UNIVERISTY OF VAASA
FACULTY OF BUSINESS STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

Samuel Johnson Ogundipe, w100936

Solution Sales Process Blueprinting (SSPB): A visual representation of value creating activities in sales process implementation

Master's Thesis in
Strategic Management

VAASA 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS page

LIST OF FIGURES

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA
Faculty of business studies
Author: Samuel Johnson Ogundipe
Topic of Thesis: Solution Sales Process Blueprinting (SSPB): A visual representation of value creating activities in sales process implementation
Name of supervisor: Marko Kohtamäki
Degree: Master's Degree in Business studies
Department: Department of Management
Major Subject: Strategic Management
Year of Entering the University: 2013
Year of Completing the Master's Thesis: 2015
Pages: 95

ABSTRACT
The dynamism and the increasing competition in the B2B market environment has forced many manufacturing organizations to transform their selling orientation and practices from purely product oriented sales to solution selling in order to maintain their competitive positions and adapt to the continuously changing customer's needs. The transformation necessitates major changes within the organizations and also in its interactions with customers, most noticeably the sales process.

Although, firms' transition to solution providers is not a new phenomenon in sales literature, studies focusing on the changes in the sales process are fragmented. Additionally, most of the studies depicting the sales process have mainly concentrated on the different selling activities without incorporating the actors that are involved in the process, or visualizing the different customer touch-points, which are important in order to develop broader understanding of the firm selling practices and for identifying sources of opportunities.

Therefore, by utilizing a process mapping techniques, known as blueprinting, this study contributes to existing knowledge by developing a sales process framework that visualizes different activities and customer touch-points in the sales process as well as actors carrying out those activities. A qualitative research method in the form of face-to-face interviews was utilized for collecting data from 8 Finnish manufacturing firms that are currently undergoing transitions to solution providers. Data analysis was carried out through a combination of within-case and cross-case analyses.

The results show that firms are interacting with customers not only during the sales phase of the process, but also during manufacturing and post sales delivery to acquire and disseminate new information. However, the process blueprint that was developed in the research reveals the need for improvements in the firms' sales process design, in order to better integrate the service function into the selling phase and to enhance the opportunities for post sales customer support.

KEYWORDS: Solution Selling, Sales Process, Blueprinting, Relationship Selling, Customer Orientation.

1 Introduction

The complexity in the business environment in industrial market, coupled with continuous advancement of sales technology has, more than ever, increased the challenges of sales organization to meeting customers' expectations and needs (Geiger & Guenzi, 2009; Ingram, 2004). And, as a result of the changes in customers' expectations and market turbulence, many companies are going through significant changes by developing strong linkages with their customers through market orientation, building strategic relationships, improving processes and structures, engaging in cross functional interactions and team selling, and developing new sales metric - such as, account profitability, customer lifetime value and account equity (LaForge, Ingram, & Cravens, 2009). More so, many manufacturing companies are repositioning themselves as solution providers by quickly responding to customers' changing needs through the integration of high level customer support and services to their core competencies in products and product developments (Shepherd & Ahmed, 2000).

According to Anderson (1996), the changes in selling orientation as we witness in today's market is driven by three main forces namely; behavioral forces (e.g. customer sophistication and market globalization), technological forces (e.g. sales force automation, electronic sales channels), and managerial forces, such as, direct marketing and the integration of sales and marketing function (Anderson, 1996). Of all the three forces, Marshal and colleagues, argued that technology is the most important driver of the changes in sales activities especially as a means to enhance salespeople-customer relationship through facilities like audio-video conferencing, webpages information update, email, voicemail etc. (Marshall, Moncrief, & Lassk, 1999).

Consequently, there has been major shift in sales process such that salespeople are shifting focus from merely closing sales deals to actually establishing long term relationship with customers (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). Likewise, industrial sales process has been transformed from extensively transactional oriented sales to a non-sequential long term relational process in which the focus of the sales effort is directed towards meeting customers need rather than on the quality or features of the products to be sold (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). These changes in orientation are not only manifesting in organizational practices but has also prompted transitions of research agenda in sales literature in order to

generate studies that are relevant to supporting the continuous update of managerial decisions and practices in sales profession (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2007; Ingram, LaForge, & Leigh, 2002; Williams & Plouffe, 2007). In this regard, a series of research have ensued that focused on providing answers to different selling orientations and practices such as, adaptive selling (Román & Iacobucci, 2010; Viio & Grönroos, 2014), consultative selling (Liu & Leach, 2001) market orientation and customer centricity (Galbraith, 2002; Gebauer & Kowalkowski, 2012; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Slater & Narver, 1995) as well as solutions selling (Cova & Salle, 2008; Matthyssens & Vandenbempt, 2008; Storbacka, Ryals, Davies, & Nenonen, 2009; Tuli, Kohli, & Bharadwaj, 2007).

However, despite these pools of research in sales literature that are dedicated to providing answers to changes in selling orientation and sales processes, it is not surprising that there is no generic framework or model for sales process especially in complex B2B situations. Unlike manufacturing processes which are, in most cases, standardized and repetitive, sales processes tend to vary dramatically across industries, companies, salespeople, and circumstances (Barber & Tietje, 2008). Hence, existing sales process frameworks focus on different perspectives such as project life cycle (Brady, Davies, & Gann, 2005), relational process (Tuli et al., 2007), value based selling (Töytäri, Brashear Alejandro, Parvinen, Ollila, & Rosendahl, 2011), operational process (Kindström & Kowalkowski, 2009), solution business model development (Storbacka, 2011), and strategic transition in sales management (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). While it is unarguably true that all these frameworks provide valuable insight of sales process in their respective perspectives, or at least, highlight the major milestones within the sales process, none is able to provide sufficient visualization of different customer touch-points and the specific value creating activities in the sales process, or identify the role of different actors that are involved in the sales process implementation; thereby rendering the frameworks too simplistic for practical applications.

Hence, by focusing specifically on the details of the selling processes of some industrial solution providers, this study attempts at mapping out important value creating activities and customer touch-points within the process in order to develop a comprehensive overview of the sales process using a process modelling technique known as blueprinting framework. As posited by Bitner and colleagues (2008), process blueprinting provides a

multilevel visualization of different activities and stakeholders (customers, managers, frontline and back office supporting employees) that are involved in a process, and a blueprinted process can be easily adapted to changes during process implementation (Bitner, Ostrom, & Morgan, 2008).

Thus, as a source of managerial contributions, it is expected that the developed process blueprinting in this study will be essentially important for salespeople's and sales manager's knowledge development especially for the continuous redesigning and alignment of different organizational systems with the selling activities (Marshall et al., 1999). Despite the plethora contribution in extant literature on the application of blueprinting frameworks (Berkley, 1996; Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004), most of the studies have majorly focused on the service industry (e.g. airline and hotel industry) mainly because the service blueprinting is suitable for purely service oriented processes (Bitner et al., 2008; Kostopoulos, Gounaris, & Boukis, 2012).

Therefore, there is also opportunity for theoretical contribution on the application of the blueprinting framework in the solution oriented sales processes. As a fact, Biege and colleagues (2012) recommended its application in industrial firms, such as project organizations, and has recently developed an improved version of the service blueprinting, coined as industrial service blueprinting (ISB), that is specifically designed for process mapping in manufacturing organizations that are transiting towards solution offerings (Biege, Lay, & Buschak, 2012). Since the existing service blueprinting framework is customer oriented which allows service providers not only to view service processes from customer's perspective, but also, to spot failure points as well as opportunity for innovations and improvements within the process (Bitner et al., 2008) , it is safe to assume that the application of blueprinting framework in solution context will enable solution providers to identify latent value elements in the solution sales process. Thus, through face-to-face qualitative interviews with sales managers/directors of selected project based solution providers and extensive review of existing solution sales process frameworks, this study aims at answering the following questions:

1.1 Research question

- From solution providers' perspective; what are the critical value creating activities in industrial solution sales process? and

- How might the sales process of firms transiting from manufacturing to solution providers be structured around the value activities and customer touch-points?

1.2 Research Objectives

- To identify the activities that are considered valuable and important by solution providers in solution selling
- To understand how the activities are implemented within different milestones in the solution sales process
- And to develop a solution sales process map with a comprehensive visualization of these activities and different points of contacts with customers using blueprinting technique.

1.3 Structure of the study

The first chapter contains the introduction of the study in which the main background of the study and the need for the current research are presented. The gaps in the previous studies which led to the formation of the research question and objectives are also presented in the end of the chapter. In the second chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is presented as follows: conceptualization of solution in chapter 2.1, the transformation of B2B selling orientation towards solution sales is presented in chapter 2.2: in order to identify the changes in sales activities as firms transform from manufacturing to solution providers, and to detect the factors that are causing the changes as well as the impacts of the changes on the sales process.

In chapter 2.3, six different industrial sales process frameworks are analyzed so as to identify overlaps and differences between the frameworks; to gain deeper understanding of the different milestones in each of the sales processes, and to highlight important value elements that might be useful for the sales process blueprinting in the empirical part of the study. This is followed by chapter 2.4, in which the generic blueprinting framework is discussed to develop theoretical knowledge of blueprinting application in process mapping. The methodology of the study is then presented in chapter 3; case analysis, findings and results are discussed in chapter 4. Finally, conclusions and recommendations for further study are presented in chapter 5.

2 Literature review

2.1 Solution as a theoretical concept

There is presently no consensus among academia on the concept of solution despite the pool of research in the domain of solution selling (Töllner, Blut, & Holzmüller, 2011). According to Eades (2003), the common conception that solution is "an answer to a problem" is only partly correct especially in business context. Eades defined solution as "*a mutually shared answer to a recognized problem, and the answer provides measurable improvement*" (Eades, 2003). The author stressed the need for interactions and mutual agreement between a supplier and the customers as important element of solution and added that the solution must be channeled towards solving a recognizable problem in the customers' domain. More so, the solution must provide a certain degree of improvement on the customers' business e.g. cost saving or reduction in production cycle.

A different but complementary definition of solution was provided by Adamson and colleagues (2012), as *"complex combinations of products and services"* (Adamson, Dixon, & Toman, 2012). While Eades definition focused on relational approach of "**how"** problems are solved in solution settings, Adamson and colleagues' definition is arguably, more centered on the suppliers' perspective with specific focus on the constituent element **("what"**) of the bundled offering (solution). As posited by Eades and Kear (2006), product service bundling is no more a sufficient definition of solution for any organization that desire to breakthrough in today's competitive world (Eades & Kear, 2006), where the term solution has almost lost its meaning as simply mere catch-phrase for marketing purpose (Eades, 2003). Hence, true solution centric organizations create market differentiation and competitiveness by developing a mindset that defines their business not by the products or services they offer but how effectively they solve customers' problem (Eades & Kear, 2006).

Interestingly, Sawhney (2006) introduced the concept of "customization" and "integration" to the definition of solution. According to the author, *"solution is an integrated combination of products and services customized for a set of customers that allows customers to achieve better outcome than the sum of the individual components of the solution"* (Sawhney, 2006). Foote and colleagues (2001), shared similar definition with Sawhney (2006) but added that optimal value solution can be achieved by "merging the

supplier's and the customer's operations—to solve a complete customer problem" (Foote, Galbraith, Hope, & Miller, 2001). Such business models that require the integration of supplier's and customers' operation seem promising because it may facilitate the development of long term partnership between both parties and, in agreement with Eades'(2003) definition, fosters shared decision making in recognizing and solving customers' problems (Eades, 2003). However, it also demand that all functions within suppliers' organization to develop customer orientation and co-produce value through multiple resource integration, effective communication and knowledge sharing (Le Meunier-FitzHugh, Baumann, Palmer, & Wilson, 2011).

Considering all the above definitions, there seems to be no particular definition that completely describes the definition of solution. However, by combining all the definitions, the following elements were identified; mutual agreement, need satisfaction, measurable improvement, interactive and relational process, product-service integration, problem identification, problem solving, offering customization, operational integration, and value co-production. In view of all these identified elements, the definition provided in the work of Tuli and colleagues (2007), is arguably the most comprehensive definition of solution. The main elements missing in the definition are, *"problem recognition"* and *"measurable improvement"*; which means that solution should provide results to customers that are superior to the value that the customers would derive should the components of the solution be purchased separately (Eades, 2003; Sawhney, 2006).

Hence, with the addition of *"measurable improvement"* and *"problem identification"*, the definition of Tuli and colleagues will be adopted in this study. Solution is hereby defined as "*a set of customer–supplier relational processes channeled towards the* ***(1) Identification of customer problems****, (2) definition of customer requirements, (3) customization and integration of goods and/or services and (4) their deployment, and (5) post deployment customer support, all of which are aimed at meeting customers' business needs* ***and to achieve measurable improvement in customers' operation*** (Tuli et al., 2007).

2.2 The dominant research streams in solution business

Although there are several literature on solution business, all the studies seems to revolve around three main research streams namely; product service system (PSS), integrated solutions, and experiential services (Pawar, Beltagui, & Riedel, 2009) .

2.2.1 Product service systems

Through continuous service addition to product offerings, the proponents of PSS posited that the consumption of natural resources can become more sustainable and the environmental impact of product utilization can be reduced by offering services such as system upgrades and product recycle (Mont, 2002; White, Stoughton, & Feng, 1999) . Consequently, the positive environmental impact of product-service bundling, can be utilized to influencing policy makers in making decisions that favors the proliferation of the PSS approach (Mont & Lindhqvist, 2003) .

More so, by shifting focus from conventional products to services (e.g. selling capabilities) through activities such as leasing or product sharing, material utilization as well as the development of a closed product life cycle can be affected (Morelli, 2006). However, the difficulties to convince customers to accept the products sharing approach or to assess the readiness of companies to adopt the PSS system, and the environmental implications of the PSS approach are still major issues of concerns for PSS implementation (Mont, 2002, 2004). Hence, there is a need for the development of new design methodologies (Morelli, 2006) and business models (Mont, Dalhammar, & Jacobsson, 2006) to facilitate the practical applications for managers.

2.2.2 Integrated solutions

Integrated solution research stream is most advantageous for companies that are struggling with decreasing margins as a result of intense market competition (Gebauer, Fleisch, & Friedli, 2005). The term, "integrated solution", refers to the complex combination of interdependent goods, knowledge, capabilities, services, and systems that generate higher value than the sum of its individual components (Johansson, Krishnamurthy, & Schlissberg, 2003). Studies on integrated solution mainly focus on financial sustainability which is claimed to be achievable through the development of capabilities that enhance the unique bundling of products and services that are tailored to meet customers' specific needs

and problems (Gebauer, Paiola, & Saccani, 2013; Mattsson & Palva, 2011; Paiola, Saccani, Perona, & Gebauer, 2013; Storbacka & Pennanen, 2014; Storbacka, 2011; Wise & Baumgartner, 1999).

By offering integrated solutions, solution providers have the possibilities to influence or assume control of customers' operational processes which; on the one hand, shift operational risks to the providers but on the other hand, creates avenue for long term relationship and continuous cash flow for the providers (Grönroos, 1994; Markeset & Kumar, 2005; Windahl & Lakemond, 2010). The customer also enjoys a reduction in operating cost especially in situation where the provider retain equipment ownership and the customers only pays for its usage (Grönroos, 1994; Markeset & Kumar, 2005; Windahl & Lakemond, 2010).

In this vein, effective implementation of integrated solution business model requires a major shift in business relations that contrast the conventional product business. For instance, rather than a target for sales, customers become an invaluable resource partner in value creation and business planning (Storbacka, Windahl, Nenonen, & Salonen, 2013; Storbacka, 2011). And the risk transfer offer solution providers opportunities for enhancing their value creation and capture. This is ensured via a reduction in customers' costs, which in turn enables the solution providers to capture a part of the value by charging premium prices (Storbacka & Pennanen, 2014).

One of the popular pricing logics utilized in integrated solutions is the value based pricing approach, whereby the provider and the customers both base compensation on a mutually agreed performance level (Storbacka & Pennanen, 2014; Storbacka et al., 2013). Hence, superior value is subject to the performance of the solution such that; over performance solution results in better positioning and above average rent for the solution providers whereas, underperformance may lead to huge losses from penalties, therefore, forecasting capability is important especially during cost setting (Storbacka & Pennanen, 2014).

It is important to note that delivering beyond expectation on one element of the total value package does not compensate for underperformance in other aspects of service or product offerings, so; customers' evaluation of performance extend beyond one transaction but includes all activities and interactions that are contained in the overall relationship

engagement (Burger & Cann, 1995). Therefore, the overall business wellbeing of a provider rests in the ability to comprehensively understand and identify the entire customers' expectation on all desired value dimensions (Wotruba, 1996).

2.2.3 Experiential services

The central assumption of the literature on "experiential services" is that company's market differentiation and the creation of competitive economic value as well as relationship development with customers is based on a focus on customers' experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The experience, in this case, is a product of customer's personal imagination and interpretation of the services consumed (Hume, Sullivan Mort, Liesch, & Winzar, 2006), that is developed overtime through series of interactions with the service provider (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Additionally, the experience is a reflection of customer's individual emotional response to the activities or events that takes place during service delivery, e.g. the attitude or behavior of the frontline officer of the service providers (Pullman & Gross, 2004).

Therefore, effective management of customers' experience encompasses the management of customers' emotion and feelings, which is essential in order to enhance the possibilities of gaining emotional bond with the customer and to influence the customer's loyalty (Haeckel, Carbone, & Berry, 2003; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011). Since the application of experiential services is mostly in business to consumer relationship, for instance, in hotel and restaurant industry (Zomerdijk & Voss, 2011), the relevance of the research stream to the current study is limited. Hence, no further review will be done for the experiential services research stream.

However, since it is difficult to clearly separate the PSS and integrated solutions research streams due to the overlapping arguments in both literature (Pawar et al., 2009), it is important to consider relevant elements from both research streams for the further development of the literature review in the current study. The paradox of interrelationship between PSS and integrated solutions can be explained by the assumption that firms are unlikely to adopt PSS approach without the expectation of long term financial sustainability; which is the central argument of integrated solutions research streams. Hence, rather than focusing exclusively on either PSS or integrated solutions research

stream, this study will draw inferences from both streams of literature in order to hopefully generate a comprehensive overview of the different changes that have taken place in the industrial business market in the last decades and to understand the impact of those changes on sales practices.

2.3 Transformation of selling orientation towards solution sales

The complexity in the business environment in industrial market, coupled with continuous advancement of sales technology has, more than ever, increased the challenges of sales organization to meeting customers' expectations and needs (Geiger & Guenzi, 2009; Ingram, 2004). And, as a result of the changes in customers' expectations and market turbulence, many companies are going through significant changes by developing strong linkages with their customers through market orientation, building strategic relationships, improving processes and structures, engaging in cross functional interactions and team selling, and developing new sales metric - such as, account profitability, customer lifetime value and account equity (LaForge et al., 2009). Many manufacturing companies are also repositioning themselves as solution providers by quickly responding to customers' changing needs through the integration of high level customer support and services to their core competencies in products and product developments (Shepherd & Ahmed, 2000).

This transition in industrial selling orientation has prompted major changes and the explosion of new ideas such as downsizing, ethical sensitivity, relationship marketing, micromarketing, reengineering, total quality, benchmarking etc., in manufacturing organizations, noticeably in the 1990s (Wotruba, 1996). This is necessitated by the need to continuously evolve with and adapt to the market dynamism that is characterized by; the internationalization of technology-driven competition, globalization of manufacturing which result from faster transitional flows of materials and money, compression of product lifecycles, the need for greater integration of technologies and increasingly sophisticated customers (Shepherd and Ahmed 2000).

