with the spare parts of Rolf Meyer, so going through them again in detail as Mr. Middendorf did, would be more or less repeating the same thing twice.

IKS Klingelberg also offers a wide range of cutting tools for soft and hardcover book production, including slitter and sheeter knives, shredder knives, milling tools, book splitter saws, trimming knives and cutting sticks. All knives are supplied in different steel grades as well as tungsten

carbide tipped qualities. All knives are strictly produced in accordance to the OEM requirements. Rotation milling tools are illustrated in Figure 18.



Figure 18 Rotation milling tools, from www.interknife.com

3.3.3 Tissue paper

For tissue paper industry, the main product is the log saw, illustrated in Figure 19. The log saw production at Remscheid has made IKS Klingelberg well known for their high quality in manufacturing. The log saw blades are produced for all existing log saw machines in various different material grades. Most of the machines are made by either PERINI or Futura, who together account for 80% of the market share.



Figure 19 Log saw blades, from www.interknife.com

The production facilities are highly automatic nowadays with several robots performing work that was previously done manually. Also safety has been taken into account, and for example the edge protectors for the log saws are of the highest quality in Remscheid.

The log saws are used to cut the winded mother rolls into standard sized toilet paper rolls. The log saw blades are very sharp after they come out of production and they only need a small regrinding before starting. The sharper the blade is in the beginning, the less regrinding is needed. During the cutting of the tissue, the log saws are always grinded simultaneously. Also spraying systems can be included to reduce friction between tissue and the blade.

The end products from tissue paper include handkerchiefs, napkins, facial tissues and towels. Also for tissue paper production, doctor blades are used to clean for example the ink printed on the toilet papers, glue and the cylinders.

IKS Klingelberg's advantage for customers is individual service. This gives customers reason to buy even if the price is not the lowest.

3.3.4 Summary and relation to theory

The author's training period in Remscheid was fairly theoretical. It generated a good overall knowledge on the paper industry as a whole. Another main reason for this training period to be taken was to introduce the sales teams at TTT to their counterparts at Remscheid. Knowing the faces behind emails and phone calls created a better working atmosphere. This was important to the whole supply chain.

Training periods like these can enhance the coordination between organisations as well as personalise business transactions. Instead of contacting another organisation, people will contact another person. Dealing with people you know can be a lot easier than just dealing with unknown people.

Learning about new products in an unfamiliar field of industry cannot take place extensively in a week. Therefore the purpose of this entire training period in Germany was to provide the author a good basic knowledge and a base on which to build in the future. Apart from the technical aspect, an additional benefit gained from this training was the introduction of the people and organisations to each other. Especially with little experience, coordination between all the stakeholders will help to get the project started.

After having gained experience from working with the customers in Finland, another training period is possible to be arranged for the author. During this training period it would be better to go even further into detail regarding specific products and machine types. Doing it all at once would not be useful, as too much information at one time would be both confusing and miss the point.

Preliminary talks were held for another training period to take place during the year 2012 if this were seen as beneficial.

4 CONCLUSION

The training period in Germany provided the author with a lot of new practical information on the products and the industry as a whole. A successful salesman has to have good knowledge of the products he is selling, and that was the target behind the training period. Without any knowledge of the products or the industry, the project would be destined

to fail, so the training period was a vital part of the process when the expansion of TTT product portfolio started.

When a company starts from a small budget with few customers, the expectations are in accordance. The budgeting at TTT was done carefully so that everyone was in the same line. No one should expect exponential growth within the first year of the project, as it was not planned either. This project was planned to last for years and by carefully monitoring the progress during planned periods, the results will be seen in time.

One of the targets was to enhance the sales of the existing customers in the industry, by giving them more focus and appointing more time to nurturing the customer relationships. Another target was to acquire new customers that would bring growth and revenue to the company. The purpose was to take over customers from competitors and to become the main supplier of consumable parts of the customers' manufacturing lines.

By launching negotiations and introducing TTT to customers, TTT will enhance its visibility. But taking over customers from competitors is more difficult. Changing from a working system to another makes little sense if the benefits are not adequate. Therefore TTT has to show that making the change would bring several benefits such as a better quality or savings in costs to the customers. Some customers might still be resistant to change just in principle, but that is something the seller has to prepare for.

It has been estimated that beginning expanding the product portfolio will be difficult, but the company is prepared to invest in the project so that it will gain some foothold in the industry. Finding out small problems with customers and solving them will open new doors for solving bigger problems. If these difficult projects are conducted well, the customers will see the benefits of working with TTT and start investing in the relationship themselves.

As with product life cycle in general, also in the early stages of this process the profits are not estimated to be great. In the introduction phase it is important to gain some foothold for the latter stages in the project. As growth begins, profits will start to rise and when the project has reached a mature stage, the profits will be high enough for the whole process to become profitable.

As growth strategy, the path chosen by TTT looks a bit like a combination of various strategies, including market penetration, market development and diversification. The process could be described as market penetration, because some customers already exist that purchase the products. The strategy also resembles market development, as new customers are approached and therefore new markets are explored.

As the outcomes of this training process and data gathering, this experience can be used as an example for future projects; as a kind of 'preparations for the seller –manual' that can be used as a benchmark and a comparison in similar situations.

A similar training period is recommended, as it has clearly provided beneficial information and experience both concerning the products and a general knowledge of the industry. A training period can also enhance organisation dynamics and atmosphere by introducing people from different organisations to each other.

Support from the top of the organisation is required to enable the sales managers to offer incentives to customers in order to win them over. At TTT the support came from as high as the parent company, but also from within the TTT organisation.

During the training period in Remscheid at IKS Klingelberg facilities, a workshop for entering Russian markets with new products was held. The results of this workshop can also be used as an example for the upcoming negotiations with new customers.

In the workshop it was noted, that technical support is required from the manufacturing company, especially in the beginning of negotiations. In this project, that is partly covered with the technical training period but also with good communication level, an aspect that was also enhanced during the visits. Organising the working systems inside the Group, such as synchronizing the SAP system were deemed important. In this project, this has also been taken into account and many similarities in working habits as well as the systems were found during the visits.

A detailed action plan is to be made separately for each and every customer that will be approached. For the action plan, several tools are available for use. For example, an excel template was provided by Rolf Meyer, that helps making a thorough knife mapping of any given customer's machines. Also, various powerpoint presentations and product brochures were provided by Rolf Meyer as well as IKS Klingelberg.

All this material will be of great help to illustrate the presentations given to customers, and therefore aid in the negotiations. Negotiations with different customers will be different, but will have a similar pattern. This pattern consists of giving a presentation of the company and products using the powerpoint presentation and brochures, and then finding out the current situation, machines in use and possible problems with existing systems. Knife mapping will be done using excel templates and then possible offers can be given to the customer.

The new customers have been targeted, and they have been evaluated as having potential for growth that is required for the project to be profitable.

Further negotiations will take place with different companies during the year 2012. The success of these negotiations will provide the author a better picture of the success of the project as a whole.

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