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HANDBOOK FOR SALES DEPARTMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS,  
CASE: SOL

Bachelor's Thesis 2010

## ABSTRACT

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Handbook for sales departments in international business, case: SOL

Bachelor's Thesis

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Acquisition of new customers is a demanding process for both time and resources. In addition to certain features required in the sales work detailed instructions are needed in order to implement the sales efficiently and successfully. The sales process includes all the activities in between finding potential customers and completing the process with cooperation and after-care of the customer relationship. Even though it is clear that the process doesn't always end up with cooperation, one should strive for success in sales every time.

This Bachelor's thesis focuses on giving instructions for sales work in the subsidiaries outside Finland of SOLEMO Oy. In addition measuring customer satisfaction as a part of sales work and handling feedback plays an important role in the thesis. The main objective of the thesis was to gather information so that a complete guide for sales work in practice is generated, and to bring out the main actions of each step in the sales process. Another objective was to develop a model on how the collected feedback may be used so that the sales work and overall activities can be developed.

As a working method qualitative interviews for salespersons of the subsidiaries and for other personnel of SOLEMO Oy were carried out. This way an inside view of sales work in reality could be obtained. A Finnish sales process description served as a basis for creating the sales handbook.

As a result of this work a cohesive and functional manual for the sales departments can be seen. A certain model for utilizing the information received from measurement of customer satisfaction was created as well. The sales handbook can be used in familiarization and giving instructions for sales work.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Sales as being a partitive process of a company's operations, it is naturally one of the most important processes due to acquiring new customers. The work that needs to be done to acquire a customer may take a very long time, in some circumstances even years. Especially in the case of SOLEMO Oy the sales process may take years. SOLEMO Oy (later SOL) needs to have an integrated handbook for sales departments in the subsidiaries abroad. At the moment the subsidiaries do not have a solid guide on how to do sales in the company. Naturally SOL has its own guideline for the sales process, but the information for it cannot be found from a single source.

The objective of this thesis is to gather all the needed information that is connected with the sales process of SOL and to describe the activities during each stage in detail. After this the company will have a single handbook for the sales departments abroad in order to familiarize salespersons and to give guidance how the sales work is being done. Another objective is to further develop the methods on how to measure customer satisfaction after the sales process has led to cooperation and how to utilize the received information. It is needed to develop this matter due to differing ways to measure and to utilize customer feedback. This issue was very important for the client.

The focus of this thesis is on the basics of sales work, what the needed qualities to work as a salesperson are and what is meant with business-to-business marketing. The sales handbook consists of a detailed description of stages of sales process. Concerning the measurement of customer satisfaction, the focus is to develop a coherent, down-to-earth and useful method on how the received feedback can be utilized efficiently. Also the collecting of feedback in different situations is described clearly. Customer satisfaction has a remarkably big significance within the company and interference in problematic issues is primarily important. From this Bachelor's thesis a more detailed version with appendices has been done for the client. This public version contains no issues regarded as business secrets.

## 2 WORKING METHODS AND DEMARCATIONS

This Bachelor's thesis is an action-based thesis. Action-based thesis is a thesis type used in universities of applied sciences. Commonly action-based thesis concentrates on advising, giving instructions, rationalizing and organizing activities. For example an action-based thesis can be about organizing an event for a client or creating a manual about a certain theme. There exist several possibilities for implementation of an action-based thesis, such as a book or a DVD. A baseline for an action-based thesis is that it is close to working life. Action-based thesis is also considered as an alternative for making a research as thesis. (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 5-6.)

In the theoretical part of the thesis various different professional books and other literature are used as sources. To see an inside view for the handbook for sales department I have done a qualitative interview for four persons, who work for SOL. These persons are Mr. Ritvars Briska, project manager SOL Latvia, Mr. Aleksey Kolchin, sales manager SOL Moscow, Mr. Ervins Kotans, general manager SOL Latvia and Mr. Tarvo Priimägi, sales manager SOL Estonia.

Furthermore a qualitative interview has been done to Mr. Erki Milistver, general manager SOL Moscow, Ms. Jaana Rynänen, SOL international training manager and Mr Jussi Ylinen. The reason for this interview was to receive detailed information from SOL as a company. From the basis of the Finnish sales process description and qualitative interviews the handbook is made.

The handbook is created only for one partitive process, the sales process. Concentrating only on the sales process was seen as a priority and as the most reasonable and useful choice. As also mentioned a clear need for creating a detailed guide for sales work in the international subsidiaries existed. It must be stated as well that the extent of the thesis would be too big if it also included other process descriptions.

### 3 COMPANY PROFILE: SOL

SOL is in a tertiary sector operating Finnish company, whose lines of business are cleaning and facility services, maintenance services, laundry services, personnel services, security services and domestic services. In addition to Finland SOL also operates in Russia, Estonia and Latvia. (Milistver, Ryyänen & Ylinen 23 September 2009.) SOL Estonia was founded in 2001, SOL Latvia in 2004, SOL Moscow in 2005 and SOL St. Petersburg in 2007 (Ylinen 29.10.2009). Altogether SOL has around 8000 employees of which 2000 are outside Finland. SOL has also had a subsidiary in Poland. The managing director of SOLEMO Oy is Ms. Anu Eronen. (Milistver, Ryyänen & Ylinen 23 September 2009.) The SOL group is illustrated in figure 1.