Another important part of the transition is the need to shift focus from typical hierarchical manufacturing structure to a customer focused process structure and the changes in sales people's role as strategic orchestrator; who must work in collaboration with the marketing department to coordinates mutual working relationship and knowledge sharing across functions within the organization towards meeting customer's specific requirements

(LaForge et al., 2009; Le Meunier-FitzHugh et al., 2011; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2010). However, despite the importance of organization structure on firm performance especially in responding to the requirements of new strategies, LaForge and colleagues(2009), pointed out that changing organization design or structure is usually accompanied by the difficulties to change the rigidity of functional structures majorly in large firms (LaForge et al., 2009). Regardless of the benefits attached to overcoming functional boundaries and developing cross functional teams, it is not uncommon that sales people may still display unwillingness to share customer insights with other departments e.g. marketing, if they do not perceive any benefit in doing so (Homburg, Workman, & Jensen, 2000; O'Leary-Kelly & Flores, 2002; Storbacka et al., 2009).

Therefore, in order to promote customer-centered selling orientation across different functions in the organization, sales manager must take deliberate effort in establishing customer-centric culture and climate, and developed a customer focused sales force through recruiting, selecting, and training of salespeople, and channeling the efforts of salespeople towards the organization prescribed strategy (LaForge et al., 2009). Additionally, appropriate level of autonomy should be granted to the sales people in their dealings with the customers and their creative as well as innovative effort in meeting customers' needs should be encouraged and rewarded (Ingram et al., 2002). More so, sales manager can integrate service recovery systems in salespeople's training and sales process, which may include; failure identification, failure attribution, recovery strategy selection, recovery implementation, and evaluating sales effectiveness, in order to bolster the organization's customer orientation and to prepare the salespeople for occasional service failure which is inevitable in long-term customer engagement (Gonzalez, Hoffman, & Ingram, 2005; LaForge et al., 2009).

Furthermore, salespeople should be motivated to act as boundary spanner by gathering customer/market intelligence during encounter with the customers and disseminate the information to all departments in order to promote companywide learning of customers current and future needs (Le Meunier-FitzHugh et al., 2011; Slater & Narver, 1995; Wotruba, 1996). As posited by Wotruba (1996), such companywide commitment towards developing customer intelligence is invaluable for adapting the provider's value proposition to customers' evolving needs. The author further argued that, being customer focused extend beyond understanding and anticipating customers' product and service needs but

also demand that the providers proactively develop additional benefits and assistance to augment the total package of value supplied to the customer (Wotruba, 1996).

This requires that the provider familiarize with, and integrate own sales process to, the customers' procedural and administrative tasks as well as buying process (Ingram, LaForge, Avila, Schwepker, & Williams, 2006; Wotruba, 1996). Studies suggest that, understanding customers buying process and structure helps providers to more effectively adapt to different customer's situation and to gain access to key policy decision makers in the customer's organization which place the provider in a favorable position to influence the customers current and future purchases (Bunn, 1993; Ingram et al., 2006; Lewin & Donthu, 2005; Wotruba, 1996).

Consequently, the delivery of superior customer value require a transition in the sales process from a focus on selling tangible goods to a service-centered logic and relationship management approach (Storbacka et al., 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). According to Sheth and Sharma (2008);*"A service-centered view of exchange implies customized offerings to better fit customers' needs and identifying firm resources – both internal and external – to better satisfy the needs of customers*" (Sheth & Sharma, 2008, p. 262). In this selling arrangement, the traditional one way communication from marketing to customer is insufficient because the service dominant view demands continuous dialogue with customers which entails answering and asking questions (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) . Therefore, listening skills become an important virtue for success (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005), especially since the new sales process involves exchange of intangibles, specialized skills, knowledge, processes, and importantly, value co-creation with customers (LaForge et al., 2009). Which makes procedural effectiveness an important part of the total value package in customer relationship and also stipulates that the process of selling is not only giving way for service, rather, selling is gradually transforming into service (Wotruba, 1996).

And to establish good relationship, it is insufficient to periodically contact customers, but demands considerable relational investments in value activities such as customer's employees training, engaging in consultative and adaptive selling (e.g. by providing pre sales and after sales support), and supplying displays or systems to improve customers' operation (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Liu & Leach, 2001; Luca, Mario, Guenzi, & Troilo,

2011; Noordewier, John, & Nevin, 2013; Román & Iacobucci, 2010). These types of personalized efforts could evoke customers' long-term commitment to a provider in an attempt to reduce future administrative and acquisition costs, and could also be a basis for developing mutual dependence and trust with key members of customer organization (Wotruba, 1996).

As Le Meunier-FitzHugh and colleagues (2011) noted, trust is an essential component for establishing credible business relationship (Le Meunier-FitzHugh et al., 2011) and in order to build or win customers' trust, salespersons (or other representatives of supplier's organization) must demonstrate high level of market knowledge and industry expertise through consultative selling skills that is sufficient to create value for, and capture customers' loyalty by helping the customers achieve their business objectives and strategic goals (Ingram et al., 2006; Liu & Leach, 2001). The consultative selling therefore requires that the sales persons act as a strategic orchestrator, business consultant, and long term ally (Ingram et al., 2006). And by winning customer's trust, confidence, and commitment, a salesperson and, of course, the entire supplier organization, may launch into an advantageous position that will facilitate critical information sharing with the customer, which is valuable for unravelling hidden customer's problems, thereby providing the supplier with the opportunities to develop high value offerings that are specific to individual customer situations (Olson, Cravens, & Slater, 2001).

Arguably, relationship or solution selling extends the sales process beyond the delivery phase with the addition of postdeployment support such as, system maintenance and customers training (Tuli et al., 2007), and also with the strategic engagement of solution providers with the customers in pre-sales discussion in order to mutually identify customers' problems and needs (Brady et al., 2005). Also, with the introduction of such term as "winning buyers' commitment" , in the sales process, to replace the traditional term "closing sales deal" (LaForge et al., 2009), it appears that the entire selling philosophy is shifting from product or goods focused to customer centricity (Galbraith, 2002; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005); which may explain why Sheth and sharma (2008) suggest a revisit of the traditional depiction of sales process. In this regards, new selling processes and models has been recommended such as problem-solving, needs satisfaction, consultative selling, and value based selling (Ingram et al., 2006; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011).

Consultative selling is most suitable in situation where the customer is willing to share strategic priorities with the provider and, to reiterate the aforementioned, has a sense of trust on the provider's capability to support the customer's strategic initiatives (LaForge et al., 2009). Value based selling models focus on selling the impact of the provider's offering on customers' operation and, similar to consultative selling, is driven by customers' willingness to collaborate with the provider as well as the perceived value of the relationship by both parties (Töytäri et al., 2011). These types of selling processes ultimately require that the providers offer technical or professional services as part of a pre-sale effort and to place the customers' buying and operational processes at the center of the offering, for instance, by developing process-centered services to support and improve continuously the utilization and effectiveness of the installed base over its life cycle as opposed to transactional and product based services such as installation and commissioning of new products (Oliva & Kallenberg, 2003).

However, in accordance with Oliva and Kallenberg (2003), there are two important challenges that are associated with process-centered services. Firstly, the firm adopting process-centered services needs to develop professional service infrastructure and a new service network which demands a different set of HR and knowledge management capabilities that can be replicated. Secondly, there is need for organizational restructuring from manufacturing to service oriented structure which demands the establishment of new distribution channels and a different set of contacts in the end-user organization (Oliva & Kallenberg, 2003). The approaches to meet these challenges rests on a variety of factors such as; the nature of the business in which the firm is operating, the dynamism of market forces, as well as the required resources and skills to meet the firm's business objectives (Shepherd & Ahmed, 2000).

Another important challenge that is gradually gaining importance among scholars of solution business is pricing; because, unlike the traditional selling of goods in which pricing is based on the cost of production, the pricing concept is more challenging to determine in the context of solution selling due to several reasons, such as the difficulties to measure or apportion price to service which is a major component of solution (Bonnemeier, Burianek, & Reichwald, 2010). The three major pricing logics in industrial market are; value-based pricing, competition-based pricing, and cost based pricing, and despite the low adoption rate amongst practitioners, value-based pricing is considered the most superior by

marketing scholars (Liozu, Hinterhuber, Perelli, & Boland, 2012) due to the acclaimed possibility of generating above average profit through its adoption (Hinterhuber, 2008). A claim that is substantiated by Hinterhuber (2004), who posited that firms can increase their earnings before interest by 22% by increasing average selling price by 5% (Hinterhuber, 2004).

Perhaps, cost-based pricing is most suitable for pure product manufacturers because the price setting in this arrangement is based primarily on the cost of production plus additional margin and the basic tenet for pricing accuracy as well as profitability is that the provider familiarize with all the cost, either fixed or variable, that are associated with the products (Monroe, 1990). Likewise, the competition-based pricing in which the prices offered by competitors in the same market are used as the basis for setting price ceilings, may be less suitable for the service orientation and individualized offerings that characterize solution selling (Ingenbleek, Debruyne, Frambach, & Verhallen, 2003). Competition-based pricing is also product oriented and firms that adopt the pricing logic will typically orientate their product pricing in relation to market competition based on the principle of higher value higher price and lower value lower price (Hinterhuber, 2008).

However, the proposition for value based pricing has been suggested to be most suitable for solution sales especially for passive buyers due to the possibilities of convincing the passive buyers of a need for new solutions by clearly demonstrating the potential value that could be derived from value-based offerings (Baines & Lightfoot, 2013; Storbacka & Pennanen, 2014). Price setting in value-based pricing logic is based on the performance of the product or solution sold to the customers (Storbacka et al., 2013) which, on one hand, allow the provider to participate in the superior quality that the offering delivers but, on the other hand, exposes the supplier to the risk that may result from poor performance of the offerings which may eventually lead to under compensation. Therefore, it is recommended that firms undergo extensive research about customers and the market environment before embarking on performance based pricing model (Hinterhuber, 2008).

Based on the reviewed literature so far, it is obvious that solution selling is centered on offering value to and maintaining relationship with customers, and the transition of manufacturing towards solution selling requires change in selling orientation, organization structure and sales process. The issue on selling orientation has been thoroughly reviewed

but no detailed review will be conducted on the organization restructuring because it is not within the scope of the current study. Hence, the next section will be dedicated to analyzing different industrial sales process frameworks in the literature; in order to identify possible overlaps between the major milestones of the frameworks and to highlight important value elements within the sales processes which is expected to help in developing fundamental theoretical knowledge that might be especially useful for the sales process blueprinting in the empirical part of the study.

2.4 Industrial Sales Process frameworks

In this section, the solution sales process is presented from 5 different perspectives which are: relationship selling perspective, project life cycle perspective, value-based selling perspective, customer solution perspective and supplier solution perspective.

2.4.1 Relationship based sales process

As shown in figure 1 below, Moncrief and Marshall's (2005) sales process is a customer centric process with the ultimate focus on managing long term customer relationship along 7 different steps that happen through natural progression based on the nature of interaction between the seller and individual buyer. One important element of this process is that it is non-sequential, i.e., not necessary for all the seven steps to take place in every sales cases and also importantly, the order of event between the 7 steps can take different forms base on a variety of internal and external factors between the buying and the selling organization.

Figure 1. Relationship based sales process (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005, p. 19)

However, according to the authors, the customer retention and deletion stage could be a good starting point. This stage involves customer segmentation and prioritization, and it is recommended that sales effort and resources should be invested on retaining existing customers that have profitability potential for the selling organization. It was suggested that sales organization should only seek to acquire new customers if the expected benefits from the customer outweigh the cost of acquisition.

The second stage, that is, database and knowledge management, involves salespeople's and sales organization's role in providing support to other departments within the selling organization, and also improving the level of professionalism in customer interaction, through extensive customer research by relying on different database and knowledge management systems (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). This stage stress the impact of CRM and technological development on the sales process as also identified by other authors, e.g. (Storbacka, Polsa, & Sääksjärvi, 2011). The third stage is the relationship selling phase and the central argument at this stage is that selling organization should focus on services that enable the development of long term relationship with the customers, and according to the authors, this is only possible with existing customers with whom the selling organization already started a relationship (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005).

The next milestone is marketing and the main value element at this stage is that salespeople break the lone-wolf tendencies (Mulki, Jaramillo, & Marshall, 2007) that characterized the traditional selling process and engage in boundary spanning role by taking up more marketing functions and stimulating support from other functional units through team selling effort (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). This means that there is need for stronger and mutual working relationship between marketing and sales as already pointed out by other authors (Homburg et al., 2000; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2010; O'Leary-Kelly & Flores, 2002) . And as recommended by Moncrief and Marshal (2005), marketing effort could be facilitated and improved through the use of national advertising agencies and modern technologies e.g. frequent updates of information on the official webpage of the selling organization as well as email communication instead of face-to-face interaction which is time consuming and require more resources.

The next step is problem solving and this involves mutual problem identification with customers. An important value element at this stage is the ability of the sales person to act as a consultant and valued partner with the customer in identifying the customer's evolving needs as well as proposing solutions, based on the selling organization's resources, that meet the needs (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). After this comes the value adding or need satisfaction stage. So, rather than investing sales effort on closing one sales deal, the effort is channeled towards providing solution that add value to the customers' business and that encourage continuous business relationship with the customer (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). And instead of relying on periodic contacts or closing deals, this requires frequent interactions with the customers through several sales calls and consulting, to ensure the continuity of the relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987; Liu & Leach, 2001; Luca et al., 2011; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005; Noordewier et al., 2013; Román & Iacobucci, 2010).

The final phase is the relationship maintenance and this involves a shift of focus from basic sales follow up activities, such as, customer appreciation through thank you letters or product functionality inspection, to a more formalized arrangement that involves dedicating specialized individuals or teams e.g. salespeople or other members of the selling organization to be solemnly responsible for maintain customer long term relationship by rendering continuous service and business building consultation (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). This type of relationship maintenance is similar to the recommendation of Oliva and

Kallenberg (2003), that firm should shift focus from product oriented services to process and life cycle oriented services.

2.4.2 Project based solution sales process

In line with life cycle oriented services, Brady and colleagues (2005) proposed a sales process for integrated solution based on project life cycle management. As depicted in Figure 2 below (see page 26), the process continues in endless cycle around four major milestones (pre-bid, bid, project execution, and post-project activities) that are implemented towards customers' value creation and need satisfaction.

In the pre-bid phase, the senior commercial and bid managers from solution provider's organization engage in strategic discussion and pre-bid negotiation with the customer (either new or existing) in order to discover the customer 'operational problems and needs especially, those needs that are associated with the products' or systems' day-to-day and life cycle utilization. In accordance with Brady and colleagues (2005), the main value elements of the pre-bid discussion is the ability of the representative of the solution providers to demonstrate high level consulting capabilities in providing recommendations that will help the customers improve or remodel their business operations (Brady et al., 2005). This phase encompasses the relationship selling, marketing the product, problem solving, and need satisfaction phase of the Moncrief and Marshal's (2005) framework. The only difference is that, Brady and colleagues (2005) had no objection or reservation against new customer acquisition but Moncrief and Marshal (2005) suggest that selling effort should be dedicated mainly to existing customers with whom the provider had already established strategic partnership.

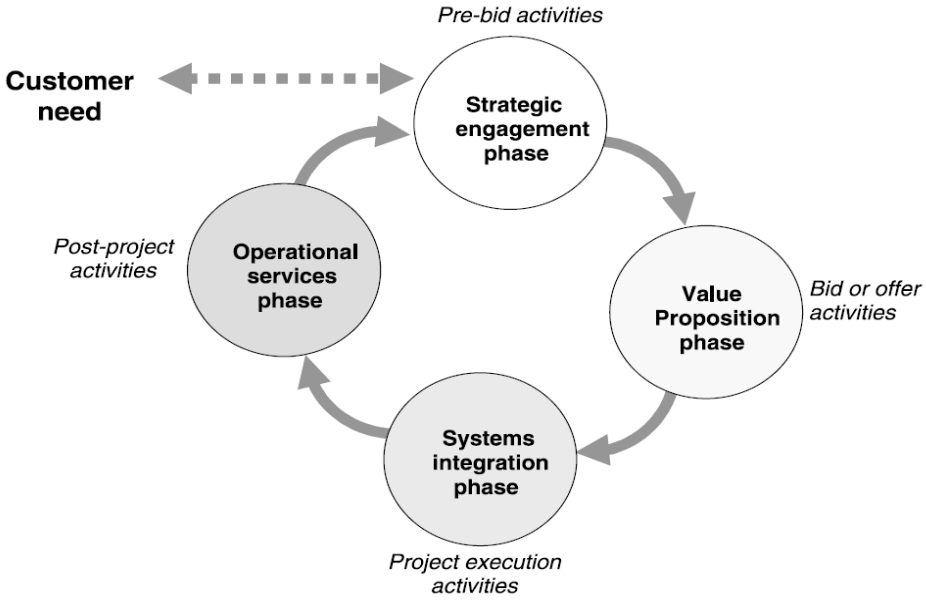


Figure 2. Integrated solution life cycle (Brady et al., 2005, p. 363)

However, at the value proposition phase, Brady and colleagues (2005) also opined that value proposition is provided as a bid for new or potential customers in a competitive tendering process but as an offer for existing customers with whom strategic partnership is already established. Another major distinction is that Brady and colleagues (2005) include contract making as part of the sales process, whereas this is missing in Moncrief and Marshal's(2005) work. And according to the authors, Contract must be made before project execution phase and the contract making must be done by a proposal team that includes representatives from different functional units such as, commercial management, technical design, and project management (Brady et al., 2005).

The main value element of an integrated solution contract is the ability of the proposal team to win customers' acceptance and trust to mutually develop the contract and measures for value quantification. This is essentially important because it gives the proposal team the opportunity to gain proper understanding of the customer's requirement that will aid in the project execution phase; for the customization of product and service offerings to solve the customer's specific business problems and to eventually exceed or, at least, meet the customer's expectations. More so, designing the contract with customer presents the

proposal team an avenue to reach agreement with the customer on specific metrics (e.g. pricing and margins, risk distribution, volume and mix of products and services, and capital cost) for measuring value, and assessing the lifetime cost, of the solution (Brady et al., 2005).

The system integration or project execution phase starts after the contract has been agreed and it involves the establishment of project organization that will implement the solution. The core value elements are the ability to design and integrate the systems according to customer's specifications and to deliver the solution to the customer within agreed time; planned budget; and importantly; to achieve high level of customer's satisfaction (Brady et al., 2005). Similar to the relationship maintenance phase of the Moncrief and Marshal's (2005) framework, Brady and colleagues' (2005) also suggest a post-delivery customer support and services at the fourth phase of their framework, which includes life cycle management of the delivered solution. This arrangement places the provider in strategic position to obtain valuable and up-to-date information about the system or product functionality and then disseminate the information to the product unit for knowledge development and product innovation (Brady et al., 2005).

2.4.3 Value based solution sales processes

Unlike the first two presented sales process frameworks that are in endless cycle, Storbacka's (2011) proposed value-based sales process is linear, containing four major milestones which are; develop solution, create demand, sell solution and deliver solution (Storbacka, 2011). The framework is recommended to be suitable for firms that are transforming from product sellers to solution providers. And considering the complexity of offering solution and the political tension that may arise between the sales and the production unit, the author further explained, as shown in figure 3 below, how firm can establish balance between customization and industrialization, as well as develop support platform for managing the solution business. In the commercial phase, the capabilities of the solution provider to manage the sales process and receive compensation are described, whereas, in the industrialization phase, the author explained the capabilities required to effectively produce and deliver solutions.

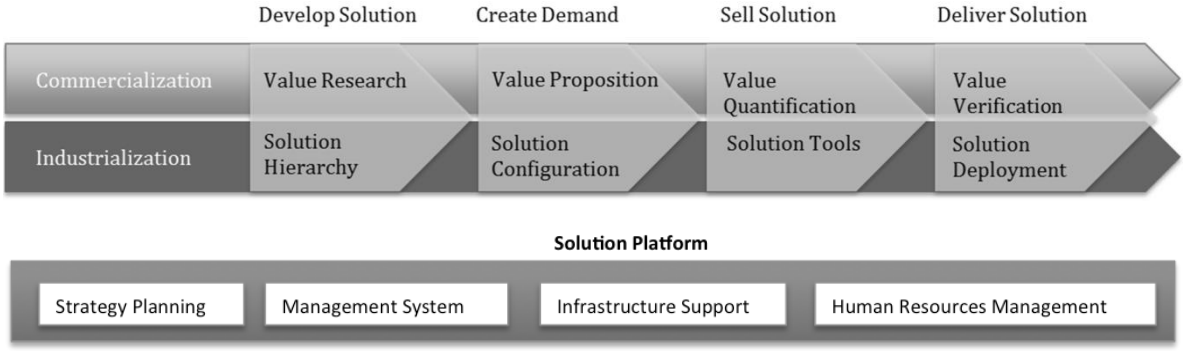


Figure 3. The solution business framework (Storbacka, 2011, p. 703)

In the first phase of the sales process, i.e. develop solution, the solution provider conducts market research, usually through regular planning with lead customers, in order to mutually create new ideas and superior value by combining the customer's insight with the firm's capabilities and resources. And, in order to tailor the solution to specific customer's needs and still achieve mass customization, the basic components of the solution are standardized and modularized; which gives room for flexibility for the provider to easily adapt to different customer's requirements (Storbacka, 2011). This phase of the model introduce the use of lead customer for new idea creation, which is missing in the first two presented frameworks.

However, similar to the value proposition phase of the Brady and colleagues' (2005) framework, and the relationship selling and marketing the product phase of the Moncrief and Marshal's (2005) framework, Storbacka (2011) also suggests that solution provider stimulate customers' interest and create demand through value proposition at the second phase of the sales process. Strong marketing is needed at this stage for awareness creation and the firm can achieve this by partnering with industry associations and through internal collaboration between product and marketing managers for campaign development (Storbacka, 2011). The value proposition should be based on the specific segment needs identified during market research that was initially conducted for different market segments. And the main differentiation capability is the ability to demonstrate the need for the new solution and the expected impact on the customers' operation (Storbacka, 2011), and as already established in other frameworks, consulting capability is highly required at this stage (Brady et al., 2005; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005).

At the third stage, the provider move from addressing market segment to individual customer level in order to sell the solution. According to Storbacka (2011), the solution provider needs solution configurators at this stage in order to modify the various modules to fit specific business needs of individual customers (Storbacka, 2011). Similar to what is termed as negotiation by Brady and Colleagues (2011), this stage is done in collaboration with the decision makers of the customer's organization and it includes value quantification and pricing of the solution (Brady et al., 2005; Storbacka, 2011). The value quantification could either be based on product features, in which case, the product qualities are the differentiator and cost based pricing are most appropriate, on the other hand, value quantification could be customer oriented, and this is based on the customers' purchasing process, financial situation and industry structure, and this may require the combination of competition-based and value-based pricing (Hinterhuber, 2008; Liozu et al., 2012; Storbacka, 2011).

The last stage of the sales process includes solution delivery and value verification which is the most obvious difference between Storbacka's (2011) framework and the two earlier discussed frameworks especially in terms of measuring and verifying the financial impacts of the delivered solution on the customers' operation. However, the process of value verification is similar to the relationship maintenance and operational services identified in the other two frameworks (Brady et al., 2005; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005; Storbacka, 2011). The use of value verification allows the provider to bargain on performance based compensation with customers and since this is a continuous process, it gives the provider the opportunity to establish long term mutually benefiting relationship with the customer (Burger & Cann, 1995; Storbacka & Pennanen, 2014; Storbacka et al., 2013; Storbacka, 2011). Furthermore, customers that engage in ongoing relationship could be very valuable as reference cases for new customers and the information obtained during value verification could documented and utilized for new solution development that can be replicated and sold to other customers (Storbacka, 2011).

Similar to Storbacka's (2011) framework; Töytari and colleagues (2011) as well as Kaario and colleagues (2003) also proposed a linear value based sales process but without the support platform. All the three processes share common factors, in terms of customer centricity, value quantification, value verification/validation and value documentation (Kaario, Pennanen, & Storbacka, 2003; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011). The main

difference is that three important stages of the sales process namely; identification of suitable customer, understanding customer business, and positioning own offering, are visually represented in Töytäri and colleagues's (2011) framework but not in Storbacka's framework (Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011).

Additionally, while Kaario and colleagues (2003) suggests that solution effort should be dedicated to understanding and enhancing customers' business process, Storbacka's (2011) as well as Töytäri and colleagues' (2011) framework concentrated on understanding and enhancing customers' business operation. Another difference is that, Storbacka (2011) recommended that customer research and new solution creation be conducted in collaboration with lead customers, whereas, Töytäri and colleagues (2011), advocated that these activities be done internally within providers organization (Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011). With the inclusion of result maintenance, sustenance and support phase in the sales process, the work of Roune and colleagues (2011) on result selling extends the sales process beyond the value verification phase, which was the final stage in the other reviewed value based sales processes (Kaario et al., 2003; Roune, Bristow, & Terho, 2011; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011).

2.4.4 Customer/Supplier perspectives on solution sales process

According to Eades (2003), successful implementation of solution sales demands that the sales process be considered from both the provider's and customer's perspectives (Eades, 2003). From customers perspective, this implies that the provider should first familiarize with different steps in the customers' purchasing process, such as identifying and assessing the customers' buying need, buying behavior, buying center, and buying situation (Ingram et al., 2006) and then select or segment the customers based on different measurements, e.g. current and future profitability potential, as well as strategic fit to the organization (Storbacka et al., 2011). And investment of sales effort or customer prioritization should be based on the possibility of the customers (either existing or new) to accept the business logic and value proposition approach set forth by the selling organization or the customers whose buying process fit the sellers' solution (Ingram et al., 2006; Kowalkowski, 2011; Storbacka et al., 2011), in this way, business and operational risk could be minimized.

Following the segmentation of customers and the identification of strategic fit between the buying and selling process, the selling organization, usually the sales person, should secure

access to decision makers or mobilizers in the buying center, establish contact, present the value proposition in the form of sales negotiation and aim to finalize the deal towards profitability (Adamson et al., 2012; Eades, 2003; Ingram et al., 2006). This process is facilitated by a set of sales tools and support from the management system who are responsible for providing information and guidance to the salesperson on the probability of sales success (Eades, 2003; Storbacka, 2011). Additionally, as shown in the flowchart diagram below, from a supplier's perspective, Eades (2003) recommends that the provider should have different sales process for active and passive buyers (Eades, 2003).

According to the author, active buyers are the customers that are actively seeking solution while passive buyers are those customers that are unaware of the potential benefits that can be derived from solution (Eades, 2003). The first step in the sales process for an active buyer is to clarify if the provider's offering can meet the customer's demand and to decide what competitive strategy is required to approach the customer in order to possibly influence the customer's vision with the proposed solution (Eades, 2003). After this is established, the provider should secure access to the decision makers, or mobilizers as posited by Adamson and colleagues (2012), in the buying center to negotiate on critical factors about the proposed sales e.g. pricing measures and metrics to assess the performance of the solution (Adamson et al., 2012; Eades, 2003). It is important to agree on the performance criteria during negotiation in order to assess the solution after the delivery phase and to prove to the customers that the proposed benefits were realized (Brady et al., 2005; Eades, 2003). However, failure to realize the promised benefits of the solution may result in huge loss for the provider which is usually the case in performance based pricing arrangement (Storbacka & Pennanen, 2014).

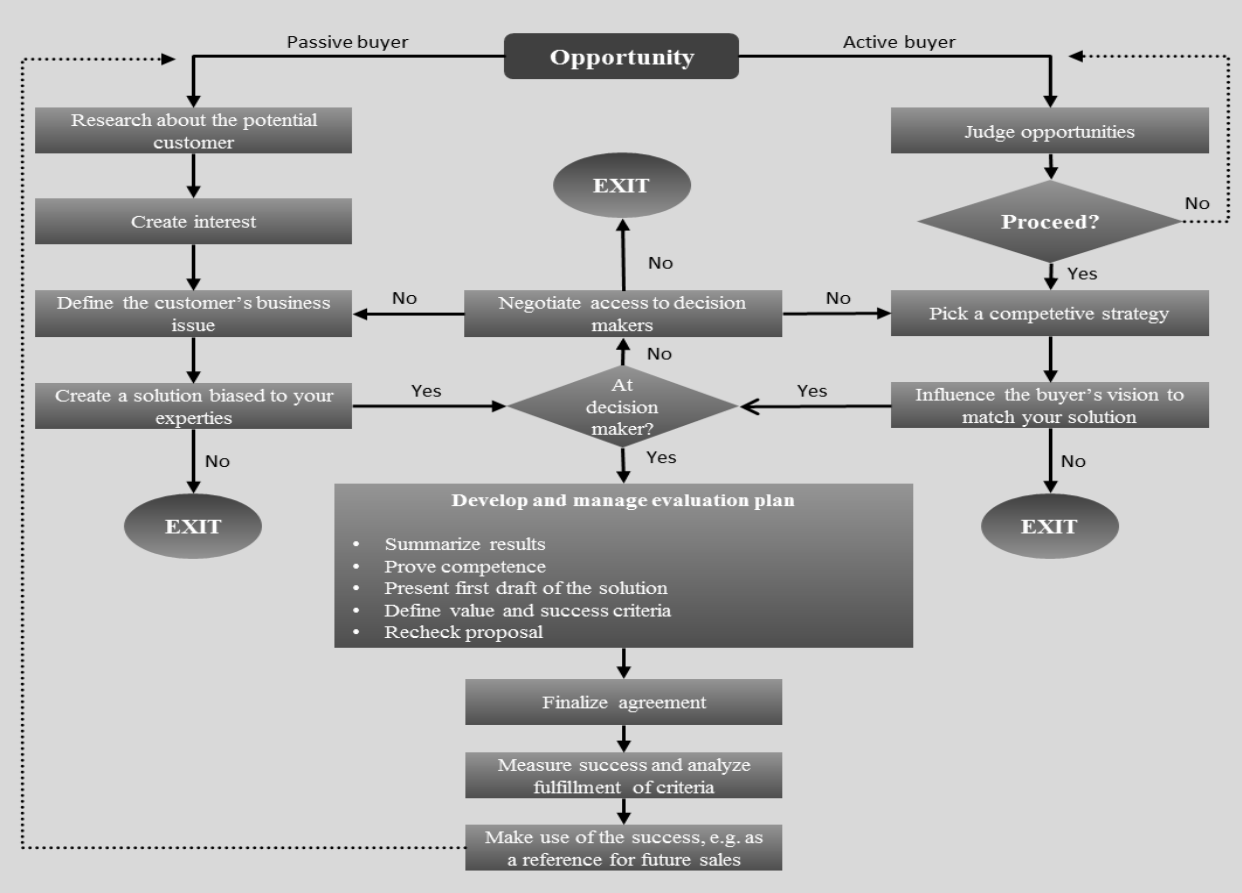


Figure 4. The Solution Sales Process Diagram from the Seller's Point of View, (Eades, 2003, p. 39)

For the passive buyers, or agile organization with emerging needs (Adamson et al., 2012), the solution provider must start the sales process by conducting extensive research in order to identify latent customer's needs, as well as problems or opportunities that can be resolved by the provider's solution (Eades, 2003). The result of the customer's research is then presented during an arranged meeting with the customer in order to stimulate the customer's interest (Eades, 2003). The focus of the discussion should be based on a clear definition of the customer's business situation, and possible future direction that is beneficial to the operational efficiency of the customer should be proposed; in this way, the provider can position own offering to the customer's future needs and also utilize the opportunity to gain access to important decision makers or other employees with potential to influence the buying organization's purchasing decision (Adamson et al., 2012; Eades, 2003). After this stage, the sales process continues in the same way as the one discussed above for the active buyers.

Perhaps, because of the use of flow chart to depict the sales process, it appears that Eades (2003) framework is more representative of how the sales process is carried out by organizations when compared to earlier discussed frameworks. For instance, this is the only framework that visually identified the decision makers in buyer organization and also the differences between the sales process for active and passive buyers. However, the framework also share similarities with other authors e.g. customer research and mutual negotiation with customers is mentioned by almost all the authors but value quantification and verification is specific to value based selling (Kaario et al., 2003; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011). An important dimension that is unique to relationship based and project based solution selling is the visualization of the post sales maintenance and support system in the frameworks (Brady et al., 2005; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). With the exception of the framework on result selling that also included the post sales dimension (Roune et al., 2011), all the value based sales process framework ended at value validation and verification (Kaario et al., 2003; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011).

Despite the agreement between all the authors in support of customer involvements in the sales process and also on the need for cross functional support in sales process implementation, none of the discussed frameworks provide sufficient visualization of the different touch points with customers along the sales process or even demonstrate how different actors interact during the sales process implementation. Arguably, without accurate visualization of the sales process, there is limit to the usefulness of the frameworks to organizations, especially to those that are currently undergoing transition from manufacturing to solution providers who are mostly familiar with operation management (OM) process methods and have limited knowledge on service based processes.

According to Biege and colleagues (2012), the existing OM methods of modelling cannot provide adequate support for such manufactures in the process of transition (Biege et al., 2012). Hence, there is need for the utilization of a different process modelling method that will facilitate accurate visualization of the solution sales process and provide practical support for firms that are undergoing such transitions to solution providers. Thus, by using a process modelling technique and utilizing data from qualitative interviews with some Finnish project based organizations that are currently undergoing transition to solution providers, this study attempt to present a more accurate visualization of the solution sales

process. And the next section of the thesis is dedicated to the presentation of different process modelling techniques and the selection of appropriate technique for the current study.

2.5 Service/Industrial Service blueprinting: visualizing sales activities

Although there are several process modelling techniques available in the literature, (e.g., flow chart, Gantt chart, data flow diagram, role activity diagram, role interaction diagram, event-driven chains, unified modeling language, business process modeling notation, service and industrial service blueprinting etc.) (Aguilar-Savén, 2004; Biege et al., 2012; Bitner et al., 2008; Shostack, 1984), this study will focus exclusively on blueprinting technique because of the following reasons;

Firstly, unlike other process design techniques, blueprint (e.g. service blueprint) design considers the service process and points of customer contact from the customers' perspectives; which provide avenue for better understanding of customer value and processes, thereby facilitating customer focused service execution across different levels in the service organization (Bitner et al., 2008). Secondly, blueprinting technique is more flexible and relatively less complex than other business process modelling; it provides multilevel visualization of different activities and stakeholders (customers, managers, frontline and back office supporting employees) that are involved in the process; and the blueprint graphical representation can be easily adapted to changes during process implementation (Bitner et al., 2008).

Thirdly, most of the other process modelling techniques are only suitable for standardized operational processes that mainly involve the transfer of tangible products or information from one actor to the others (Aguilar-Savén, 2004) and are therefore considered unsuitable for processes that involve complex combinations of goods and services which characterized the transition process of firms from manufacturing to solution providers (Biege et al., 2012). Hence, considering that the current study focus on solution sales process, blueprinting technique appears to be the most appropriate for the sales process modelling.

2.5.1 What exactly is blueprinting?

Blueprinting is a mapping technique for visualizing a dynamic process in such a way that the interactions and interdependencies between every steps, levels and points of divergence within the process is documented (Shostack, 1984, 1987). Blueprinting has been extensively applied in service industry for creating comprehensive visualization of entire service process as well as refining single step in the customer process (Bitner et al., 2008). In order to create a service blueprint, the first step from the service provider's point of view is to map the processes that constitute the service, in so doing, the designer can easily identify points of potential failure and therefore have the possibilities to develop fail-safe processes before service execution (Shostack, 1984). Through critical analysis of fail points at the design phase, the designer will not only have the advantages of minimizing the consequences of service failure but also increase the chances of identifying areas of process improvement, innovation opportunities and opportunities to maximize profits (Bitner et al., 2008; Shostack, 1984).

However, from the customers' stand point, rather than designing a generic blueprinting process for all customers, Bitner and colleagues (2008) advocated that the design should focus on specific customer segment and the customers' view of the service process to be blueprinted (e.g. customer's opinion of the starting and ending point of the process) should be clearly understood and delineated (Bitner et al., 2008). Every other activities within the process (e.g. actions of service provider's frontline and back stage employees, and support processes within provider's organization) should evolve around and be linked to the identified customer's activities and actions (Bitner et al., 2008). And in order to enhance the productivity of the design, it is important that the process design be done by cross functional team, and possibly with customers (Bitner et al., 2008; Shostack, 1987), as pointed out by Shostack (1987), including customer in the design process opens a window of opportunities for cross-learning and mutually benefiting relationship between the provider and the customer (Shostack, 1987).

2.5.2 The components of service blueprinting framework

Although, there have been several modifications to the original service blueprinting framework developed by Schostack in 1982 (Bitner et al., 2008; Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004; Shostack, 1984), a typical framework consist of 5 major components and as depicted

in figure 5 below, the components are ; customer actions, onstage contact employees, backstage contact employees, support processes, and physical evidence (Bitner et al., 2008).

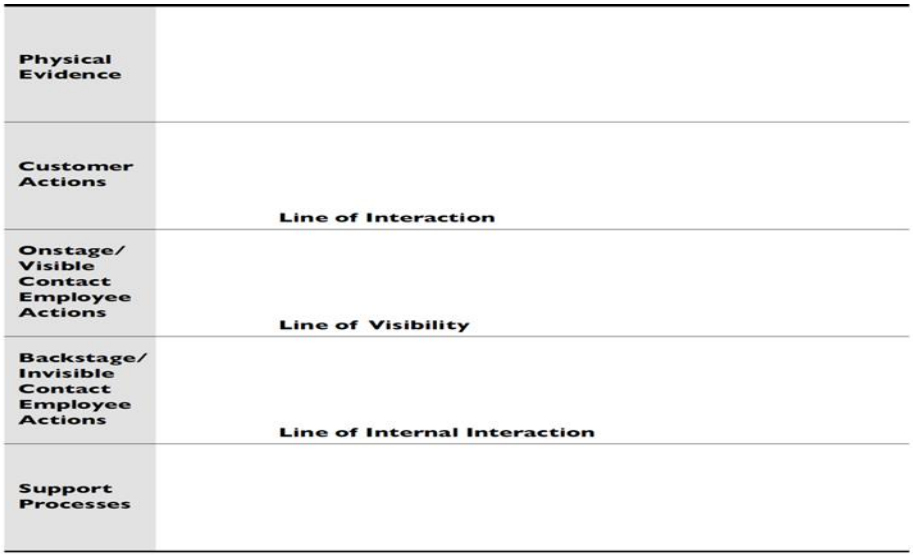


Figure 5. Components of service blueprinting framework (Bitner et al., 2008, p. 73)

Every action of the service customers and service provider are represented in chronological order at the horizontal axis while the vertical axis shows the different between all the areas of actions and the separation is represented by different lines (Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004). The customer's actions are the central focus of the service provider's value proposition and it encompasses all steps and activities initiated by the customer during the course of the service delivery process (Bitner et al., 2008; Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004). The customer's actions are separated from the onstage contact employees' actions by the line of interaction and these actions represent every face-to-face encounter with the customer (Bitner et al., 2008).