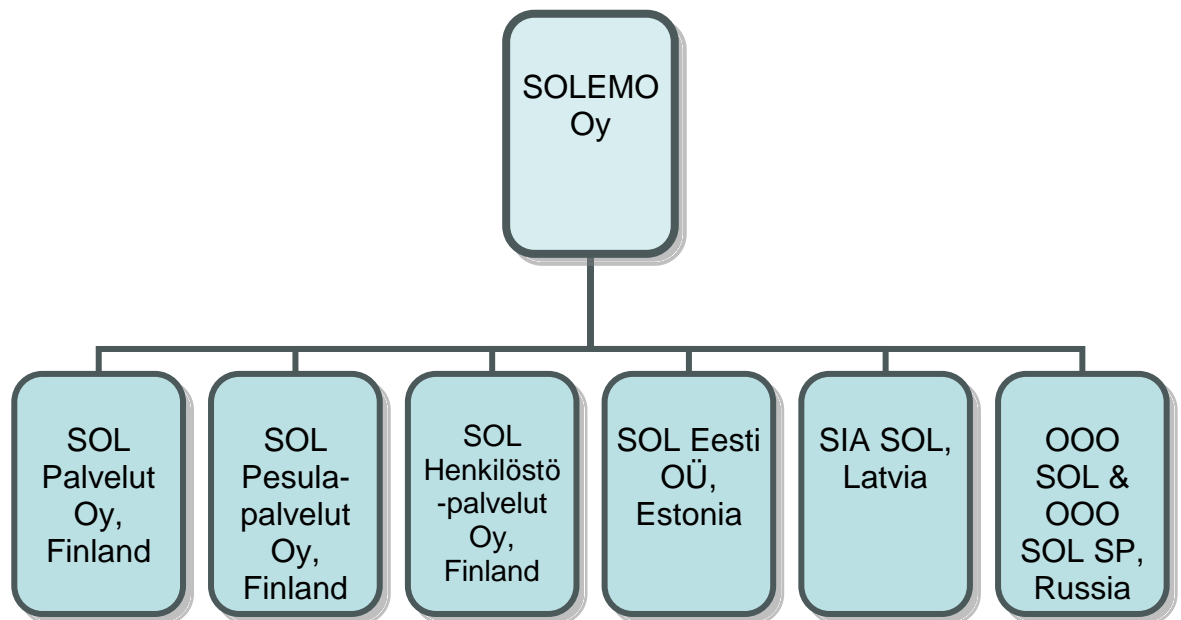


Figure 1. The SOL Group (SOL 2009, 2)

The roots of SOL go as far back as 1848 when Lindström Oy was founded. As an own company SOL was founded in the early 1990s when Ms. Liisa Joronen bought herself Lindström's cleaning- and waste services. Her intension was to create a better work community. During the history of SOL the waste services have been closed down, but new lines of businesses have came along. The company has been developing constantly. (Joronen 2008, 4-5.) In 2008 the turnover of SOL was approximately 154 million Euros, and 10% of the turnover came from international operations. (SOL 2009, 7.)

SOL mainly operates in business-to-business market. The main customer segments are companies, communities, the state and municipalities. In domestic services and laundry services the main segment is private persons. The biggest competitors in the Finnish markets are ISS, Lassila & Tikanoja and RTK. In the field of cleaning- and facility services SOL is among the three biggest companies. Outside Finland the biggest competitors are Serviks and Clean House in Latvia, ISS and Pesumati in Estonia and Ranova, Tshisti Svet, OMS and Kristanval in Russia. (Milistver, Ryyänen & Ylinen 23 September 2009.)

In the future SOL wishes to grow faster than the markets. The company believes that opportunities for growth exist, especially outside Finland, and the aim is to establish subsidiaries in new countries. In the future a remarkable part of SOL's turnover will come from outside Finland. SOL's aim is to strengthen its brand as an expert in multiple areas in service industry. (Milistver, Ryyänen & Ylinen 23 September 2009.)

## 4 SALES AS A PARTITIVE PROCESS OF A COMPANY

### 4.1 What is meant with sales process

Due to the reason that sales process is an essential subject in this thesis, it is necessary to know what is meant with the term sales process. Sales process is a series of events where a salesperson tries to sell a product or a service to a customer. The purpose of the salesperson is to convince the customer about the benefits and the value of his or her product or service. In the sales process there are many different events, of which the whole sales process consists of. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 65.)

When talking about wide ensembles, the sales process commonly takes a long time. This derives from the team of several persons participating in the purchasing; conversations, meetings and sales negotiations with many people from different departments. Via these steps the whole sale process proceeds.



The sales process is not about determining details only from one side. It is about interaction with two sides, the seller and the buyer, and about getting a conclusion that fulfills the objects of both sides. In some cases the whole sales process is completed after only one sales negotiation. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 65.) The authors have also listed how the stages of a sales process may move on:

- Building up and opening a customer relationship
- Clarifying the need of a customer
- Finding out the solution to fulfill the needs of buyer and seller
- Making the offer
- Making the decision about the offer
- Making the contract
- Delivery
- Cooperation in the future

(Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 68.)

In the case of SOL the cooperation in the future is continuous, because the company acts in a service sector and the service contracts with customers are made for a long period of time. The service contract can be made, for example, for two years. In chapter 6 the stages will be dealt in more detail from the point of view of SOL.

For a salesperson it is important not only to control his or her own sales process, but also to understand how the purchasing process of the customer goes forward. Every person has their own style and way to go through the purchase process. In the purchase process of the customer there can be seen a certain order how it goes on. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 66.)

In the beginning the trust develops between the buyer and the seller. In this stage the seller must use the expertise to convince the buyer about him or her. The next stage focuses on analyzing the situation and the business on the whole. The mission of the seller is to find out the need of the customer and on the other hand, to create the need for the customer. This is based on the

proper information that is received from the customer. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 67.)