The actions of onstage contact employees are separated from the backstage contact employees by the line of visibility ; every activities above the line of visibility can be seen by the customers but activities below the line (e.g. telephone calls by the customer service personnel), which are carried out by the backstage contact employees as part of the delivery process, are invisible to the customer (Bitner et al., 2008). All the activities of the contact

employees (both onstage and backstage) are separated by the internal line of interactions from the support processes that are carried out by various individuals and business units within the service provider's organization that have no contact with customers but are supporting the contact employees to facilitate the delivery process (Bitner et al., 2008). The importance of cross functional interaction for the effective delivery of service to the customer is represented by the vertical lines that connect the support area to other part of the blueprint and the physical evidence at the top of the blueprint represents every tangible object about the service provider's offering that can influence the customer's perception of quality (Bitner et al., 2008).

In a modified version of the service blueprint described above, two new lines were added under the line of internal interaction known as "the line of order penetration" and line of implementation (Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004). The line of order penetration is the line that separate activities that are initiated by the customer; which are those activities at the heart of the service process and are determined by external factors, from activities that are independent of customer's activities; which are those activities that are determined by the provider's internal production factors e.g. production capacity and other resources and capabilities at the disposal of the provider that facilitate preparation of equipment for service implementation (Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004). The last line in the modified version of service blueprinting is the line of implementation; this is the line that separates management activities, e.g. business planning, resource allocation, managing and controlling of employees, and financial reporting, from support activities described above (Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004).

The addition of the lines of operation and implementation to the service blueprinting framework obviously enhances the applicability in service operations; nevertheless, the modification is mainly focus on service companies without any consideration for firms that are involved in integrated offerings such as manufacturing organizations that are making transition to solution providers (Biege et al., 2012). As a result, a revised modification of the blueprinting has been done to provide practical support for servitized manufacturing organizations and the revised blueprinting is coined industrial service blueprinting (ISB) (Biege et al., 2012). The ISB is a hybrid framework that combined the characteristics of the flow chart system and event-driven-process (EPC) with the elements of the modified service blueprinting framework. An important feature of the ISB is that the

multidimensionality of solution selling is taking into consideration and one of the unique features that differentiate ISB from other process modelling methods is that the graphical representation of ISB is not limited to the interactions, interrelations and communication between actors in the provider organization but also give room for the interactions with customers and external partners that are involved in the production, delivery, and maintenance of the integrated offerings (Biege et al., 2012).

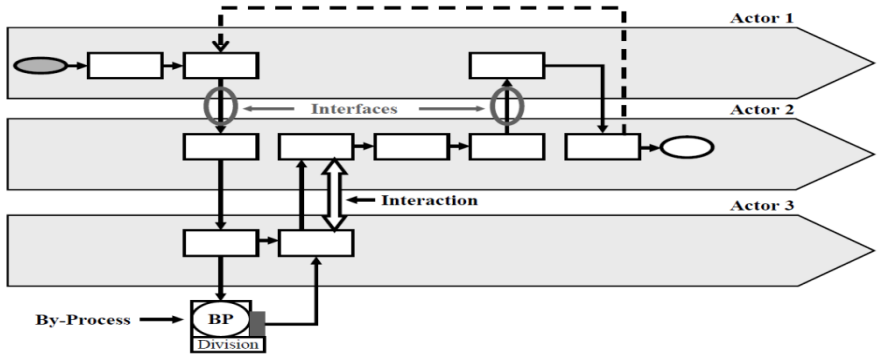


Figure 6. Industrial service blueprinting (Biege et al., 2012, p. 947)

Figure 6 above is the prototype of the ISB that was designed by Beige and colleagues (2012). All the main actors both within the organization (e.g. sales, production, maintenance, purchasing) and outside the organization (e.g. customers and external partners) are represented by separate arrows that range from left to the right side of the blueprint. Activities are represented by rectangles and the activities are positioned in the arrow of the actors that performed them in the sequence of occurrence. The activities are mapped according to major events or milestones in the process. The arrows connecting the rectangles represent the sequence of event and the direction of the connecting arrows is determined by both the order of activities and the actors that performed the activities. The interface line shows the link between main activities and subsequent activities between actors and the dashed arrow connects the point of potential information source with point where the information can be implemented. As suggested by Biege and colleagues (2012), the list of actors in a process map should not be more than five, in this way, the role of each actor can be easily identified and there will be clear separation between main activities and supporting activities (Biege et al., 2012).

Additionally, in order to enhance the clarity of the sequence of activities and to visually display interactions between actors, every single activity that is performed by more than one actor is mapped in the arrows of all the responsible actors and connected by an interaction arrow which is represented in figure 7 by the 2 dimensional arrows. What mainly differentiate the interaction arrow from the connecting arrow is that the interaction arrow is broader and it is not filled out. Any point in the process that requires special attention or is suspected to be point of failure and weakness is represented by circles containing exclamation mark (Biege et al., 2012).

Aside from the main activities that are performed by the represented arrows in the blueprint, there are other sub-activities or processes that are implemented to support the main process; these sub processes are tagged “by-process”. In the figure above, the by-process is represented by a square with an inscribed circle containing letter "BP". It is suggested that the name of the department responsible for the by-process be inscribed in the symbol because those departments responsible for executing by-processes are usually not part of the main process implementation (Biege et al., 2012).

Considering that the ISB framework has been designed specifically for servitizing manufacturers or manufacturing firms that are in transition to solution providers, there is justification that the prescribed procedures for process mapping in the framework is relatively more appropriate for the current study than all the other discussed frameworks. Hence, the process mapping in this study will be done following the prescribed instructions proposed by Biege and colleagues and the methodology adopted for data collection will be presented in the next section.

3 Methodology

The main objective of this chapter is to present and justify the methods adopted to conduct the study. The main areas covered include; research methods, data collection, sampling and case selection process, and finally, data analysis method.

3.1 Research Method

Since the aim of the current study is to gain deeper insight into the value creating activities in sales process as firms transits from manufacturing to solution provider and to develop theoretical understanding on the structure of solution sales process which is currently lacking consensus amongst sales scholars (Brady et al., 2005; Eades, 2003; Kaario et al., 2003; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005; Roune et al., 2011; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011), it is imperative to adopt an exploratory research approach in order to gain in-depth knowledge and provide possibility for theory development (Paiola et al., 2013; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009; Storbacka et al., 2009) . As Robson (2002) noted, an exploratory study is important to find out *"what is happening; seek new insights; to ask questions and assess phenomenon in a new light"* (Robson, 2002, p. 59).

Following previous studies that have investigated firms' transition from manufacturing to solution providers, this research will employ multiple case studies using an inductive approach (Paiola et al., 2013; Storbacka et al., 2009, 2013). Case study has been regarded as *"An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used"* (Yin, 2013, p. 16).

The use of multiple case study give room for greater flexibility to adapt to different circumstances and provides a more robust outcome than a single case study (Yin, 2003), which also provides opportunity for comparative analysis between cases and a possibility for analytical generalization (Saunders et al. 2009). And as pointed out by Eisenhardt (2007) , the fundamental purpose of using cases is to allow theory to develop inductively, and *"the theory is emergent in the sense that it is situated in and developed by recognizing patterns of relationships among constructs within and across cases and their underlying logical arguments"*(Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 25). Hence, by analyzing the relationships between the sales processes of the 8 companies that participated in this

research, the current study attempts to contribute to theoretical knowledge through inductive enquiry in order to develop a comprehensive overview of the solution sales process. Inductive approach has been supported in sales research as a feasible option for case study research particularly for manufacturing firms that are transiting to services (Baines, Lightfoot, Benedettini, & Kay, 2009).

3.2 Sampling and Case selection Process

Probability sampling is not appropriate for this research because the aim of the study is not to generate statistically representative sample or to draw statistical inferences (Bryman, 2012). More so, this is a qualitative research which stipulates the requirement for a non-probability or qualitative sampling method (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). One of the prominent qualitative sampling methods is theoretical sampling or otherwise known as purposeful sampling (Bryman, 2012; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Theoretical sampling is appropriate for theory building rather than theory testing and it stipulates a purposeful selection of cases that "*….are particularly suitable for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs"* (Eisenhardt & Graebner 2007, p.27). Therefore, considering the aim of this study, the companies that participated in the study were purposefully selected based on the following criteria that were adapted from the work of (Kindström, 2010):

- Case must be a project based company or have background in manufacturing with tangible products;
- The case must have undergone or is currently undergoing transition from manufacturing to solution provider
- Therefore, the focus must be on integrated offering through complex bundling of products and services
- Must be willing to share important information and participate in this study
- Preferably, the company should be participating in the FUTIS (Future of Industrial Services) project.

The last option in the list of requirements was included because the current study was funded by the FUTIS project which is a research consortium with a focus on transforming the Finnish engineering and metal industry, and to promote the development of industrial service innovation. The FUTIS project is funded by Tekes, consisting of 19 companies and

9 research institutions under the coordination of FIMECC - Finnish Metals and Engineering Competence cluster (Helle, 2012).

Based on the above criteria, 8 Finnish companies were selected for data collection mostly through face-to-face interviews and in few cases, adobe connect was utilized because the respondents were located outside of Finland. The data collection took place between October 2014 and March 2015. It should be noted that not all the companies that participated in this study are members of the FUTIS consortium, however, by combining companies that are participating in the consortium with other leading manufacturing companies firms that are undergoing transition to solution provider, assess to large amount of data is enhanced which is a good basis for data triangulation and a medium to increase the validity and accuracy of qualitative research (Jack & Raturi, 2006; Saunders et al., 2009). In order to maintain condition of anonymity as requested by the respondents, the firms will be identified by phonetic nomenclature as; Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, Hotel.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The three principal ways of conducting exploratory research are; literature search, interviewing experts on the specific subject matter, and conducting focus group interviews (Saunders et al. 2009). In the case of the current study, both literature search and interviews of expert was adopted. Literature review provides the development of fundamental theoretical knowledge which aids in the development of a semi-structured questionnaire that was utilized in the primary data collection. The data collection was conducted through face to face interview with sales managers, directors of sales, president of integrated solutions, managers of solution process, product managers and solution coordinators, as well as regional marketing managers who have average of 11,5 years in their respective managerial positions (see profile detail in appendix). In order to improve the reliability of the study and to bolster data triangulation, extensive information search was also conducted on the official webpages of the case companies and some of the companies also provided important documents (e.g. official sales process models) to augment the interview data (Huikkola, Ylimäki, & Kohtamäki, 2013; Jack & Raturi, 2006).

In accordance with Beverland and Lindergreen's (2010) prescribed research process, a two-step data analysis method was adopted (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010). Firstly, each case is

analyzed separately in order to point out the uniqueness, and will be followed by a cross case analysis, in order to identify similar pattern of actions and differences between the cases. The similarities between the cases form the basis for analytical generalization while the differences represents unique attributes of individual case (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010; Huikkola et al., 2013).

The milestones identified in the existing sales process frameworks (Brady et al., 2005; Kaario et al., 2003; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005; Roune et al., 2011; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011) were used as themes to structure the case description and analysis and to provide common platform for easy assessment and comparison of the cases (Huikkola et al., 2013). Additionally, in order to reduce the possibilities of interpretation error and omitting important data, or the possibility of researcher's biases in drawing conclusions and validating important findings derived from the data, all the interviews were recorded and direct quotations of the interviewees' responses were extensively utilized (Oliva & Watson, 2011). Finally, the result of the data analysis is presented using the ISB framework to show the roles of different players in the sales process implementation, identify important activities, and different customer touch-points.

4 Findings

The study findings are presented as follows: the first part focuses on a brief description of the companies participating in the study; the second discusses the result of the cross case analysis.

4.1 Within-case description and analysis

4.1.1 Company Alpha

Alpha is an international supplier of material flow systems that specializes in the manufacturing and servicing of automated logistics as well as packaging, storing and control systems. Alpha's capabilities in engineering and machine building as well as resource capacity as a single source supplier avail the company the flexibilities to offer customized solutions and project services to the major players in the paper, converting, and metal industries. Being a Finnish owned organization, the company's main market of operation is Finland and other European countries such as Sweden, Switzerland, and Estonia. However, by collaborating with international sales agents and representatives, Alpha has extended the operational scope and market presence to Asia, United States and Australia. The company is currently considering remote monitoring technology to enhance customers' production planning and service operations.

4.1.2 Company Bravo

Bravo is a manufacturer of conveyor systems, cranes and automated warehousing with specialty in manufacturing and logistics process development. Through partnership agreements with customers in logistics and transport industries, the company renders services such as: technical consulting and inspections; equipment modernization and renovation; system installation and maintenance; as well as project deliveries and life cycle management of production systems. Additionally, Bravo offers customized material handling solutions for lifting, storage and transmission systems which covers the entire process of equipment design, manufacturing, installation, commissioning, operation, maintenance and customer training. Due to the specific focus on operational efficiency and logistic cost savings, Bravo's business model is centered on serving customers in the Finnish geographical area.

4.1.3 Company Charlie

Charlie is a global market leader in developing and supplying technologies as well as rendering services for the pulp, paper and energy industries. The key value drivers of the company are: closeness and personalized commitment to customers; high-tech for green energy production plants; and a wide range of service portfolio targeted at improving the customer's business and operational performance. Charlie has transformed from offering add on services (e.g., spare parts, maintenance outsourcing, mills and plants improvements services) to providing entire turnkey solutions that encompasses: project engineering, procurement, construction and operations, as well as full scale mill process automation projects. Charlie is able to adapt to local market challenges and specific customer's needs at different locations around the world through the area business offices in North America, Asia, South America, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

4.1.4 Company Delta

Delta operates in the marine, power generation and oil & gas industries with operational presence in about 70 countries around the world. The company mainly functions as a value partner with customers (e.g. ship builders & ship owners) in providing high level technologies and expertise to reduce the customer's operating expenditure (OPEX) and risks. However, in response to market competition and the need to gain greater influence on customer's business decisions, the company has engaged in vertical integration by acquiring companies that are primarily involved with shipping architecture and design, thereby; enhancing the company's ability to manage customer's capital expenditures (CAPEX) and total business economy. As the market leader in the marine and energy industries, Delta's main competitive advantage is embedded in the capabilities to provide integrated offerings and sustainable solutions that meets individual customer's needs from its wide range of products, services and technology portfolios.

4.1.5 Company Echo

Echo is a manufacturer, supplier, and operator of a variety of power generation, transmission and distribution products and systems (e.g. high and low voltage drivers, transformers, turbine control, and power plant optimization systems). Additionally, the company offers process automation systems and services for industrial process instrumentation, measurement and optimizations. As power is one of the most consumed

industrial utilities, Echo's products and services enrich the business operations and needs of a broad range of energy and utility industries such as; cement, oil & gas, chemical, marine, aluminum, metal and mining industries. Through continuous technology innovations, product reliability, and uptime deliveries, Echo is able to champion the energy and process automation market by offering environmentally sustainable solutions that improve customer's operational efficiency and productivity throughout its 100 countries of operation.

4.1.6 Company Foxtrot

Foxtrot is a high rated company in the manufacturing and maintenance of elevators, escalators and automatic building doors. The company serves the hotel, transport, housing, retail, aviation, and marine industries. The service portfolio ranges from spare parts supplies and equipment modernization to entire building life cycle management. The company creates market differentiation by not only focusing on the immediate customers' (e.g. building owners and facility managers) needs but more importantly, on the experience of the customers' customers as the focal learning point for new innovation and value creation. And by paying close attention to the structure of the target markets, Foxtrot is able to identify key investment decision makers in the industry and channel its selling effort to influence them. The company is able to maintain leadership position in its market of operation by focusing on Customer's comfort and safety as well as uninterrupted equipment functionality. Foxtrot is currently operating in about 60 countries through its international distributors and production centers.

4.1.7 Company Golf

Golf is a manufacturer and life cycle manager of trucks, coaches and buses. By leveraging continuous technological innovations with its core competence in truck manufacturing and design, the company is able to better serve the logistics and transportation industries and transform its business model from a focus on capital expenditure to customers' efficiency and performance management. Through its widely distributed service network and modularized vehicle design, the company is able to guarantee 24/7 intervention, reduced vehicle repair time, establish quality assurance, and guarantee uptime delivery for customers; which is obviously one of the most important value drivers in the transportation industry. Golf ensures continuous relationship with customers through its subscription

based fuel efficiency solution which is a bundled offering that includes; fleet management, driver training, driver follow up, and vehicle maintenance & repair. The company is able to provide real-time services in over 100 countries around the world through its international sales and service subsidiaries as well as international dealers and workshops.

4.1.8 Company Hotel

Hotel is a supplier of a wide variety of systems and sensors for public organizations like meteorological institutions, airport authorities, road administrators and defense organizations. The company has a wide product range such as; weather systems, weather stations, wind sensors, wind measurements and visibility sensors. Hotel also engages in project management services, equipment maintenance, data services, 24/7 technical support, equipment modernization, and customer training. As the global leader in environmental and industrial measurements, the company enjoys strong international reputation and customer's trust which is an important source of competitive advantage for the company. The main value drivers are continuous technology innovations, product quality and durability. The company ensures customer's intimacy and achieves individualized relationship with customers by dedicating specialized frontline sales to each customer that are responsible for making periodic visits to the customers' locations. As a source of information for product innovation and to gain better understanding of customers' changing expectations and needs, the company conducts annual customer satisfaction surveys. Hotel is in the early phase of transition towards solution provider and currently undergoing organizational restructuring and reorientation.

4.2 Cross-case Analysis

The purpose of the cross case analysis is to assess the common practices among industrial solution providers when delivering customer solutions. The analysis is mainly focused on identifying the value creating activities in solution sales process implementation. Empirical evidence from the participating firms in the study revealed the following themes as the major milestones in a project based solution sales process; information acquisition and dissemination, secure access-initiate relationship-identify needs, propose value and negotiate, execute project, deliver project-verify and document value, maintain relationship.

4.2.1 Information Acquisition and Need Identification

It became obvious from the interview data that there is no specific starting point for sales process because sales is situation specific and it is influenced by several factors e.g. customer's needs, existing relationship with the provider, attitude and experience of salespeople, type of offering etc. However, one particular way identified in the study is through information acquisition about customer's current situation, past business endeavors, and possible future potential as well as information about customer's business environment and competitive situation.

> ***Charlie:*** *"And everyone of those have their own sale to make the sale, to take care of the sales process. Of course they are following the steps, but what I have seen, there is no standard way to do the sales. Everyone of these specialties, these senior sales guys, they have their own style to do it."*

> ***Alpha:*** *"We have, for example in India, we have one Indian salesperson, marketing person there, and he is doing a lot this, he calls directly to the customers and try to find out if they have any need for our products, and he is doing a lot of marketing, direct marketing for the specific customers which we select for according to certain criteria."*

> ***Delta:*** *"What we are doing is trying to understand first of all, it depends also of the customer, the specific customer. What are their needs, how much do they know, how open are they for solutions and things like that? Are they interested into having a full model, asset model, where we are trying to, confirming more or less"*

Interestingly, evidence from the data also showed that solution providers are actively engaging in direct marketing activities, simultaneously with information acquisition (e.g. through exhibitions, company visits, conferences, phone calls, social media, and continuous updates of their webpages), to disseminate information about their offerings and boost their market visibilities. The importance of frontline sales, sales managers, and international agents is stressed by the respondents as a means to secure and maintain close contact with customers and for establishing personalized relationship. The study confirms the common notion in solution sales literature about the high cost of new customer acquisition (Storbacka et al., 2011) which is reflected in the arguments made by some of the respondents about their dependence on their companies' industrial reputation in terms of

technology superiority, experience in project business and product reliability to attract new customers (mostly small and medium sized companies) and as competitive leverage, to minimize the cost of directly approaching all customers in the industry, which is practically impossible.

> ***Golf:*** *"Normally, in most cases they (customer) come to us. But in many cases we for sure, we try to make efforts to get some competitor's customers to us. ...We can offer them a truck, please use that one for one month for example as a free. That is not so typical, because it's so expensive, but in some cases we have done it."*

> ***Bravo:*** *"I think companies know quite well our name, when they need a logistics system, many times they will contact directly to us… we would like to have that they will contact us, because we have very, very limited resources, we can't go to every customer in Finland. ... I should say we have a quite good knowledge of the market, so we know the biggest customers, and of course we are directly contact for this customers"*

> ***Charlie:*** *"in Scandinavia, we are known, that the company knows that we have that kind of products and power-stations, and they will make a phone call to us. But when we go to the Europe… where we are not so much known… we have the agents… they are screening the market… And then in conferences and exhibitions we try to search customer"*

> ***Foxtrot:*** *"I would say this is an industry where the amounts to kind of four, five big players. So of course in terms of technology and design we're quite much ahead… So often if we have new solutions, one of the key things is to promote those already within our existing customer-base. And then, how this is done outside, it's pretty normal. It's like marketing activities and just maybe sales meeting new customer, of course promoting new solutions"*

However, for major customers in the industry (either new or existing), early intervention appears to be a valuable and resourceful activity for the solution providers especially for better positioning against competitor and to be able to detect the customer's needs as they emerge and also to be able to influence them. Most of the respondents claimed to ensure early intervention through regular company visit to the customer's site by a dedicated salesperson from the provider's organization that is responsible for monitoring the customer's activities and reporting new opportunities to own organization. This practice

aligns with the recommendations in sales literature for transiting manufacturers – see (Wotruba, 1996). The definition of "regular" however varies between companies and customer categories.

> ***Foxtrot:*** *"If you ask from sales process perspective and also from a value proposition creation, the key is to be there as early as possible. Period! … And knowing that the customer's probably going to ask us in four months time for a spec, but let's go into it with them anyway and talk not about our products but what's going on in the project … by visiting customers… we make the assumption that we can increase our retention rate"*

> ***Hotel:*** *"I would claim that we have contact to each and every national meteorological service in the world. …we have very wide global representative network who are dealing with our customers… And we frequently visit our customers, so we kind of, in some cases we are even kind of creating the needs, or that we go to the customer and just start to educate them that you really should do this and that and that"*

> ***Echo:*** *"We have very active partner doing this kind of initial screening of the markets and it is such a good information that they must really monthly or at least quarterly contact and receive very good data from potential customers. We have also front-end sales organization, own front organization in almost every country, that are visiting customers and getting this kind of information"*

> ***Bravo:*** *"This is the business you have to have personal contacts. I can't make an offer without visiting a customer or going through their systems of their material which they have in their logistic systems. Mostly we are doing much, I should say consultant work"*

Customer categorization and prioritization appears to be another important activity associated with the information acquisition phase. There seems to be universal metrics for prioritizing and categorizing customers and the most common metrics identified by the respondents are: sales or production volume, profitability potential of the customer, perceived risk (technical or country risk), and available resources to meet the customer's need, as well as the quality of existing relationship with the provider compared to the competitors'. These identified metrics for customer prioritization in the cases are similar to

the findings of Storbacka and colleagues (2011) except for the addition of the economic viability of the potential customer's market of operation and their value drivers.

> ***Alpha:*** *"we have certain criteria for the factories so that if we think about the steel producer so that for coils the production needs to be at least 200 hundred tons per year.… And then also the areas, our main market areas nowadays …it's China and India,… But of course our home market, Western Europe, it is important for us… And then North America, so we will extend our efforts to this area because nowadays US economy is growing so we put more efforts there in the US market"*
>
> ***Bravo:*** *"I think we are looking for the companies, which turnover and systems are increasing. For example, I can tell you an example, that now we are looking for the companies who are starting the mail-order business, for example e-commerce."*
>
> ***Delta:*** *"So it depends on the potential of the customer… First of all their financials, what are their strategies as well, so how are they positioning themself towards their own customers. And then we are trying to see how we in fact can link our values into the values they perform to their customer. …What the customer wants to achieve,… is it growth or is it profitability or is it market share or is it, you know, whatever it may be"*
>
> ***Hotel:*** *I think the main things are, well, obviously the sort of estimated kind of value and estimated profitability. …Then also the risks, what risks do we see in the project; technical risks, commercial risks, country risks and that kind of stuff. And then …how does our solution fit with the customer's requirements? Do we need to maybe develop something in order to have best fit? What's the competitor situation? I mean technically and sort of relationship-wise"*

However, in contrast to the argument of Eades (2003) that sales organization are engaging sales activities with key decision makers in customer's organization, findings from this study revealed that the structure of customer organizations are not always the same and in some cases, people with most influence could be middle management or even production level officers. Hence, respondents claim to be actively engaging in customer organization mapping, which entails gathering specific information about the structure of the customer's organization in order to understand different players in the firms that are considered to have

major influence on investment decision or that are considered as potential beneficiaries of the proposed value of the provider. Through the mapping process, the firms gain better understand of the customer organization and plan strategic influence towards achieving multi-level relationships and contacts with the customer.

> ***Delta:*** *"Sometimes the decision maker is not the top guy in the organization, right? So the CEO of the shipping company might actually say, ok, I'll go with whatever the fleet director says. If the fleet director says we don't need a service agreement, you know, it's his area of responsibility. … once again the sort of vertical touch-point, meaning that you have multi-layer touch-points with the customer, so that is very important"*

> ***Charlie:*** *"we should target on those people who, let's say, can make the decision or who are responsible for fuel management for example, we should target on them. And typically the power-plant manager is somehow related or has a direct responsibility for the plant economics"*

> ***Echo:*** *"We try to evaluate relationships between the different organisations. On what level the decisions are made to certain size of projects: if it's department or if it's special purpose project team to make the decisions or if it's CEO to make the decisions. …customer companies vary a lot. Some companies do make decisions on technical level and they just get the approval or they are kind of making the decision ready just sending it for signature and approval for CEO."*

> ***Foxtrot:*** *"within a project you have very complex organizations, so addressing the right person, log in the most important influences will also help you to be there as early as possible, … 'cause you don't want to spend also a lot of time with a person, who may not in the end know much about the project or do anything with the project. … We have in some of our sales training, like how to find out what is the customer organization, so who are the right players and how to know if you are dealing with the right person""*

Furthermore, to guarantee continuous information flow within the provider organization and with the customer, series of feedback mechanism were utilized, for instance; customer loyalty and satisfaction surveys, sales reporting, analysis of customer's annual report and organizing special events where both existing and new customers interact and company's

solutions are presented. And to keep track of customer information and facilitates systematic identification of new opportunities; most of the companies utilize a CRM system or customer database (otherwise known as opportunity funnel in some cases) for centralized information sharing and to report update of every customer interactions.

> ***Foxtrot:*** *"So from our loyalty surveys, are we getting some kind of information there, which is showing any kind of trend or otherwise that we need to act upon as a unit."*

> ***Delta:*** *"We try to put ourselves in the shoes of mainly the ship owner… we were looking into their (customer) annual reports trying to understand what was important for them on a strategic level. And then we tried to, I will say, focus on that offering."*

> ***Bravo:*** *"We have this GRM-program where our people can see .... for example I may agree appointment on some company. I can check there who have been there in past. So I can check it, and what kind of activities they have done to this company."*

> ***Echo:*** *"We are a company with lot of different channels, strategies and we have product sales and system sales and service sales and whatever and there are actually lot of contacts from different departments to the same customers. Even sometimes too much – you could say – but as long as CRM is used properly I don't see it's problem, it is more maybe strength to have information from this customer visits"*

Additionally, salespeople are engaging in internal marketing by coordinating and orchestrating resources from other functions for opportunity profiling, and also presentation of the profiled opportunity to the top management for approval before approaching customer.

> ***Hotel:*** *"let's say that we have somehow identified that ok, there is a certain need for this customer for a given solution… the sales responsible calls a meeting which includes all the different stakeholders inside our company, like the business unit people, the project people, if needed the technical experts. ...And if we make a go-decision in that one, then we start actually working the case"*

> ***Delta:*** *"I have weekly, biweekly meetings and my manager, I think, on a more higher level has monthly meetings where we are looking at the sales projects… we look at the sales pipeline, and discussing each individual project and reviewing more or less what is the status of the project… Then if we need for instance to have operational aspects and service aspect included, or do we need to have design aspects included, then you will include members, close organizational members there in the team"*

> ***Bravo:*** *"In our organization the sales managers or sales people, they are responsible for the project, so they have to know everything what happens on the sales phase. …Of course they can ask help from our design department if there are some resources they can use. But he has to keep all the wires in his own hands, that he really knows what happens inside our company on this project, and what happens on customer on that project"*

The "opportunity profiling" was regarded by all respondents as an important activity and it is performed by the salespersons in collaboration with project manager, design department, and technical sales in some organizations. As revealed in the data, the purpose of opportunity profiling is to identify preliminary customer requirements and needs before making actual approach to the customer, and to assess the profitability potential of the opportunity as well as the available resources to fulfil it, and most importantly, the strategic significance of the opportunity to the customer and the contact person in the customer organization.

> ***Hotel:*** *"We have this kind of short listing of the case facts because the people who make the decision may not be actually, they are typically kind of senior managers, who are not maybe involved in the case itself."*

> ***Charlie:*** *"if there is potential for a project, and then we need to develop a concept or verify that we have a technology, we have a solution for this customer. …we need of course a lot of information from the customer or from the opportunity. Understand what is the power demand, what is the heat demand, what kind of fuels are available, what are the different cost factors of let's say purchase and sales of this company"*

> ***Delta:*** *"But we use T Form which is a simple sort of one-pager to identify customer needs and particularly we are looking at what we called uncovering customer needs but*

> *particularly the implied need. …Because if you find those and can address those in your value proposition, then you are in a way much easier to come across as the one that has understood the customer."*

The boundary spanning or facilitating role of salespeople in acquiring customer information, coordinating resources within own organization and stimulating support from other functions for opportunity profiling, and then securing top management approval, indicates the resourcefulness of sales organization and confirms findings from previous studies (Guenzi, 2002; Luca et al., 2011; Marshall et al., 1999). More specifically, in support of the common notion in service dominant logic, especially relating to the work of Vargo and Lusch (2004), extensive focus of many of the cases on personalized contacts with customers shows that managers are gaining more awareness of the need for 2-way communications; not just marketing products, but more importantly, listening to customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Finally, the findings pointed to the blurring boundary between marketing and sales functions (LaForge et al., 2009; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2010) as sales takes more marketing responsibilities or even in the case of Bravo; displacing the marketing function completely.

> ***Bravo:*** *"We have a quite small organization, so I have to make the marketing, I have to visit the customers, I have to make, analyze the data, I have to make the layout, I have to make the pricing. …It gives quite a bad feeling for the customer, if you have to say every time, I have to check it with my colleagues… Normally we can immediately answer to the customer if they have some questions, and that gives a good feeling of our professional skills for the customer."*

4.2.2 Need Validation and Offering Positioning

The starting point of influencing the customer is through physical meetings between the salespersons and the relevant persons in customer organization. Unlike the regular meetings discussed in the information acquisition phase, this type of meeting is more organized and specifically for validating the technical details about the new opportunities from the customer. More so, it gives the opportunity for the salesperson to answer specific questions, in relation to the opportunity, that the customer perceive important and then to identify customer's situational requirements for tailor made solutions. Hence, consultative selling

and listening skills capability become apparent capability for sales people, and respondents claim that the use of tools (e.g. win-plan, excel formula) is also important to facilitate the discussion and to establish strong basis for justifying own value proposition in relation to the customer's needs.

> ***Alpha:*** *"After receiving this information we start with the layout, so we make a layout proposal of them, and then we normally have a meeting with them and we discuss about the layout and clarify more detail their needs ….we want to be, develop the system together with them in early phase so that we can give our ideas to them. …We are not alone, so there are other competitors also. So the idea is that when they ask the offer from other companies, they will use our ideas and our layout, so then we are in the stronger position."*

> ***Delta:*** *"If we don't understand it clearly from the customer, then we will need to have these kind of initial meetings of course with the customer, where we are having a dialogue, where are understanding more about this kind of solution. What is their operational patterns, what are their ideas, where should this asset operate? All these kind of things would be very important input for us to tailor more or less the value quantification"*

> ***Echo:*** *"In many cases we have even in house two different alternatives, and we can give them (customers) for example excel formula, saying that this is one of our options, this is another one, and they can themselves fill in expected electricity price and see how long it takes because then you get kind of payback calculation*

Although, strong market knowledge and industry expertise are required for consultative selling (Ingram et al., 2006; Liu & Leach, 2001), respondents recommended total avoidance of comparing own solution with the competitor's offering during any encounter with the customer because of the risk of providing misleading information which could lead to loss of credibility. More so, there is a possibility that the customer is more knowledgeable about the competitor's business.

> ***Charlie:*** *"that doesn't bring anything good if you then start talking about the competition. You should be aware of the competition, but act like you would be alone on the market when you are meeting customers. Because it's very, very dangerous to talk about*

competition, because if you are wrong with your opinions, so it will hit you hard really, if customer knows better the competitor's offering"

Delta: *"when you go down the sales process, then you also narrow down an understanding of who is going to be your competitors. And there you will also have an idea of how we differentiate what we can push on compared to competitors… But I will say, we could look at for instance the fuel consumption at our competitors, but it's, we don't understand what kind of guarantees they offer… we never know if they give some kind of special spare-part agreement that has a certain value"*

Foxtrot: *"we try to play on our own playground, meaning that our competitor, well, maybe other competing companies, they may offer a lower price, and maybe to the customer it may look as the same solution. Then ok, we have our conditions. If that is the condition and the manager does not agree to go any lower than that, then as simple as that."*

What appears as the paramount activity of the so-called influencing phase, and perhaps of the entire sales process is the co-planning of technical design with the customer, prior to their investment. As claimed by many of the respondents, the customer usually have limited knowledge of what they want so early engagement gives the opportunity to influence the customer and to enhance the possibility of the provider's competitiveness during invitation for tender.

Hotel: *"…the fact is that if you are not involved in these discussions in early phase when customer is thinking of building the solution project, you practically have no chance in tenders… Because there have been some parties already involved in early phases in discussions and it is already biased or steered to some direction. And the customer would never take a project from a company with whom he or she has not spoken earlier about their needs and so on."*

Alpha: *"we try to show the customers that if we make it like this, then you could have this kind of savings for this system. But the problem is that if we are not, if we can't discuss this early enough with the customer, they have made their decision for the mill layout already, We are not getting so much advantage that if we can do that in our way"*

> ***Charlie:*** *"Actually a company is actually doing quite a lot of these things by themself with consultants, they are not calling us directly that we are making this kind of a plant. ... But they are making actually the conceptual design by themself, and then they will release the inquiry. ... But then there are other companies who don't have resources, and they don't know actually what they want. ... we are wishing that actually, that these customers who are contacting us here, they should be more valuable to us when actually we can discuss with them or we can define actually the product, what would be best for them, and of course will recommend those products from our portfolio.*

Based on the respondents' testimonials, two business models were identified during the technical layout: (a) gaining better positioning and planning post sales services through specifications, based on the provider's equipment and systems; (b) embedding various players' technologies into a single offering. Whereas the former seeks customer's lock-in; the latter aims at solutions efficiency. The aforementioned cases claim emphasis on the customer's best interest, and act as integrators, by combining own systems with competitor's products to deliver a flexible and more efficient solutions to the customer.

> ***Bravo:*** *if we have our system inside that company (customer's company), they are very rarely taking, they have no other chance than take us to the service company because we have the best knowledge, we have the spare parts for them and we can guarantee that this system really works as we have promised*

> ***Delta:*** *"When we design ships, we don't exclusively use our products. We actually design ships with our competitor's products also. And we do it sort of with the mindset that if the customer entrusts us to be the architect to his projects, then we have to put the customer's needs and wishes a first priority, not our priorities… And this is the sort of integrity that we feel is needed for us to even be credible in that position."*

Although, involvement in the technical design phase was echoed by the respondents as the central of the sales process, the possibility to interfere with such activity has certain limitations both external to the provider's organization, e.g. industry or country restrictions, and level of customer's willingness and know-how, and internal limitations such as, the capabilities or available resources in provider's organization. Some of the case companies have developed tools, (e.g. questioning model) that are utilized to steer customer's

openness and those without design capabilities have acquired design organizations in order to gain control of the entire sales process.

> ***Hotel:*** *"Our company or no one else, who is interested in delivering the actual projects cannot be involved in this official specification phase, it is forbidden because of transparency rules and so on. ... Because there must be an open tender, no limitations in competition and so on. ... the customer specifies the project either by themselves, sometimes they can do it by themselves, or if they hire a consultant agency"*

> ***Echo:*** *"There are cases where we are also selling consultancy and working as a – almost like consultants, supporting, making inquiry – but this is a little depending on market and on the rules because we are always also saying that we are entering this only if it doesn't limit our participating in the competition, because there are countries where consultant can not participate in the final bidding"*

> ***Foxtrot:*** *"we have different questioning models that we use, and questioning techniques too, that we train our sales guys on, so how to open up those and how to really find out what's behind or between the lines as you said. So that's hugely important and a big emphasis of many of our sales programs"*

> ***Delta:*** *"while we are a company that wants to sell an integrated solution, we have invested, we have acquired companies for example in design in order to support this strategy… So a ship design is also a part of our offering and something we have, businesses in order to get more into this, exactly to be the architect of the project, and be able to influence what kind of requirements and solutions are there"*

Although, there is no clear indication from the study, it appears that customers may prefer outsourcing the design layout to external consultant rather than collaborating with the provider. An interesting practice recognized in Alpha is that, the company act both as a consultant and a solution provider. Unlike other cases where the design layout is offered as part of the sales process without any payment, Alpha offers the technical layout design tagged as "feasibility study contract" as a separate consulting service and customers are required to pay an agreed fee.

> ***Alpha:*** *"We make a feasibility study for example for the whole factory. So actually this feasibility study means that ok, pay us a small amount of money, let's say 30 000 or something, and we make this feasibility study. We investigate what should they do for their material handling and packing systems in their factory.....then it's quite easy for us to get the order also, because then we can specify what we, let's say our equipment and our concept to this offer request… it's a good example how we can get the advantage against the other competitors"*

This finding demonstrates the critical role of the technical design or technical negotiation in the sales process both for the providers and for consumers. More importantly, it uncovers the weaknesses in the existing project-based sales process. For instance, the four milestones in the work of Brady and colleagues (2005) namely; pre bid activities, bid activities, project execution activities and post project activities, seem to emphasize "bidding activities" as the central of the sales process (Brady et al., 2005). However, evidence from these findings depicts the "technical design" as the heartbeat of the entire process, thereby, opening up an avenue for further academic enquiries.