The following stage is about considering the salesperson's solution, which is based on the information that is received during the situation analysis. The seller must bring out the benefits of the solution, because the buyer may be doubtful towards the need of the solution. Here the seller must turn the hesitation into certainty. The final stage of the customer's purchasing process is about deciding whether to accept the solution or not. Buyer and seller negotiate about the advantages and disadvantages of the solution and the seller must be well prepared for this. The salesperson's knowhow and skills have an effect on the buyer's decision. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 67-68.)

#### 4.2 Basics of a personal sales work

The basic idea of a personal sales work is a personal interaction between two sides, the buyer and the salesperson. So that the salesperson would reach the goals in sales, the knowledge about the product or service the salesperson is selling needs to be in a high level. In addition it requires training, patience, resilience and of course, the right timing. Also understanding and adapting in the sales situation is important. When talking about training it is important to train oneself regularly due to changing business environment. (Pekkarinen, Sääsäski & Vornanen 1997, 25-27.)

For a salesperson it is not enough to have a high level of knowledge solely on one's own product or service. A salesperson must also have an idea of what happens around him or her and what the situation in the markets is. The information about the competitors' products and what their products are like compared with the product of one's own is vital. (Rope 2003, 97.)

When selling a product or a service to a customer, a salesperson should keep a customer-oriented approach in mind; the details should always be told in a way that a customer understands them. As well, it doesn't make sense to speak about matters that are not significant to a customer. An important aspect in a salesperson's know-how is the means to try to sell something to a

customer, he or she hasn't even thought of buying. To get the customer to buy, lowering the price more than planned is not the solution. Salesmanship must not be based on giving too big discounts. (Rope 2003, 99.)

Each person has an individual way to do sales. Yet there are some basic techniques that can be applied to sales. One of these techniques is to memorize some basic lines when beginning the conversation with a customer. This may be useful for a novice salesperson. In the push-button -technique a salesperson finds the customer's weaknesses and uses them when doing sales. In the Aida-technique the sales situation moves ahead in a certain order. First the attention arises. Then a salesperson makes the customer to become interested in the product or service. After this a desire to buy comes out and if everything goes well, the sales situation ends to action, which means that a customer buys. The problem solving technique focuses on finding the solution to customer's problem. In the funnel-technique a salesperson clarifies the needs of a customer by asking questions and the further the questioning goes the more detailed the questions are. (Pekkarinen, Sääski & Vornanen 1997, 28-29.)

Timo Rope (2003, 101-104) has listed matters that a good salesperson should possess. Below are some of the features that are important to possess.

- **Good at speaking.** A sales pitch should not be forced. A sales pitch needs to come out naturally
- **Good at listening.** Nothing can be sold if a customer doesn't need it. By listening what the need of the customer is, a salesperson can find the solution
- **Understanding of the situation.** A good salesperson knows how to act with different kinds of people in different kinds of situations.
- **Trustworthy and honest.** A salesperson must stand behind the words he or she has said. A seller also needs to speak about the product or service as it is. In other words, call a spade a spade.

- **Service-oriented.** Sales work is customer service, where a customer feels that the salesperson is really there for him. Concerning this feature, a salesperson needs to have a social character. (Rope 2003, 101-104.)

How then should a salesperson act in a business situation? Generally speaking a salesperson should act in a natural way. Too polite behavior is considered to be constrained and too indifferent behavior may give the customer a feeling that they are not taken into consideration enough. If a customer afterwards has a feeling that it was pleasurable to do business with the seller, the seller has been successful in his actions. Some behavioral rules differ between cultures. One example is whether to call by the first name or to address formally. (Rope 2003, 92-93.)

It may be that a person does not possess all of the features of an ideal salesperson. The more good features a salesperson possesses the better. Some of the features can be learned, and it would also seem that a company must train salespersons regularly to uphold the skills and to bring out new information. Regular training is important also because not everyone is a natural born salesperson, and different people absorb information with a different rate. I also believe that the right stance to sales work brings good results.

## 5 BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

### 5.1 What is the basis of business-to-business marketing?

Business-to-business markets mean that the buyer is a company or a community. Companies or communities buy commodities from other companies to sell them to end users directly or to manufacture new products from these commodities. Commodities, which can be both products and services, may also be bought to maintain the activities of a company. (Korkeamäki, Lindström, Ryhänen, Saukkonen & Selinheimo 2002, 173.)

Figure 2 describes from which kind of commodities business-to-business market consists of.

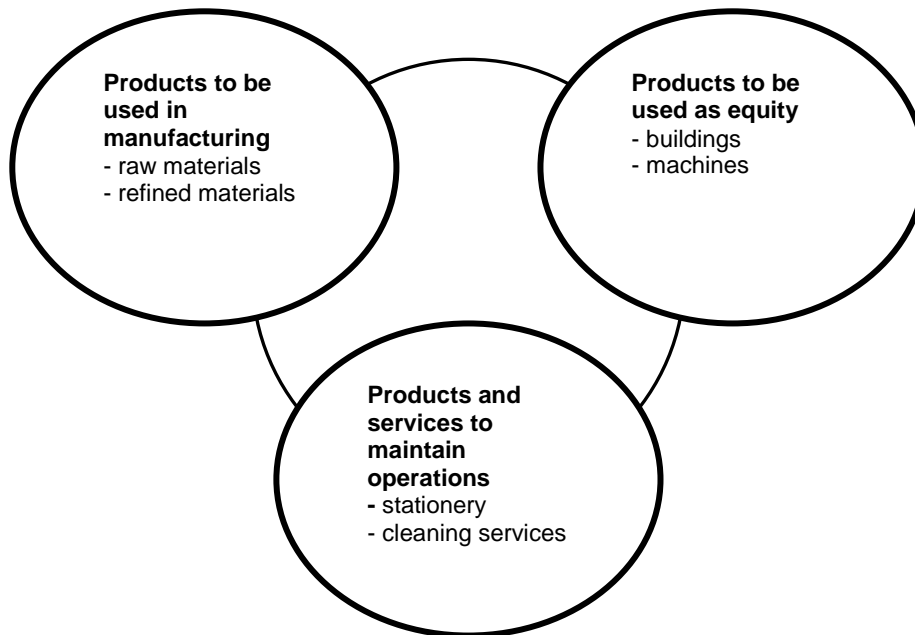


Figure 2. Three groups of commodities a company may purchase from another company. (Asiakasmarkkinointi 2002, 174)

To be able to create a functional b-to-b marketing strategy, it is necessary to know how the purchase process of a customer works. Customer in this case is the organization. The common thing in both business-to-business and business-to-customer market is that behind the purchase decision is always a human being or group of human beings. This is the reason why understanding the actions and behavior of the customer is important. (Rope 1998, 10, 17-19.)

The purchase process consists of various different stages, from clarifying the need to purchasing itself and to experiences the process generated. In different stages a different amount of people from the organization participate in the process. (Rope 1998, 10, 17-19.) For a b-to-b marketer the objective is not only to create a customer relationship, but also to secure the future of it and to make the cooperation deeper. These points of view make a well functioning cooperation possible. (Rope 1998, 24-25.)

The purchase process does not definitely always follow the same specific pattern. Usually if it's not the first time of buying from the same supplier, it is

not needed to rigorously go through all the stages of the purchase process. This, however, requires that the buyer is totally satisfied with the supplier. If the buyer is not totally satisfied, it may be needed to weigh the situation and the supplier more closely. Also the amount of people participating in the purchase process depends on what the company is buying. (Korkeamäki, Lindström, Ryhänen, Saukkonen & Selinheimo 2002, 177 & 182.)

## 5.2 Purchasing situations

As I mentioned in the chapter above, the progression of the purchase process depends on what the company is buying. Concerning this also the challenges of a b-to-b –marketer may vary. An important aspect in b-to-b marketing is to notice how an important the acquisition for the customer is; the acquisition of a same kind of commodity may have a different significance in different companies. (Rope 1998, 51.)

The classification of purchasing situations is not always simple. Nevertheless the purchasing situations may be divided according to regularity or uniqueness and significance or little-significance. It must be kept in mind that the purchasing situation always consists of two of these factors. For example for a bakery the buying of flour is both regular and little-significant. The demarcation is not univocal and marketer's task is to identify the factors of which the purchasing situation of the client consists of. (Rope 1998, 50-51.)

The purchasing situation determines what kind of sales process will be gone through. The sales process will be gone through thoroughly if the product to be bought is significant for the company. In these kind of cases all the possible risks should be avoided, so that the acquirement can be considered successful. The risk related to purchasing may be for example an economical risk if the costs grow too high. Another typical risk can be an operational risk. This means, for example, the production is unstable due to a poor quality of the purchased machine. The risk can also be comprised from buyer's doubts towards the commodity. Here the marketer's task is to remove these doubts so that the purchasing process may proceed. (Rope 1998, 53-54.)

If the purchasing situation is little-significant, the purchase process moves on more straightforward. Some stages may be dealt with faster and with a smaller attention. It is profitable for a company to reach the situation where purchasing happens with a certain routine. An example from this kind of situation is that an organization has already bought commodities from the supplier in question, as also mentioned in chapter 5.1. (Rope 1998, 54-55.)

### 5.3 Segmentation as a part of business-to-business marketing

Segmentation means that a company divides customers into different groups. Each group has certain features and criteria and all the customers can be placed into these groups, segments, according to the features it has. The criteria of each segment are to be chosen by the company itself, but in business-to-business market the buying behaviour is one important criterion. Segmentation helps in understanding the customer well and it can be said that successful marketing requires a carefully done segmentation, especially when a company operates in big markets. (Korkeamäki, Lindström, Ryhänen, Saukkonen & Selinheimo 2002, 183.)

In addition to buying behavior business-to-business market can be divided according to other criteria as well. Segmentation based on needs is one way even though it is not recommendable. Assessing the needs of companies can be very difficult and as a remarkable factor according to this, needs inside the company and among personnel may vary dramatically. Segmentation can also be done according to geographical location of customers. One way is to divide companies according to their size. Consumption manners and the way of thinking and acting usually differ between smaller and larger companies. Concerning this the customers may also be divided according to their future potential. Segmentation as its best creates a competitive edge for a company. (Hague. N.D.)

To receive all the benefits from segmentation and so that the segmentation is helpful, a marketer needs to pay attention to certain matters. First of all it is essential that the segment is big enough. If the segment is too small, it may not be profitable to implement a separate marketing on it. The criterion for this

is that the customers of a segment must bring more money into a company than the segmentation itself takes. (Rope 1998, 58-59.)

Other important aspect when doing the segmentation is to find the appropriate features of companies. This way the different segments can be determined. Finding the basic features, like the amount of turnover and the amount of personnel, is rather easy. Instead finding deeper information about the inner factors of the company may be more challenging. The third aspect is to separate the segments properly from each other. This requires that each segment has a different kind of, uniquely directed marketing. (Rope 1998, 59.)