4.2.3 Sales Negotiation and Value Proposition

The sales negotiation is usually initiated by the customer's request for tender and this may take several years after the initial discussion with the customer. So, respondents posited that maintaining close contacts with the customer is an important value driver. According to the respondents, tender preparation is a long process that requires a lot of resources and time and in order to access customer's commitment and to ensure mutual understanding of the potential price of the project, some providers start by submitting a preliminary budget offer with estimated project value before investing resources in developing the official tender. As data revealed, request for budget offers or price may also be initiated by the customer.

> ***Bravo:*** *"After we have finished the layout, we both are satisfied, then we start the calculation process, and we calculate the price to the customer and make an offer to the customer. Mostly it's a budget offer first, because… mostly they have no idea about the cost, so we have to make a budget offer first, that if it's on the right level. Because I want to make a half a year work and then when we get the price they say that it's too expensive, we can't take it."*

> ***Foxtrot:*** *"at first your point is not to give a tender straight away to the customer, so first you understand your customer's needs, make the right questions, meet with him, stimulate. The customer will most likely often ask for example for a budget price. You can give that. Based on that then you try to stimulate again the customer to make an official, or if not official, any formal request for quotation."*

> ***Alpha:*** *"So our design department and development department, they are supporting nowadays sales very well. And they have calculated all the prices for this standard equipment… So they are ready-made for the sales department. Then even if we want to sell the standard, then there came a request from the customers that they want to have something special or they need something special. Then we discuss with our design department and together we evaluate if this is what we want to offer"*

However, the decision to submit a tender or quotation demands critical assessment of the customers' official specification against the provider's capability and technology, aside the potential profitability of the case. Hence, many respondents claim to conduct internal review of customer's specification, before tender preparation and official bidding engagement. Depending on the structure of a provider's organization and available resources, as well as the size and complexity of the customer's specifications, a typical tender preparation is done by sales manager, in collaboration with project, design, and tender manager.

> ***Charlie:*** *"They are not all the time the same people, who are making the bids. It's depending on the resource question who is nominated to which sales project. …Let's say that if we know that the sales manager is a strong person owning a lot of knowledge, then we can take a weaker engineering manager to that project. But if we know that the sales engineering is not so experienced in that product in question, then we have to take a stronger engineering manager to support actually the technical development of the bid. And if have this top priority sales project, we are trying to select the best ones of those."*

> ***Hotel:*** *"So at some point when the specification is ready, hopefully when it has been sort of jointly discussed between us and the customer, they make a formal specification and then they put out a formal sort of tender process. And then in our sales process comes the quotation review. And what happens there is that we read the specification, we read the*

requirements that the customer has put forward, and then we decide that ok, can we actually answer to this and do we want to commit, because doing a proposal is fairly sort of heavy activity, it takes a lot of resources, so we have to decide if we commit resources to actually doing that proposal."

Echo: *"This is where we have put much more effort during last years, having first of all opportunity screening and then separately say tender screening type of activity. So to have early enough, first of all decision, if this looks interesting, secondly, when have more concrete information about the inquiry, then we will have the kind of tender screening to decide if we are quoting or not, based on more real facts and sometimes and usually having even inquiry already in our hands to choose if we are starting to work on this"*

By involving the design manager and project management office already in tender preparation, data shows that company can enhance the accuracy of important components of the tender, for instance, price calculation, material specification and equipment measurements. Additionally, early involvement of other departments quickens their sense of awareness and may foster timely preparation for the project execution phase which will apparently affects the delivery time. An interesting initiative that signifies the risk taking capability of few of the provider's organization and stress the importance of early involvement of the project team is the commencement of project execution phase even before the contracts is signed. In this way, the companies that take such initiative can reduce the delivery time, which is obviously one of the criteria for measuring project success.

Hotel: *"because project office is always somehow involved in this building phase, they know what to expect, they have already prepared. They have allocated needed resources already, so it's not a surprise to them. We just don't go knock on their door saying; by the way, here's a project for you, it should be ready in four months"*

Bravo: *I must ask offers for components or devices that we need to put in this project. I ask those prices and ask also from our suppliers. …Then we work on weight. I can have weight of these from constructions,… Then of course electricity. Most cases I ask from our design manager… he gives price for the electrics… Then there's installation, maybe I have to ask mobile crane offers, how much does that make. I have this pricing table where I put all*

values in, and then I estimate how much profit we have too. Maybe some risk, share, and then I have price.

Delta: *‘"We try to get project management engaged already in the sales stage… and actually we look at it as a way to sell, show our, to introduce our capability and execution strategies in an early stage in the capture team. …And sometimes we find it either necessary or clever to start certain activities in advance, we actually might start discussing with sub-suppliers or we might actually do some engineering even though we don't have the contract… we take a little bit of a risk. But it's something that we see it's better to do than to be under the gun and be a little bit behind the curve later on”*

Pricing is an important aspect of the negotiation and there are possibly many companies bidding for a project. Based on the discussion with the respondents, a winning price is not always the cheapest price. More so, it became apparent from the obtained data that there is no centralized value proposition, because it all depends on what is most important to the customer; some customers are technology driven, some are interested in product quality, some in profitability and others in delivery time and speed. There are customers that are interested in project services, and some is system delivery and all having different priorities, requirements, technical specifications, and legal conditions. Therefore understanding customer's business priority or philosophy may actually facilitate the success of sales negotiation. Hence, an attribute that has been echoed in many literature (Vargo & Lusch, 2004); "listening" is very important in order to understand what the customer really wants.

Alpha: *“…the idea is that if they (customer) like our technical proposal, then they may pay a little bit more for us than the competitors, so that we could get a little bit better price. So that it's not the price how they make the decision. …but ok, there are some customers who always take the cheapest one.”*

Charlie: *"It's very often much more important for the customer to have good performance than lower price”*

Delta: *“… If you looked at a customers’ annual reports… instead of talking about EFIT, EBIT and profitability and revenues…if they focus very much on availability and up-time.*

This will give us the idea to look at the full (holistic) picture of their value chain… to find how we could support their up-time."

Perhaps, due to the lack of centralized value demand among solution customers and the difficulties to combine the different aspects of project sales, the highly recommended value based pricing is not adopted by any of the case companies except case Golf that utilizes subscription model base certain performance target that has been agreed with customers. As identified in previous work on value based selling (Kaario et al., 2003; Töytäri et al., 2011) the main challenges pointed out by the respondents that limits the adoption of value based pricing is the lack of willingness from customers and the difficulty to quantify value which is subject to the complexity of the solution. However, a new element that evolves in this study is the level of motivation or willingness of the provider to take risks. Hence, the most common pricing logic amongst the cases is the combination of cost-based and competition-based pricing (Liozu et al., 2012).

Delta: *"We are a company that is not, we have not expanded our risk-willingness along with our capability having grown to be a solution-provider. … for instance we are taking a lot of modern interfaces. That means that we in fact by doing this that we are also taking a larger part of the risk of the projects, and we have not adapted our internal view of risk along. …in order to offer value-based pricing, then you should also take some, because then there will be an upside but there will also be a downside"*

Foxtrot: *I think we use this (performance based pricing) only in some countries, so I would like to say that we are confident enough in our products, that we could use them in all deals, but it depends on the attitude of the front-line or the local country in how they see this. And as well, customers aren't always asking for that, so of course your facility managers who are dealing with the day to day running of our equipment are maybe more interested in it. But I mean, it varies from country to country.*

Hotel: *"I think definitely, in principle the sort of value-based customer engagement is a really good approach. But it's not possible in every case… I have to say that myself I have been working mostly with the traditional businesses, where you could say the value is not as easily quantified. For example, if we take an airports business where I have been working the most. The customer's driver to get something is, first and foremost based on regulations.*

Of course there's the kind of life-cycle cost considerations and stuff. But as said, these kinds of customers are maybe not as used to kind of thinking in a value-based way"

Golf: *"...For one vehicle, we have priced as 290 Euros per month, it's not so big money, but the most important thing is to get our solution sold and also the main thing is to get more satisfied customers, and by that way to keep the customer, by that way to get the new customers"*

Value proposition is based on mix of arguments between transactional factors, such as; product features, technology superiority, product reliability, and reasonable price, and relational factors mainly life cycle cost savings, reputation and trust, as well as promise of up-time intervention. Some companies are experimenting with performance based promises, e.g., through availability agreement and delivery warranties. The value of maintaining relationship with old customers is also stressed as important factor in value proposition because many of the respondents claim to justify capability to offer superior offering or to proof their level of experience using reference cases of previously executed projects.

Hotel: *"our strength in this area is that we are the only company in the world who can provide all the needed observation technologies that are needed for weather forecasting. So we are really the leading company in that sense and number one in the world, much bigger than our competitors. ...one value is that we have the whole product portfolio, everything comes from us. And we are present locally… So we have a big company that customer can trust, premium quality, wide product portfolio, strong service and after-sales and good reputation.*

Bravo: *"So you always have to think what's the advantage for the customer, in that thing you are the right. But of course the price is the most important, you have to be compatible with the price, that's my experience for these 15 years. If you are about 20 or 50 percent more expensive than your competitors, then you probably don't have the right system made"*

Charlie: *"normally we are bringing customers to visit our reference units and so that hey can see by themselves what kind of supplies we can execute, and they can discuss with our customers to get the feedback how we have supplied and how we have managed in the*

project execution, and how well performance guarantees, all the guarantees has been fulfilled and other things has been going"

Golf: *"There must be maintenance 24/7 hours to reach the vehicle if it's on a road in the middle of the night,… And you need to have workshops, the network of the workshops all over the country. If you have workshop only in Helsinki, they don't buy your brand"*

Alpha: *"we want to speak about the total cost of the ownership for example, so we try to explain to our customer that ok, even if the equipment itself, it cost a little bit more, then if they save in the material costs and operator-cost, then in the total cost of the ownership"*

An important activity related to sales negotiation is contract negotiation. Usually, contract negotiation follows customer's acceptance of proposal. Similar to the assessment of customer specification in the request for tender, a typical practice among the providers is to conduct an assessment of the contractual conditions stipulated by the customer. A provider may decide not to pursue sales even at this stage, if there is perception that the customer's conditions cannot be fulfilled. An interesting practice identified in Hotel, is the customer's request for bid-bonds during proposal submission which enforces the provider to commit to the project, otherwise, subject to penalties.

Foxtrot: "*And when you contract, of course you are really checking, finally validating, the manager is responsible also to validate all conditions. If especially the conditions are outside the defined scheme of the sales person, so the sales person, they have defined conditions. If the conditions are deviating, then the sales manager is responsible to approve or not*"

Hotel: *"The customer typically requires that ok, with your proposal you have to submit sort of a, you could say it's a sort of check for about 5 percent of the offer value. And then if the customer selects us and we say that sorry, we have second thoughts, then they can actually cash in that 5 percent. So actually costs a hell of a lot, so that's the sort of the mechanism from the customer side that they use to make sure that the supplier doesn't just kind of get scared at the last point"*

In few of the case companies, the service organization is invited to the contract negotiation with customer. This practice facilitates the kickoff of service negotiation even before the project execution. As noted from the interview data, involving service organization at this stage could: facilitate the integration of project and service sales; help the maintenance and service department to develop early engagement and familiarize with the customers; and increases the possibility of securing post-delivery services agreement beyond the traditional warranty period.

> ***Charlie:*** *"We will contact actually to our service department, and somebody is coming there, joining actually to the sales team, and he is making actually this operation and maintenance or service proposal beside the big preparation, because then he as to be aware of equipment size and that kind of things, that he can actually do the sizing of the service operations and maintenance agreement… And actually when we are here making the deal, and that's actually for example the service and operation and maintenance sales is actually starting, but maybe the final deal is made during the project execution phase"*

> ***Hotel:*** *"During sales contract we try to steer customers so that whenever he or she is tendering a project, they would require maintenance agreement also…so like five-year maintenance agreement, certain requirements, down-time requirements or whatever, response-time requirements or training, whatever. But yes, and that is our strength, because we can do that very easily. We have been putting a lot of focus on that, so we have a very good service organization… And of course they (service organization) understand the cost-structure of maintenance, so that we can then price it wisely"*

The last activity is the sales order review and official handover between the sales and the project management office. This usually takes effect after signing the sales contract and it involves detail clarification of customer's requirement, contractual conditions, project schedule, budget planning and resource allocation, as well as success analysis for successful negotiation. Some companies also perform failure analysis in lost sales cases and the result of the analysis is documented for future learning. In some cases, kick-off celebration is done before project execution which includes members of the sales, project and design organizations. By engaging in such social exchange and interactions, there is high possibility of stimulating interpersonal relationship to develop a more cohesive working environment between members of the organization (Flaherty & Pappas, 2009).

This may also be a source of motivation when employees feel that their success is celebrated (Ingram et al., 2006).

> ***Bravo:*** *"Normally after we have made contract with customer, then it goes to our project organization. So we have a meeting, where I will give every information I have to our project organization,… And then they will take it and start making purchases, start making more detailed planning… but for example very big projects, I will take also our project managers, our designers with me, and we are together finishing this sales phase, because they are then ready to start the realization immediately. And maybe they can also help me on that case. So they can estimate some installation times or they can make more detailed drawings and more detailed design for this system, so we can make the calculation more exact or that kind of things"*

> ***Hotel:*** *"After we have a contract… then we have our own internal process where we hand over the case to our project office. So then sales phase is over, we have the contract. If it's a big case we have some champagne and congratulate, and then we hand over the project to project office"*

> ***Delta:*** *"…at this stage we go into sales order review, we hand over the signed contract, the project to the manager and his team, and they go ahead and execute that project for the following year or so"*

4.2.4 Project Execution and Delivery

The activities associated with project execution and deliveries are divided into three main categories namely; manufacturing activities, monitoring and documentation activities, and activities related to the preliminary evaluation of the system. The manufacturing activities include; project planning, material procurements, system designs, system engineering and installations as well as technical inspection of customer's factory or site location. It appears that information acquisition is a continuous process and execution phase does not signify separation from customers. As noted from acquired data, providers maintain close contacts with customers during project execution in order to; give progress report, notify possible changes and, most importantly, clarify confusing assumptions on project technicalities.

Bravo: *"We arrange meetings with our customer. And of course I'm (sales manager) in that and the project manager and maybe design manager from our side, and project group from our customer's side to make a kick-off meeting… if it's big project, it can take a year to manufacture it and deliver. There's some, let's say after two months that they (project and design group) have some design meetings. And after when the manufacturing phase is going, they have visits on-site, on our workshop. Or when installations are going, we have meetings on-site"*

Alpha: *"When contract is signed, let's say within one month we will have a kick-off meeting with the customer, so that our project team came to the customer together with the seller. …we start the basic design. Then after basic design there normally is again a meeting with the customer, basic design meeting. And after basic design has been reached, then we start do detail-design. And then there again will be a meeting for the detail-design and we start the manufacturing"*

Charlie: *"Actually at this point normally when the deed has been done, it is actually the sales guys jumping out from the process and it's the project execution team who will continue this project ready… Of course the sales person is still responsible if there comes contractual items during the project execution phase. If they have to modify the contract or evaluate the contractual topics, warranties and delivery times and that kind of things. Then actually the sales guy will jump also back to his role, because he knows what has been at the final end discussed and agreed with the customers"*

Hotel: *"We coordinate all the deliveries, logistics, customer relationship, customer contacts… Then we kind of schedule the delivery of systems and schedule trainings, schedule acceptance tests. …so for the customer the sales manager is always the main contact point. And many times during the implementation, during the project delivery, customers contact sales managers, ask this and that. Sales mangers, of course, they must know how the project is proceeding."*

The monitoring and documentation activities take effect simultaneously with the manufacturing activities. The importance of utilizing computer database (CRM system) for progress reporting and information sharing is stressed by many of the respondents. In addition to the CRM systems, some of the companies engage in risk avoidance or

minimizing practices by nominating monitoring groups for quick identification of failure points and to provide immediate intervention in order to ensure that projects are delivered according to schedules, specify budgets, and in accordance with customer's requirements.

> ***Bravo:*** *"I (sales director) will get the project report every week… they have project meetings and I can get the report how the project is going on. And of course we have our data system there, where I can see every time what is the cost of the project… But every time we are doing cooperation, if something starts to go wrong or our project manager finds something that it's not right, he will contact me and together we will solve these problems"*

> ***Hotel:*** *"In big projects, very big projects, there is project steering group… Sales, then a person from this segment, P&L responsible segment. Some service manager, perhaps someone from finance even following up how the cash-flow is going… Monitor and steer, so that if something goes wrong things are escalated as soon as possible, so actions are taken then immediately and not after one or two months."*

> ***Echo:*** *"Because our execution handover from sales to project – project manager – is very crucial part of this. You have to have proper documentation, also technical specifications towards customers. But this same technical specification is used by our execution. There are too many situations where I kind of feel like customer doesn't know what he bought and our execution doesn't know what we sold. And when you are going to ask the sales manager, he has no clue what he was selling"*

The preliminary evaluation of the system is the last set of activities in the execution and delivery phase. Although there are different practices among companies, the central argument from respondents is the need to conduct factory assessment before delivering the system to the customer in order to ensure that customer's requirement is met. In relation to the findings of Brady and colleagues (2005), customer satisfaction assessment is stressed by the case companies as an important target of the project delivery (Brady et al., 2005). In addition to assessing customer's satisfaction, companies are also conducting internal assessment (success and failure analysis) to identify and document new practices that were achieved in the course of project implementation that can be replicated for future solutions, and failure analysis is done in order to avoid recurrence.

Alpha: *"Normally we test some critical equipment before sending to the customer. So we assemble the equipment and we test the critical parts there. Or if agreed with the customer, we can test whole line also before sending. And then when we have these test-runs in our factory, customer came there and they inspect the line and functions. And when they are happy, then we will ship the equipment to the customer."*

Echo: *"They are very complex and usually long time period of execution, it could be five years of execution for a power plant project. And there are things you are probably not so good in and there are just perfect matches to customer expectations even within one project. And then finally when you are doing the assessment and discussing with customer how we did or if it's plus or minus, it's very good if you have some goods because claiming also the minus sides because at this point we were not fulfilling the technical requirement but it was done a little bit differently and then it's kind of trading off also with customer in final negotiations"*

Bravo: *"We have our internal meeting when project is finished. And we check good practices, what was good in this project, what kind of, maybe you have new solutions that we can use afterwards. And of course this economical side we check out how it went. ... And if there is some bad solutions, then we can avoid them after this."*

Delta: *"If we have, I will say, projects that we have lost and we have very often like a lost-case analysis. So what went wrong and what kind of lessons learned can we take with us"*

The need to establish the basis, and develop capabilities, for repeatable solution is not entirely new (Davies, Brady, & Hobday, 2006; Storbacka, 2011; Windahl & Lakemond, 2010), however, despite all recommendations among sales scholars generalizing the possibility of replicating solution, it appears that the repeatability of solution is industry specific and depends on the level of convergence or divergence in customers' need as well as the uniqueness of the bundled offerings. As noted by one sales manager from case "Bravo", all cranes and conveyor systems are unique and specially designed to suit each customer's situation. Whereas, in the case of Golf; a truck manufacturer that is offering customer solutions, the repeatability of the solution is more readily implemented because

of the possibility to generalize or easily manipulate the offering to different customer situations.