Strategically when a company does the segmentation, it has three options. First option is the non-segmented marketing, second option is selective marketing and the third option is centralized marketing. The non-segmented marketing means that the markets are not segmented at all. (Korkeamäki, Lindström, Ryhänen, Saukkonen & Selinheimo 2002, 184.) This option may be chosen, for example, if a company operates in very small markets (Rope 1998, 58).

In selective marketing different segments will be chosen, and a different marketing will be directed to these segments. This option is useful, for example, when a company has many different kinds of products or services. Centralized marketing means that a company has only a few segments or perhaps only one. This option may be chosen, for example, if a company is a subcontractor. (Korkeamäki, Lindström, Ryhänen, Saukkonen & Selinheimo 2002, 184.)

The segmentation as a process moves forward step by step from general decisions into more detailed division. The macro segmentation means that different target groups are chosen. After this certain persons from inside each segment need to be found. These persons are the ones to whom the marketing is directed. The organization itself is not the decision maker but it is the person or group of persons who is. This is the reason why segmentation must be reached to a personal level. Also finding specific information about the characteristics of the persons helps when the marketing takes place.



When all this is done the marketing decisions for each segment can be made. (Rope 1998, 70-71.)

It would seem that on the whole the consequences of segmentation should be monitored afterwards. If it seems that the chosen segments are not appropriate for the company, they should be taken into further consideration. In consequence of this, the segmentation maybe has to be done again from the beginning. It has to be remembered that each segment needs to have a uniquely done marketing decisions. If the segmentation is not proper, the marketing solutions may not be proper as well.

## 5.4 The implementation of marketing

### 5.4.1 The marketing mix and the significance of service

The implementation of business-to-business marketing is done with using the traditional competitive weapons of marketing. These competitive weapons are product, price, place and promotion, also called the 4 Ps or the marketing mix. To promote something, it is needed to use product, place and price as the basis for promotion. (Rope 1998, 76.) When planning the comprehensive marketing solutions, it is worth noticing that the more sophisticated, complex and valuable the product or service is the more demanding the buyers in b-to-b -markets are. The buyers are usually experts who really know what they want and are willing pay for it. On the other hand nobody is willing to pay for nothing; the product or service must come up to expectations, requirements and needs of the customer. Concerning this, marketing implementation must be done with care. (Harrison, Hague & Hague. N.D.)

Kuusela (1998, 78) explains that the concept of 4 Ps has been extended several times. In 1987 Judd added people in the concept. In 1984 Kotler added political power and public opinion formation. In 1981 Booms and Bitner expanded the competitive weapons with participants, process and physical evidence. In 1991 Baumgartner presented the concept of 15 Ps. This model additionally includes people, positioning, public relations, politics, probing, profit, plan, partitioning, prioritizing, performance and positive

implementations. The extended marketing mix is particularly developed for marketing services. The extended marketing mix emphasizes the significance of service and customer relationships.

Marketing physical products and intangible services has some differences. A product to be marketed will be produced so that it will include features wanted by the product's target group. When the product is ready, it is marketed as it is and so that it is wanted among the target group. If the product meets the requirements of the target group in real life, marketing has been successful. The product to be marketed is produced beforehand and then marketed. Marketing services is more complex, because normally services cannot be produced beforehand. Matters related to the service, like the service outline, can be planned in advance but a finished service entirety cannot be produced beforehand. Usually the service is tailored for each customer, and marketing must be adapted according to the situation. (Grönroos 2003, 89-92.)

When marketing services the quality of a service is a very significant matter to the marketer. Within a company the quality of a service should be seen as the customers see and experience it. Otherwise the quantification of the quality of the service may be too narrow. The reason for this is that the customer experiences the quality of the service in two ways. First an important matter to a customer is what is being received from the service provider. The second matter is how the service is being received. These two matters constitute the quality of the service in the eyes of a customer. As the marketer understands how the client experiences the quality of the service in its entirety actions can be directed to the desired direction. This way the operations are sincerely customer-oriented, which is the key to success. (Grönroos 2003 98-101.)

#### 5.4.2 Product as a competitive weapon

The product in this case means that a commodity is being made a marketable entirety. It doesn't matter if the commodity is product or service, but the purpose is that it is ready to be marketed. The marketable entirety consists of the commodity itself and images that are added to it. Images are created for

instance with name, package and colors. These factors make a commodity desirable in the eyes of a customer. (Rope 1998, 76-77.)

By choosing the elements of the marketable entirety, the creating of a brand begins. With these specific elements the company differentiates from competitors. When talking about a brand, it is important also to do a positioning to it. Positioning means choosing both the market where the company operates and how the company's products or services are different from competitors. The positioning can be done by using the perceptual map. The perceptual map consists of two features that are considered essential for the brand, e.g. price and durability, and both extremities from these features are shown on the perceptual map. After this the brand along with competitive brands are placed on the map according to how the features are seen with each brand. This clarifies how the brand is seen among competitive brands. (Jobber 2007, 305-307, 327.)

When talking about a product to be marketed, usually the concept of quality is included to it. Quality can be seen from several points of view. The quality from the point of view of competition means that the quality of the product is better according to competitors. The quality of production means that the production works as it should and resources are used optimally. The quality of expenses means that the desired quality can be produced with the lowest possible costs. The customer quality means that how a customer finds the product and what kinds of features are important to a customer. These four points of view are related to the quality of activity. (Rope 1998, 79-80)

An important aspect considering quality is what the company's stance to it is. The stance might be inadequate if for instance the situation of competition is not taken into consideration or quality thinking focuses only on production. But if as an indicator of quality is fulfilling the customers' needs and that the customer is satisfied, the stance is comprehensive quality thinking. Altogether quality as a concept is very multidimensional. (Rope 1998, 81-83.)

### 5.4.3 Price as a competitive weapon

Setting a price for a product has many perspectives. It is clear that the price must not be so low that it doesn't cover all the costs included to the product. The price must also not be so high that the demand disappears. In addition to this for instance the overall demand, prices of competitors and what the market is like must be considered. Customer oriented approach is a key factor when pricing. The amount of benefits a customer receives when buying something must be balanced with the amount of money the customer uses for buying. If this is not the case, the price is not set correctly. (Kotler & Armstrong 2008, 285.)

When pricing is done correctly it includes the full understanding of the value that the customer gets. The value-based pricing is based on this. In this kind of pricing model the designing and production can be started after the value that a customer gets from the product is assessed. The value that the customer gets determines the price which, for one, determines which costs can be included to production and designing. A good-value pricing model means that a customer gets a reasonable amount of quality with a reasonable amount of money. This pricing model can be adapted by introducing a cheaper version from a product that already exists. A value-added pricing model means that if the price is too high compared with competitors, the price won't be dropped. Instead some extra features are added. Via this the product or service entirely differs from competitors and the current price is justified. (Kotler & Armstrong 2008, 285-287.)

Pricing should walk hand in hand with all other marketing decisions and it shouldn't be a separate matter. The starting point is customer oriented approach, keeping in mind that external factors also influence the price. These factors always need to be taken into consideration. Also setting price for a totally new product and for already existing product is different; company's strategy influences on pricing an existing product, and pricing a totally new product should correspond positioning. Altogether pricing is a sum of various different factors. (Jobber 2007, 465.)

#### 5.4.4 Place as a competitive weapon

The concept place in the 4 Ps' model means that a product or a service needs to be available in suitable locations at the time when customers are willing to buy. Also the products must not run out, so the supply chain management is also an essential part of place. Before the product reaches its end user there may be intermediaries in between. Choosing the right, cost effective, distribution channel and so that the customer is satisfied are crucial parts of place. (Jobber 2007, 679.)

In business-to-business market intermediaries are used commonly even though they are in some occasions bypassed. The direct selling from manufacturer to business customer takes place when buying an expensive industrial product is in question. Buying this kind of commodity includes clarifying several details and features of it, therefore close collaboration is necessary. A company may also sell its products by using an agent, who sells the products to customers. This way own sales department is not needed. A same agent may have various products for sale from many different companies. This means that the energy and time used for sales is divided between several products and companies. As a consequence some products may get too little attention. (Jobber 2007, 684.)

If a company produces commodities to be bought quite often, they use distributors as an intermediary. In these cases both own and external personnel may be used. For a business customer the benefit is to be able to buy small amounts locally when needed. In b-to-b market products can also be sold using both an agent and a distributor. Here the distributor buys products from the agent employed by the manufacturer. The aim of using this kind of distribution channel is to save in costs, because hiring an outside agent may be cheaper than hiring own sales personnel. (Jobber 2007, 685.)

Selling services to business customers happens directly from service provider to business customer or by using an agent in between. If providing the service includes interacting and meeting personally, the service is normally supplied directly. An example from this is cleaning services. If the agent is used as an

intermediary, it normally means that the geographical distance between service provider and customer is too long. This way it is more profitable for the provider. (Jobber 2007, 685-686.)

#### 5.4.5 Promotion as a competitive weapon

The final part in the 4 Ps' entirety is promotion. The crucial information of products or services must be transferred to customers to affect the decision makers. Altogether commodities are not bought if people are not aware of them. The sales staff is considered to be the best channel in transmitting the information, details and benefits about the product or service to customers. In addition promotion needs to be done in other ways as well. These ways are for instance advertising, trade fairs, internet and catalogues. (Hutt & Speh 2007, 391.)

The promotional strategy should be comprehensive. Advertising, sales promotion and personal sales work need to be connected with each other so that the profit objects can be achieved. The main role of advertising in b-to-b market is not only to improve the results of personal sales work but also to increase the efficiency of the overall marketing program and to strengthen brands. In addition the idea of advertising is to make existing customers more aware of the company and its brands and to remind customers as well. On the other hand the purpose is also to inform totally new customers about the company and its products. (Hutt & Speh 2007, 391-393.)

Business-to-business advertising has a specific pattern how it goes on. First of all it is important to make clear what the company wishes to accomplish with advertising. This has connection with the overall marketing objectives. Second, the amount of money that needs to be spent in advertising is defined. Third, the company must decide what kind of message is included to advertising, that is, what wants to be told. Fourth, the media to reach potential customers will be chosen. It is the task of a marketer to assess which media is the right one so that the target groups can be reached. The advertising as a process doesn't end when the media has been chosen and the advertising campaign has started. Afterwards it is essential to estimate how effective the

advertising was. The conclusions determine how advertising should be done in the future. (Hutt & Speh 2007, 394-395.)

Trade fair can be an effective means in promotion. As advantages of trade fairs can be seen for example large amounts of potential customer at the same time under the same roof and introduction of new products and services when experts and interested people are at present. Furthermore trade fairs create a situation where a company has a chance to show its best features. A successful participation in a trade fair may have a direct effect on sales efficiency. (Hutt & Speh 2007, 406-407.)