> ***Bravo:*** *"most of my sales cases are special, there are not any cranes that we can take on the stock and deliver it, it's so special. …Of course we can use our previous experiences and ways to do some solutions for these cranes. But anyway, there are more or less very special cranes. And made for that special solution and special task for our customer's production"*

> ***Golf:*** "*The main task with our solution is that sales guy and the customer, they will make common deal so to say, that when they discuss about fuel consumption, the main task is to lower the fuel consumption so, they will set the target consumption for the vehicle considering the vehicle, is specified by the economical way. Then there will be driver training for two drivers per vehicle, and the follow-up for the drivers. That follow-up means that our driver trainer calls once per month to the drivers and discuss about the habits what they are driving with. Then there is that fleet management, and I will send every month monthly report to the customer, so he can follow how his vehicle runs. And there is some extra part in maintenance, there is, we call it Maintenance Plus, so it means that there is tire pressure checking and so on"*

Based on these differences between offerings complexity, it became apparent that solution repeatability may not be possible in all industries. Hence, two theoretical hypotheses are postulated as follow;

> ***Hypothesis (1):*** *solutions are replicable or repeatable in industries where there is convergence in customers' needs and offerings can be modularized*

> ***Hypothesis (2):*** *solutions are non-replicable or non-repeatable in industries where customers' needs are divergent and offerings are highly specialized.*

The proposed hypothesis could be verified through quantitative studies involving, heavy machinery industries that are offering integrated solutions e.g. car manufacturers and industries that supply highly specialized solutions, such as technology industry.

4.2.5 Sales Follow-Up and Customer Retention

According to the information gathered from the respondents, there is a wide range of possibilities for post-delivery activities which is mainly determined by the type of contracts or existing relationship with the customer, as well as the amount of resources within the customer's organization or network. In some cases, especially those companies that are serving customers with slow adoption of solution offerings (e.g. case Hotel); project commissioning signifies a periodic break in the relationship. Whereas, more advanced companies like Charlie, Delta, Foxtrot, and Echo, have pre-defined service agreements with customers and during commissioning, the service organization takes over the customer engagement.

> ***Charlie:*** *"from the start of the project commissioning up to the end of the warranty time, and after that also depending on what kind of contract we have. Some customers maybe want to have only maybe 2, 3 years contract at the first for operation and maintenance, and somebody might think about for the 10 first years, depending on the case"*

> ***Delta:*** *"So when we say that we build an integrated solution based on a comprehensive product portfolio, we take our technology or product portfolio as a foundation. Then secondly Life-Cycle Services, meaning how we can support the customer when they use the asset and when they grade the yield of the investment. So 40 percent of our revenue is in this area, so we're fairly big with anything from just delivering spare parts to service agreements"*

> ***Hotel:*** *"And we do sort of have very clearly in mind that ok, when we start the project and when we finish it, we sort of have to do everything during that stretch as good as we can. But what typically happens in project business is that when the project ends the relationship sort of grows dormant"*

However, irrespective of the differences between the cases, customer satisfaction is highly prioritized. Many of the cases claim to conduct post sales follow-up to assess customer's satisfaction after the system has been in operation for a period of time. Series of feedback mechanisms e.g., customer satisfaction survey and loyalty survey, were utilized. At this

point, the sales process is restarted by dedicating specialized sales person to the customer to monitor the system usage, engage in regular visit, and stimulate customers for future sales.

> ***Bravo:*** *"We are asking the customer satisfaction, after we have delivered the project and it's accepted, we send a questionnaire to the customer that is he satisfied in our sales phase, is he satisfies for our material we have sent him. Is he satisfied of our project realization etc. And then customer gives us a feedback and we try to learn on that."*

> ***Hotel:*** *"We have our customer surveys of how do the customer, whatever, feedback survey. So we do that once, every two years I think. So we follow up that very well and the results have been very promising"*

> ***Foxtrot:*** *"in our company, even if you are a new guy, you are assigned a few customers. In a way you partially own them and you are responsible to visit them, or to increase or at least maintain profitability with those customers … At least by visiting customers the assumption or some of customers we make the assumption that we can increase our retention rate for example, or we can increase our maintenance, lift in operation base, lift in service base"*

In cases with predefined values or agreement with customers e.g. availability contract, or pre-set performance target, customers are visited at an agreed time to verify and evaluate if the set value or performance has been achieved. The continuity of the relationship with customer depends on the ability to fulfil the promised value. An interesting practice that is adopted by one particular case to ensure compliance with the preset target and possibly improve relationship efficiency is the use of remote monitoring technology that is attached to all the systems, in sales that involves availability contract. Investment in remote monitoring or other form of information technology has been promoted in previous studies as a means to prevent failure and an avenue to facilitate systematic information gathering and analysis as well as real-time opportunity identification (Artto, Martinsuo, & Kujala, 2011; Oliva & Kallenberg, 2003; Paiola et al., 2013; Storbacka et al., 2013).

> ***Alpha:*** *"Normally, it is written in the contract and there is certain percentage, for example availability, we need to fulfill 98 percent for example. And we show in the end of the project before handing over the project, we need to fulfill all this, otherwise they will take a penalty*

from us… in many cases we have Internet connection to our system. But nowadays we are doing it mainly for troubleshooting, let's say after project has been commissioned and we have 24-hour support seven days per week. So if they want to buy that service from us, they get help from us. And then if they have problems there, we can go the system and check what is wrong there, and we can do even small modifications online"

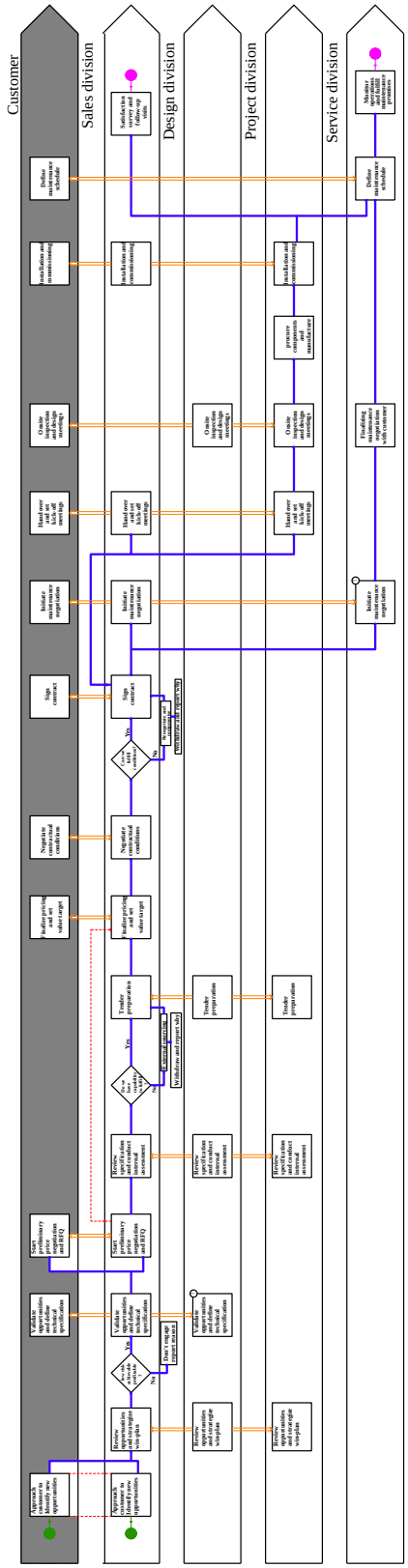
Echo: *"Customer requests in some cases for availability contracts. And this is more and more coming in to business because it's recognized also by customers and all players at this businesses that control electrification is all about availability reliability so to have little bit concrete on your promises so then so there will be a contract saying that it must be at least so and so much and if we are doing worse than there is some sanctions and if it's better there is possibility to have maybe additional bonus"*

Golf: *This is one customer, and he has now our solution vehicle. He has actually some 10 vehicles overall. But he changed one vehicle to our solution vehicle, and he has 43 liters, 42 liters fuel consumption for that previous vehicle,… when we make a deal with the customer, we set the target fuel consumption by using the analyzer between those two vehicles, we set the target as 38, and customer says at that time, if I can achieve that, I'm so hell of a satisfied. Ok, then after two months It runs a little bit less than 35 liters per 100 kilometers. … Then he was a little bit quiet and said that oh, shit, really?*

As posited by Brady and colleagues (2005), providers may enhance their strategic positioning and acquire post-delivery information that are valuable for new product innovation and development by taking responsibility of operational performance of the system (Brady et al., 2005). Although, almost none of the companies in this study claim to have full operational contract or of having complete control and responsibility of equipment maintenance, it appears that the case companies are still able to position themselves for strategic information gathering and customer retention through the identified practices, especially, through the combination of regular visit to the customer location and the use of monitoring technologies. However, for companies depending only on manual collection of information through sales people's (either project or service sales) regular visit to customer location, there is possible limitation that the quality of information is contingent on the questioning skill and reporting capability of the sales people.

Hotel: *“That is something that I also see that would be beneficial, having a sort of systematic mechanism to gather the information in a certain kind of defined way and then kind of inject it in the strategy process. This is not actually happening right now in our company. How it happens, it's more or less sort of, there is information in individuals, but it is not systematically kind of gathered an injected into other processes. It's more like people discuss between themselves and then if the right people happen to be at the right coffee machine at the right time, then great things can happen”*

Foxtrot: *"We of course collect a lot of this information. We try to, it's never enough, but of course. The point is also how much can the sales person, how much time he can dedicate. So you can maybe even have everything about the customer, but then the sales person my not necessarily have the time and skills and everything to really look and utilize that in the best way"*



Legend

Symbol	Description
	Activities or events
	Decision gates
	Indicates activities that take place simultaneously
	Direction of event
	Interaction between actors
	By-process or activities that takes place in special situations
	Showing where critical information is obtained and utilized
	Process starting point
	Process ending point

Tools

Win-plan*excel formula/solution analyzer* questioning model

Figure 7. Solution sales process blueprint

5 Discussion and Implications

An overview of the entire sales process (see the blueprinted process above), indicates that the business concentration and customer solutions offered by the case companies are focused on the following services; system installation and commissioning, equipment availability contract, pre and post manufacturing site inspection, remote monitoring services, after sales services (e.g. spare-part supplies), performance contract, and consulting services; especially those relating to the technical negotiation at the *"need validation and offering positioning phase"* of the sales process. In reference to the work of Oliva and Kallenberg (2003), there are two types of services which are; product-oriented services and end-user's process oriented services. The two service dimensions are further divided into two categories; transaction-based and relationship-based services. With the exception of case Alpha that is offering factory simulation service for the feasibility contract agreement - which fits into the categories of the end-user's process oriented services, most of the services of the case companies are relationship-based- product-oriented services. Hence, this finding confirms the claim of Oliva and Kallenberg, that the shift of manufacturing firms into full customer operational management is still unrealizable for most manufacturing industries (Oliva & Kallenberg, 2003).

Another obvious observation is the limited level of integration between the project sales and service organization in most of the case companies. All the major activities from information acquisition and need validation phase up until the sales negotiation phase are performed by the joint cooperation between sales, project and design organization. In many of the case companies, the service organizations do not appear throughout the entire sales process, except in case Charlie and Delta where service department are invited to participate in contract negotiation phase. Based on the information from respondents, the lack of integration between project sales and service organizations are due to three main reasons. Firstly, differences in priorities and goals of the two organizations. For instance, while new customers are important for project organizations, existing customers are the main target of the service organization. And secondly, management expectation or metrics for assessing the performance of both organizations are different, so each organization continue striving to meet own targets while neglecting the need to work together towards common goal.

Thirdly, despite that the case companies have started developing capabilities towards becoming solution providers and are emphasizing relationship based activities in their sales process, the existing structure in some of the cases (e.g. Hotel and Bravo) are still similar to typical manufacturing organizations which is mainly designed around product groups and geographical locations (Gebauer & Kowalkowski, 2012). Some cases (e.g. Foxtrot, Charlie and Echo) that are more , so-called, "customer-centric" or service-centric, have however adopted more customer oriented structure that are similar to the proposed structural framework in previous sales literature; which includes front-end sales or area business unit, back end production and engineering unit, and strategic business development units or headquarters (Davies et al., 2006; Gebauer & Kowalkowski, 2012). Some of the case companies have started realizing the incompatibility of their existing structure in relations to their desired relationship based offerings, and are taking initiatives e.g. in case Hotel, through organization restructuring and, in Alpha; experimenting with system co-development through early engagement of service department in core activities of the sale process e.g. technical design.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to existing literature in three major dimensions. Firstly, through activity-level analysis of the solution sales process, the identified managerial practices indicates that the entire sales process revolves around early engagement of solution provider to participate in technical negotiation and design with the customer before needs are realized or investment decisions are made. Hence, unlike the existing project based sales process, particularly the work of Brady and colleagues (2005), that is centered on "*bidding activities*", the findings from this study calls for a shift of focus to the utilization of *"technical design* "as the unit of analysis. Although, the framework of Brady and colleagues was developed for integrated solution providers (Brady et al., 2005); by focusing on bidding activities, the process appears to be too transactional oriented, whereas, evidence from this study shows that companies have strong tendency to establish the basis for long term relationship with customer during the technical design phase. Hence, instead of the current set of activities (pre-bid activities, bid-activities, project execution, and post project activities), this study proposes a redress and restructuring of the project-based sales process by focusing on the following activities:

- **Pre-design activities:** information acquisition, customer categorization and prioritization, need identification, and opportunity profiling.
- **Design activities**: need validation, technical design negotiation, offering positioning, value proposition, sales negotiation and relationship selling (e.g. through performance guarantee, availability contracts or maintenance agreement).
- **Project execution activities**: site inspection, manufacturing, customer update reporting, system installation and commissioning, pre-delivery evaluation, and project delivery.
- **Operational or relationship maintenance activities**: sales follow up, customer satisfaction survey, equipment maintenance, performance and value verification, remote monitoring etc.

Secondly, this study adds to existing knowledge in solution sales literature by developing a sales process blueprint that not only visualizes important activities in sales process implementation, but also displays the different customer touch-points and how various actors in provider's organization interact to deliver value for customers. Hence, unlike existing frameworks that mainly highlighted the different milestones in the sales process (Brady et al., 2005; Eades, 2003; Kaario et al., 2003; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005; Storbacka, 2011; Töytäri et al., 2011), visualizing the interplay between different actors in customer value creation presents an opportunity to gain better understanding of the sales process and also, set a good basis for providing clear guidance for practical applications.

Lastly, with only few exceptions (Biege et al., 2012), previous studies have mainly focused on service industry in the application of blueprinting frameworks (Berkley, 1996; Bitner et al., 2008; Fließ & Kleinaltenkamp, 2004; Kingman-Brundage, George, & Bowen, 1995). Considering the benefits associated with utilizing blueprinting techniques for process modelling; e.g. it encourages customer focused organization and facilitate the identification of sources of failures and opportunities (Bitner et al., 2008); scarcity of studies utilizing the techniques within industrial organization context signifies a major setback for knowledge development. Therefore, this study fills the gap through the application of blueprinting framework on transiting manufacturers operating in different industrial context. And more specifically, the study responds to the call for further research in the assessment of the benefits of , and challenges facing, project-based manufacturing organizations as they make transition to solution providers (Biege et al., 2012).

5.2 Managerial implications

The data collection in this study was conducted on companies operating in different industries with unique practices that can be replicated or adapted to different industrial organization settings. Hence, the study provides rich platform for cross-industrial learning. Firstly, the newly proposed blueprinting framework offers useful guide to managers, especially those undergoing organization restructuring, to re-orientate their organization and sales process around those activities identified as the fundamental practices for long term customer relationship development.

Secondly, findings from this study indicate that organizations are utilizing two different types of business models or offering structures. One is a rigid structure in which firms exclusively propose own technologies in technical propositions as a means to guarantee post sales purchases and impede market competition, while the other is a flexible structure that offers customers options from a variety of sources – even from competitors' product. Although, there is no evidence from this study to proof that one offering structure is better than the other, however, by alternating between both, managers can develop better understanding of their customers' needs and possibly channel their organizations towards higher profitability.

Lastly, evidence from this study shows that early engagement of service and project organization enhances cross functional interaction in suppliers' organizations and even fosters the integration of post sales services into the project sales. Only few of the case companies have been able to successfully integrate the service organizations into the project sales and their practices are presented in the sales process blueprinting. Hence, managers can utilize this finding as a learning curve to reorganize their organization and sales process.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

The most obvious limitation of this study is the exclusive focus on the solution provider organizations for data collection, that are utilized in the proposed process blueprinting framework, without including data from customer organizations. Since solution customers are active partners in solution selling, and as already established by other authors (Biege et al., 2012; Bitner et al., 2008; Shostack, 1987); principal players in process blueprinting,

focusing only on provider organization's perspective of value creating activities is apparently an indication of a weakness that requires further investigation. Hence, in order to develop a holistic understanding of the value creating activities in the solution sales process and to confirm or, otherwise, improve the findings of this study, future research should focus on customer organization for data collection or even extend information search to customers' and supplier's network.

Furthermore, the case "Hotel" appears to have the most unique challenges amongst all the companies that participated in this study, especially in terms of offering customer solution or adopting value-based pricing model. Based on careful observations of the research data, the major cause of the challenges is that the company mainly focuses on public organizations that are traditionally transactional oriented and resistant to change; restricted by a variety of industry and government regulations to specific offering structure; have highly bureaucratic purchasing process and limited financial resources, which is due to their dependency on government budget and external funding from international organizations (e.g. World Bank or regional developer bank) for major investments.

And as pointed out by the interview partners from case "Hotel", most of the company's customers have their own service organizations which limit the possibilities of offering post-project services without engaging in direct competition with the customers' service organization. Therefore, the uniqueness of the case and existing challenges presents fertile ground for further research opportunities. For instance, future study can investigate existing business models of solution providers that are serving public organizations in order to develop theoretical understanding of such organizations and to propose practical recommendations on how to structure integrated offerings in such unique situations.

References

Adamson, B., Dixon, M., & Toman, N. (2012). The end of solution sales. *Harvard Business Review*, *90*(7-8), 60–68.

Aguilar-Savén, R. S. (2004). Business process modelling: Review and framework. *International Journal of Production Economics*, *90*, 129–149. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0925-5273(03)00102-6

Anderson, R. E. (1996). Personal selling and sales management in the new millennium. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*.

Artto, K., Martinsuo, M., & Kujala, J. (2011). *Project business*. *International Journal*. Helsinki, Finland. Retrieved from http://pbgroup.tkk.fi/en/

Avlonitis, G. J., & Panagopoulos, N. G. (2007). Exploring the influence of sales management practices on the industrial salesperson: A multi-source hierarchical linear modeling approach. *Journal of Business Research*, *60*(7), 765–775. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2007.02.011

Baines, T., & Lightfoot, H. (2013). *Made to serve*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Baines, T., Lightfoot, H. W., Benedettini, O., & Kay, J. M. (2009). The servitization of manufacturing: A review of literature and reflection on future challenges. *Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management*, *20*(5), 547–567. http://doi.org/10.1108/17410380910960984

Barber, C. S., & Tietje, B. C. (2008). A Research Agenda For Value Stream Mapping The Sales Process. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *28*(2), 155–165. http://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134280204

Berkley, B. J. (1996). Analyzing service blueprints using phase distributions. *European Journal of Operational Research*, *88*(1), 152–164. http://doi.org/10.1016/0377-2217(94)00157-X

Beverland, M., & Lindgreen, A. (2010). What makes a good case study? A positivist review of qualitative case research published in Industrial Marketing Management, 1971-2006. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *39*(1), 56–63. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2008.09.005

Biege, S., Lay, G., & Buschak, D. (2012). Mapping service processes in manufacturing companies: industrial service blueprinting. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *32*(8), 932–957. http://doi.org/10.1108/01443571211253137

Bitner, M. J., Ostrom, A. L., & Morgan, F. N. (2008). Service Blueprinting: A Practical Technique fo Service Innovation. *California Management Review*, *50*(3), 66–95. http://doi.org/10.2307/41166446

Bonnemeier, S., Burianek, F., & Reichwald, R. (2010). Revenue models for integrated customer solutions: Concept and organizational implementation. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management*, *9*(January), 228–238. http://doi.org/10.1057/rpm.2010.7

Brady, T., Davies, A., & Gann, D. M. (2005). Creating value by delivering integrated solutions. *International Journal of Project Management*, *23*(5), 360–365. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2005.01.001

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. *Book* (4th ed., Vol. 4th). Oxford NewYork: Oxford University press Inc.