Because trade fairs are often expensive and time-consuming, participation needs to be well planned. Choosing the suitable trade fair is essential; being at the wrong place at the wrong time is nothing but wasting resources. When attending trade fair a company should always have objectives concerning the event. For example actual selling, strengthening image, finding new customers and collecting useful information about the competitive situation are all appropriate objectives. Before the trade fair takes place it is worth informing customers with advertisements about participating in the trade fair. This helps in getting the right people to visit the stand. Also staff needs to be well trained to work in trade fairs due to dissimilar situations compared with normal work. Afterwards the performance in the trade fair and the benefits it generated for the company must be evaluated. (Hutt & Speh 2007, 407-409.)

## 6 HANDBOOK FOR SALES DEPARTMENT

### 6.1 Finding and analyzing customers

#### 6.1.1 The beginning of the sales process and means to find customers

The sales process of SOL consists of the following stages:



Figure 3. The sales pyramid. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.)

The sales work begins with making an operational plan for the year. The plan consists of important matters regarding the planning of sales. It works as a guideline of how, when, where and to whom the sales is targeted. The plan includes an area for budgeting the whole year and each month of the year. With the operational plan the salesperson is able to follow the sales realization compared with the budgeted sales and previous year.

When the sales process begins, the salesperson needs to be aware of the target groups, from whom the clientele consists of. The main target groups of



SOL are enterprises, the state, municipalities and communities. (Milistver, Ryyänen & Ylinen 23 September 2009.) The first step of the sales process is to find potential customers according to the operational plan. In this field of business customers rarely come to salesperson, so in order to do sales, potential customers must be found and analyzed by the salesperson. In general it can be said that cleaning is needed among every target group at some scale either implemented by own workforce or outsourced.

Phone book and other same type of lists of companies can be used when finding customers. Other suitable methods to find potential customers are internet, newspapers and moving around in the sales area, which enables noticing business customers concretely (Kolchin 23 September 2009). Also different kinds of trade fairs can be places to find potential customers and to create the basis for a customer relationship. Though in most cases potential customers need to be found by the salesperson, it is not unusual that the customer contacts the salesperson first. This may happen for example if an existing client has recommended SOL to some other business client, who has recognized the need for cleaning services (Priimägi 23 September 2009). Sometimes without the effort of a salesperson potential customers may be found.

### 6.1.2 Analyzing customers

Analyzing potential customers begins with SOLE-classification. The SOLE classification means that clients are classified according to the expected monthly worth of a service contract. For example the amount of personnel or the size of premises gives a hint of SOLE-classification. This classification is also applied to existing customers. In addition to SOLE-classification possible company risks and security risks of the client must be taken into consideration. Also the situation in the market and information about competitors are matters to be paid attention. A salesperson should find out the main things of the branch of business where the potential client operates in. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) This improves analyzing potential customers and the actions are more consistent as the sales process moves on.

SOLE-classification is a good method to classify customers according to their worth. Clients can also be thought from the viewpoint of what they mean to the company or what their status in the eyes of the company is. This means may be used for both potential customers and existing customers. The way of thinking is called the flow-thinking. The flow-thinking is based on the state of the customer, where he or she is situated in the customer flow at the moment. (Hellman 2003, 18-19.)

The states of customer in the flow-thinking are the following:

- Suspect
- Prospect
- Selected prospect
- New customer
- Active customer
- Becoming a passive customer
- Passive customer
- Lost customer

(Hellman 2003, 19.)

Suspects, prospects and selected prospects are not yet existing customers, that is, potential customers. Suspect means, that a customer has the features to become a client for the company, but the client has no yet been identified. Prospect means that the customer has the right features to be an existing client and the company or salespersons have identified this customer. The selected prospect has some specific features chosen by the company. The state of an active customer, as well as other states, may have many different levels. For instance an active customer may be a key customer or even a referee. (Hellman 2003, 191, 262-263.)

When new clients are acquired, all of them are down the line at every state. It is notable that a client may also move backwards in the flow. For example a lost customer may become a new customer again. A company or its salespersons may also invest energy and resources to attempt to move a

certain client into a certain state in the flow or to develop the status in a certain state. At once a client may only be situated in one state. The task of a company is to assess and position clients into the flow and to control the flow. From the point of view of the future clientele the most important situation is naturally the one when a salesperson tries to move the customer from prospect into a new customer. From the point of view of productivity, active customers play the most important role. (Hellman 2003, 18, 22, 202.)

For a salesperson the exploitation of flow-thinking in sales work is important. Identifying the state where the customer or customers are at the moment gives a possibility to move the emphasis in sales work or to develop ways how to move the client from one state to another. If for example a client is becoming passive and through it a lost customer, the salesperson can invest energy and time to try to prevent this from happening.

Active contacting with the customer, showing the customer that SOL cares and clarifying why the situation has developed in a negative state may be the solution for not to lose the client. Another example, which is very closely related to this handbook, is to identify the prospects or selected prospects and putting emphasis on turning prospects into new customers with making contacts and assuring the client about the benefits of the services of SOL. By using the customer flow –thinking, sales work can also be planned and initialized in case of possible or wanted changes in customer's state

## 6.2 Building up customer relationship

After potential customers have been found and the salesperson has made an analysis of them, the second stage of the sales process begins. In this stage the salesperson starts to build up the customer relationship. The salesperson makes a preparation for sales procedure plan. It means how the sales process is planned to be executed under a client or under a group of clients. When starting to build the customer relationship it is important to assess the expectations and needs of potential customers. However, assessing customer's needs may be complicated and troublesome. In addition the

knowledge of the line of business of a potential customer is good to keep in mind. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.)