Bunn, M. D. (1993). Taxonomy of Buying Decision Approaches. *Journal of Marketing*, *57*(January), 38–56. http://doi.org/10.2307/1252056

Burger, P. C., & Cann, C. W. (1995). Post-purchase strategy: A key to successful industrial marketing and customer satisfaction. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *24*(2), 91–98. http://doi.org/10.1016/0019-8501(94)00036-V

Cova, B., & Salle, R. (2008). Marketing solutions in accordance with the S-D logic: Co-creating value with customer network actors. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *37*(3), 270–277. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2007.07.005

Davies, A., Brady, T., & Hobday, M. (2006). Charting a path toward integrated solutions. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *47*(3), 39–48. http://doi.org/10.1225/SMR202

Dwyer, R. F., Schurr, P. H., & Oh, S. (1987). Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, *51*(2), 11–27. http://doi.org/10.2307/1251126

Eades, K. (2003). *The new solution selling: The revolutionary sales process that is changing the way people sell*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Eades, K., & Kear, R. (2006). *The Solution-Centric Organization: Transform Your Revenue Engine to Market and Sell High Value Solutions*. New york: McGraw-Hill.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory Building From Cases: Opportunities and Challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, *50*(1), 25–32. http://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2007.24160888

Flaherty, K. E., & Pappas, J. M. (2009). Expanding the sales professional's role: A strategic re-orientation? *Industrial Marketing Management*, *38*(7), 806–813. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2008.04.007

Fließ, S., & Kleinaltenkamp, M. (2004). Blueprinting the service company - Managing service processes efficiently. *Journal of Business Research*, *57*(4), 392–404. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(02)00273-4

Foote, N. W., Galbraith, J., Hope, Q., & Miller, D. (2001). Making solutions the answer. *McKinsey Quarterly*, *38*(3), 84–93. Retrieved from http://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=6388961

Galbraith, J. R. (2002). Organizing to Deliver Solutions. *Organizational Dynamics*, *31*(2), 194–207. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616(02)00101-8

Gebauer, H., Fleisch, E., & Friedli, T. (2005). Overcoming the service paradox in manufacturing companies. *European Management Journal*, *23*(1), 14–26. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2004.12.006

Gebauer, H., & Kowalkowski, C. (2012). Customer- focused and service- focused orientation in organizational structures. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *27*(7), 527–537. http://doi.org/10.1108/08858621211257293

Gebauer, H., Paiola, M., & Saccani, N. (2013). Characterizing service networks for moving from products to solutions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *42*(1), 31–46. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2012.11.002

Geiger, S., & Guenzi, P. (2009). The sales function in the twenty first century: where are we and where do we go from here? *European Journal of Marketing*, *43*(7/8), 873–889. http://doi.org/10.1108/03090560910961434

Gonzalez, G. R., Hoffman, K. D., & Ingram, T. N. (2005). Improving Relationship Selling Through Failure Analysis and Recovery Efforts: a Framework and Call To Action. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *25*(1), 57–65. Retrieved from http://0-search.ebscohost.com.sally.sandiego.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=17200369&site=ehost-live

Grönroos, C. (1994). From Scientific Management to Service Management: A Management Perspective for the Age of Service Competition. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, *5*(1), 5–20. http://doi.org/10.1108/09564239410051885

Guenzi, P. (2002). Sales Force Activities and Customer Trust. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *18*, 749–778. http://doi.org/10.1362/0267257022780606

Haeckel, S. H., Carbone, L. P., & Berry, L. L. (2003). How to Lead the Customer Experience. *Marketing Management*, *12*(1), 18–23. Retrieved from http://ezp1.harvard.edu/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=75506754&Fmt=7&clientId=11201&RQT=309&VName=PQD

Helle, P. (2012). FutIS - Future Industrial Services. Retrieved June 1, 2015, from http://www.fimecc.com/content/futis-future-industrial-services

Hinterhuber, A. (2004). Towards value-based pricing — An integrative framework for decision making. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *33*(8), 765–778. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2003.10.006

Hinterhuber, A. (2008). Customer value-based pricing strategies: Why companies resist. *Journal of Business Strategy*, *29*(4), 41–50. http://doi.org/10.1108/02756660810887079

Homburg, C., Workman, J. P., & Jensen, O. (2000). Fundamental Changes in Marketing Organization: The Movement toward a Customer-Focused Organizational Structure. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *28*(4), 459–478.

Huikkola, T., Ylimäki, J., & Kohtamäki, M. (2013). Joint learning in R&D collaborations and the facilitating relational practices. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *42*(7), 1167–1180. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2007.10.005

Hume, M., Sullivan Mort, G., Liesch, P. W., & Winzar, H. (2006). Understanding service experience in non-profit performing arts: Implications for operations and service management. *Journal of Operations Management*, *24*(4), 304–324. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2005.06.002

Ingenbleek, P., Debruyne, M., Frambach, R. T., & Verhallen, T. M. M. (2003). Successful new product pricing practices : A contingency approach. *Marketing Letters*, *14*(4), 289–305.

Ingram, T. N. (2004). Future Themes in Sales and Sales Management: Complexity, Collaboration, and Accountability. *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, *12*(4), 18–28.

Ingram, T. N., LaForge, R. W., Avila, R. A., Schwepker, C. H. J., & Williams, M. R. (2006). *Sales Management - Analysis and Decision Making*. (J. W. Calhoun, D. Shaut, N. Marquardt, R. von Gillern, N. Moore, & S. Schempp, Eds.) (Sixth). Natorp Boulevard Mason, OH 45040 USA: Thomson South-Western.

Ingram, T. N., LaForge, R. W., & Leigh, T. W. (2002). Selling in the new millennium: A joint agenda. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *31*(7), 559–567.

Jack, E. P., & Raturi, A. S. (2006). Lessons learned from methodological triangulation in management research. *Management Research News*, *29*(6), 345–357. http://doi.org/10.1108/01409170610683833

Johansson, J. E., Krishnamurthy, C., & Schlissberg, H. E. (2003). Solving the solutions problem. *McKinsey Quarterly*, *3*(3), 116–125. Retrieved from http://www.levelfive.com.au/~levelfiv/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Solving-the-Solutions-Problem.pdf

Kaario, K., Pennanen, R., & Storbacka, K. (2003). *Selling value: Maximize growth by helping customers succeed*. (H.-L. Mäkinen, Ed.). Juva: WSOY.

Kindström, D. (2010). Towards a service-based business model – Key aspects for future competitive advantage. *European Management Journal*, *28*(6), 479–490. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2010.07.002

Kindström, D., & Kowalkowski, C. (2009). Development of industrial service offerings: a process framework. *Journal of Service Management*, *20*(2), 156–172. http://doi.org/10.1108/09564230910952753

Kingman-Brundage, J., George, W. R., & Bowen, D. E. (1995). "Service logic": achieving service system integration. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, *6*(4), 20–39. http://doi.org/10.1108/09564239510096885

Kohli, A. K., & Jaworski, B. J. (1990). Market Orientation: The Construct, Research Propositions, and Managerial Implications. *Journal of Marketing*, *54*(April), 1–18.

Kostopoulos, G., Gounaris, S., & Boukis, A. (2012). Service blueprinting effectiveness: drivers of success. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, *22*(6), 580–591. http://doi.org/10.1108/09604521211287552

Kowalkowski, C. (2011). Dynamics of value propositions: insights from service- dominant logic. *European Journal of Marketing*, *45*(1/2), 277–294. http://doi.org/10.1108/03090561111095702

LaForge, R. W., Ingram, T. N., & Cravens, D. W. (2009). Strategic alignment for sales organization transformation. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *17*(August), 199–219. http://doi.org/10.1080/09652540903064662

Le Meunier-FitzHugh, K., Baumann, J., Palmer, R., & Wilson, H. (2011). The implications of service-dominant logic and integrated solutions on the sales function. *The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *19*(4), 423–440. http://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-6679190405

Le Meunier-FitzHugh, K., & Piercy, N. F. (2010). Improving the relationship between sales and marketing. *European Business Review*, *22*(3), 287–305. http://doi.org/10.1108/09555341011040985

Lewin, J. E., & Donthu, N. (2005). The influence of purchase situation on buying center structure and involvement: A select meta-analysis of organizational buying behavior research. *Journal of Business Research*, *58*, 1381–1390. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2004.09.004

Liozu, S., Hinterhuber, A., Perelli, S., & Boland, R. (2012). Mindful pricing: Transforming organizations through value-based pricing. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *20*(3), 197–209.

Liu, A. H., & Leach, M. P. (2001). Developing Loyal Customers with a Value-adding Sales Force : Examining Customer Satisfaction and the Perceived Credibility of Consultative Salespeople. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *XXI*(2), 147–156. http://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2001.10754265

Luca, D., Mario, L., Guenzi, P., & Troilo, G. (2011). Organizational drivers of salespeople's customer orientation and selling orientation. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *31*(3), 269–285. http://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134310305

Markeset, T., & Kumar, U. (2005). Product support strategy: conventional versus functional products. *Journal of Quality in Maintenance Engineering*, *11*(1), 53–67. http://doi.org/10.1108/13552510510589370

Marshall, G. W., Moncrief, W. C., & Lassk, F. G. (1999). The Current State of Sales Force Activities. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *28*, 87–98. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0019-8501(98)00025-X

Matthyssens, P., & Vandenbempt, K. (2008). Moving from basic offerings to value-added solutions: Strategies, barriers and alignment. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *37*(3), 316–328. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2007.07.008

Mattsson, J., & Palva, O. (2011). ABB: Piloting solution sales. In J. Mattsson & P. Parvinen (Eds.), *Best cases in B2B sales Management* (pp. 177–207). Tampere: The Federation of Finnish Technology Industries.

Moncrief, W. C., & Marshall, G. W. (2005). The evolution of the seven steps of selling. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *34*(1), 13–22. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2004.06.001

Monroe, K. B. (1990). *Pricing: Making profitable decisions*. NewYork: McGraw-Hill: McGraw-Hill. http://doi.org/10.1016/0019-8501(79)90045-2

Mont, O. (2002). Clarifying the concept of product – service system. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 10,* 237–245.

Mont, O. (2004). Reducing life-cycle environmental impacts through systems of joint use. *Greener Management International*, (45), 63–77.

Mont, O., Dalhammar, C., & Jacobsson, N. (2006). A new business model for baby prams based on leasing and product remanufacturing. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 14*(17), 1509–1518. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2006.01.024

Mont, O., & Lindhqvist, T. (2003). The role of public policy in advancement of product service systems. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 11*(8), 905–914. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-6526(02)00152-X

Morelli, N. (2006). Developing new product service systems (PSS): methodologies and operational tools. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 14*(17), 1495–1501. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2006.01.023

Mulki, J., Jaramillo, F., & Marshall, G. (2007). Lone Wolf Tendencies and Salesperson Performance. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 27*(1), 25–38. http://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134270102

Noordewier, T. G., John, G., & Nevin, J. R. (2013). Performance Outcomes of Purchasing Arrangements in Industrial Buyer-Vendor Relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, *54*(4), 80–93. http://doi.org/10.2307/1251761

O'Leary-Kelly, S. W., & Flores, B. E. (2002). The integration of manufacturing and marketing/sales decisions: impact on organizational performance. *Journal of Operations Management*, *20*(3), 221–240. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-6963(02)00005-0

Oliva, R., & Kallenberg, R. (2003). Managing the transition from products to services. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, *14*(2), 160–172. http://doi.org/10.1108/09564230310474138

Oliva, R., & Watson, N. (2011). Cross-functional alignment in supply chain planning: A case study of sales and operations planning. *Journal of Operations Management*, *29*(5), 434–448. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2010.11.012

Olson, E. M., Cravens, D. W., & Slater, S. F. (2001). Competitiveness and sales management: A marriage of strategies. *Business Horizons*, *44*(2), 25–30.

Paiola, M., Saccani, N., Perona, M., & Gebauer, H. (2013). Moving from products to solutions: Strategic approaches for developing capabilities. *European Management Journal*, *31*(4), 390–409. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2012.10.002

Pawar, K., Beltagui, A., & Riedel, J. (2009). The PSO triangle: Designing product, service and organisation to create value. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *29*(5), 468–493. http://doi.org/10.1108/01443570910953595

Pine, J., & Gilmore, J. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, *76*(4), 97–105. http://doi.org/Article

Pine, J., & Gilmore, J. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage* (reprint). Boston MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Pullman, M. E., & Gross, M. a. (2004). Ability of Experience Design Elements To Elicit. *Decision Sciences*, *35*(3), 551–579.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (2nd ed.). Oxford; Blackwell: Wiley.

Román, S., & Iacobucci, D. (2010). Antecedents and consequences of adaptive selling confidence and behavior: A dyadic analysis of salespeople and their customers. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *38*, 363–382. http://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-009-0166-9

Roune, T., Bristow, J., & Terho, H. (2011). *Selling results solutions: Creating sales opportunities in mature industrial markets*. Helsinki: Talentum Media Oy.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students fifth edition*.

Sawhney, M. (2006). Going beyond the product, defining, designing and delivering customer solutions. In R. F. Lusch & S. L. Vargo (Eds.), *The service-dominant logic of marketing: Dialog, debate, and directions* (pp. 356–380). New York: M.E. Sharp Inc.

Shepherd, C., & Ahmed, P. K. (2000). From product innovation to solutions innovation: a new paradigm for competitive advantage. *European Journal of Innovation Management*, *3*, 100–106. http://doi.org/10.1108/14601060010322293

Sheth, J. N., & Sharma, A. (2008). The impact of the product to service shift in industrial markets and the evolution of the sales organization. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *37*, 260–269. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2007.07.010

Shostack, G. L. (1984). Designing services that deliver. *Harvard Business Review*, *62*(January-February), 133–139. Retrieved from http://demos.aptaracorp.com/Showcase/Courses/eLearning/Soft_Skills/HBSP_Service_Success/module03/reading/pdfs/des_article.pdf

Shostack, G. L. (1987). Positioning Through Structural Change. *Journal of Marketing*, *51*(January), 34–43.

Slater, S. F., & Narver, J. C. (1995). Market Orientation and the Learning Organization. *Journal of Marketing*, *59*(July), 63–74.

Storbacka, K. (2011). A solution business model: Capabilities and management practices for integrated solutions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *40*(5), 699–711. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.05.003

Storbacka, K., & Pennanen, R. (2014). *Solution Business: Building a Platform for Organic Growth*. New York Dordrecht London: Springer Science & Business Media.

Storbacka, K., Polsa, P., & Sääksjärvi, M. (2011). Management practices in solution sales—A multilevel and cross-functional framework. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *31*(1), 35–54. http://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134310103

Storbacka, K., Ryals, L., Davies, I., & Nenonen, S. (2009). The changing role of sales: viewing sales as a strategic, cross-functional process. *European Journal of Marketing*, *43*(7/8), 890 – 906. http://doi.org/10.1108/03090560910961443

Storbacka, K., Windahl, C., Nenonen, S., & Salonen, A. (2013). Solution business models: Transformation along four continua. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *42*(5), 705–716. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2013.05.008

Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology With Examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(1), 77–100. http://doi.org/10.1177/2345678906292430

Tuli, K. R., Kohli, A. K., & Bharadwaj, S. G. (2007). Rethinking Customer Solutions : From Product Bundles to Relational. *Journal of Marketing*, *71*(July), 1–17.

Töllner, A., Blut, M., & Holzmüller, H. H. (2011). Customer solutions in the capital goods industry: Examining the impact of the buying center. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *40*(5), 712–722. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.06.001

Töytäri, P., Brashear Alejandro, T., Parvinen, P., Ollila, I., & Rosendahl, N. (2011). Bridging the theory to application gap in value-based selling. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *26*(7), 493–502. http://doi.org/10.1108/08858621111162299

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, *68*(1), 1–17. http://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036

White, A. L., Stoughton, M., & Feng, L. (1999). *Servicizing : The quiet transition to extended product responsibility*. *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*. Boston.

Viio, P., & Grönroos, C. (2014). Value-based sales process adaptation in business relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *43*(6), 1085–1095. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2014.05.022

Williams, B. C., & Plouffe, C. R. (2007). Assessing the evolution of sales knowledge: A 20-year content analysis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *36*(4), 408–419. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2005.11.003

Windahl, C., & Lakemond, N. (2010). Integrated solutions from a service-centered perspective: Applicability and limitations in the capital goods industry. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *39*(8), 1278–1290. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2010.03.001

Wise, R., & Baumgartner, P. (1999). Go downstream - The new profit imperative in manufacturing. *Harvard Business Review*, *77*(5), 133–142.

Wotruba, T. R. (1996). The transformation of industrial selling: Causes and consequences. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *25*, 327–338. http://doi.org/10.1016/0019-8501(96)00035-1

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. (3rd, Ed.) (4th ed.). Newbury Park; London: Sage publications, Ltd.

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (5th ed.). California, USA: Sage publications, Inc.

Zomerdijk, L. G., & Voss, C. a. (2011). NSD processes and practices in experiential services. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *28*(1), 63–80. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2010.00781.x

Appendices

Appendix 1 Profile of Interview respondents

Case Company	Current position of respondents	Years of industrial experience	Date of interview	Duration of interviews
Alpha	Vice President: Metal industry	19years	25.10.2014	89 Minutes
Alpha	Vice President: Paper and converting	5years	18.12.2014	101 Minutes
Alpha	Sales Manager	1yeay	18.12.2014	98 Minutes
Bravo	Sale Manager: process cranes	10years	12.12.2014	46 Minutes
Bravo	Sales Director: Conveyer systems	15years	12.12.2014	55 Minutes
Charlie	Manager: Plant and process solutions	2years	05.01.2015	99 Minutes
Charlie	Director: Power plants solution	4years	06.02.2015	79 Minutes
Charlie	Director: Project & energy Sales	25years	06.02.2015	79 Minutes
Delta	Vice President: Offshore Business	20years	27.01.2015	158 Minutes
Delta	General Manager: MLS	15years	09.02.2015	72 Minutes
Echo	Manager: Marketing and Sales in Power generation	17years	13.02.2015	104 Minutes
Echo	Manager: After-sales services	20years	11.03.2015	86 Minutes
Echo	Sales Manager: Relay-sales	17years	11.03.2015	86 Minutes
Foxtrot	Sales Process Development Manager	5years	26.02.2015	113 Minutes
Foxtrot	Manager: Customer Value Creation, Sales Development	8years	26.02.2015	113 Minutes
Golf	Product Manager & solution coordinator	7years	05.02.2015	92 Minutes
Hotel	Regional Market Manager	14years	04.02.2015	50 Minutes
Hotel	Sales Manager: front line sales	7years	06.02.2015	70 Minutes