As part of the sales planning is the TOP-30 process. Ms. Tiina Tuunainen (9 November 2009), a SOL sales manager from Kouvola Finland, explained that usually sales persons have 30 most desired customers. Normally these customers are classified as S or O –customers according to the SOLE-classification. With these 30 most desired customers a specific process should be gone through and this process is called the TOP-30 process.

The TOP-30 process means that how to operate with these potential customers and how the sales process proceeds during the TOP-30 process so that in the future the client could be obtained. (Tuunainen 9 November 2009.) The expected worth of a service contract with the TOP-30 customers is relatively big, so the sales process with these clients is somewhat larger

### 6.3 Contacting potential customers

The actual building of customer relationship begins with contacting potential customers. Telephone is the most important tool when making the first contact. A call to a potential customer is also the most used method to make the first contact. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) The telephone conversation should be started with introduction, in other words who is calling and wherefrom. The second thing is to find out who is responsible for acquisitions in the company. The aim is to talk with the right people, that is, with the decision makers.

If SOL as a company is unfamiliar to the person responsible for acquisitions, it is needed to explain what kind of company SOL is and what kind of services it provides. The first objective of the phone call is to make the client interested in SOL and its services. Another purpose is to try to make an appointment with the customer (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 72).

There are some main issues that usually make customers interested in outsourcing some operations. First, it is important to tell the client that the services SOL provide makes the client save in costs (Briska 23 September

2009). Another issue is to bring out if SOL has experience on same type of clients. Also one thing is to tell the customer that SOL is a professional in the services it provides. To support this matter the training system and earlier references can be mentioned. (Priimägi 23 September 2009.) These matters can reduce the customer's hesitation.

In the end every salesperson has own style how to talk with clients. The above mentioned issues may and should be used as assets when speaking with the customer, remembering that the conversation should be natural and not forced. The assets to be used in the conversation must be adjusted to the nature of the telephone conversation. Own conversation style develops and certainty grows as time goes on.

Telephone is not the only tool to make the first contact. E-mail and a letter can be used as well. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) When using these means in making the very first contact, the message needs to include at least who is contacting and wherefrom, what kind of a company SOL is, what is the purpose of the contact and contact information of the salesperson. The content of the message needs to be distinctive in order to get the client interested in the company. Normally when using these methods as making the first contact, it is also needed to inform the potential client when the salesperson is making the next contact. This way the client knows when to expect the next contact.

The following contact is made with phone. The overall purpose of contacting is to arrange a meeting, and normally meetings cannot be booked just by sending a message. The means that is used as making the initial contact must be suited for the country's business culture. If for example a letter does not reach the decision makers and it doesn't have any effect on the customers, some other means must be used. A letter and an e-mail work as a means to market SOL and its services. This way the customer receives some basic information of SOL, if the company is totally unknown.

When calling the client for the first time the client considers the situation during the phone call. The customer thinks about the advantages and disadvantages of the solution. The salesperson's task is to bring out and state

the reasons that more advantages exist than disadvantages. If a client hesitates and the salesperson is able to remove the hesitation with arguments, the salesperson is close in arranging a meeting. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 72.)

For a salesperson it is important not to stop selling when the client says no for the first time. Presenting advantages and convincing the customer about them may remove the hesitation. If a customer has a negative attitude, one way is to find out why the attitude is negative. If the reason for this is found, the discussion can be continued according to the reason. By softening the matter and discussing about it the hesitation may be decreased. Pushing the customer is not the right way and will not make a customer to make decisions (Kotans 23 September 2009). If the customer is being pushed it may in the worst case result in losing the customer.

If the customer doesn't have enough time to discuss about the subject when the salesperson calls, the salesperson arranges another time to call. In these cases the salesperson must remember to call again as agreed. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 72.) It may also be possible that the client has a valid agreement with some other service provider. In these cases the salesperson's task is to politely try to find out when the agreement expires. If the expiring is found out, it is polite to ask if it is ok to call again when the next tendering takes place. This way SOL has the possibility to participate in the next tendering.

In order to remember who to call and when all the forthcoming calls need to be listed for example to a notepad or to a calendar. If the salesperson forgets to call the client as promised, he gives an indifferent and careless image of himself. It is the salesperson's duty to be the active side when contacting (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002). Altogether the objective is to make 20-25 phone calls per week.

## 6.4 Meeting with the customer and finding out the need

When the contact making has been successful and the salesperson has managed to book an appointment with the client, the preparation for the meeting begins. At this point at the latest the salesperson needs to clarify oneself the basics of the field where the customer operates in. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) It makes the conversation and understanding easier. It is worthwhile to plan the meeting well and create targets for the meeting (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 74). Am I just introducing myself and the company or is my target to survey the premises as well to give an offer? These matters depend on the customer, the situation and what was discussed during the telephone call.

An essential part of the preparation is to look decent and to have clean clothes (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 75). This is particularly important, because SOL's lines of business include cleaning services and laundry services. The salesperson gives not only an impression of himself but also of the entire company. The preparation includes a knowledge concerning SOL. It is relevant to be able to tell detailed information about the company as a whole. It is not enough to have knowledge only on the services to be sold. (Alanen, Mälkiä & Sell 2005, 76-77.) During the preparation and especially just before meeting the client it is worth also to assess physical and mental state. If a salesperson feels nervous or for example the mouth is dry, there is still a chance to improve the state. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 126.)

The meeting itself is the best way to find out the detailed need of the customer, if it was not discussed on the telephone before the meeting. If the client is passive in realizing and finding out the actual need, the salesperson's task is to forward the conversation and to present options and solutions. One effective way to forward the conversation is to ask questions concerning the need (Rope 2003, 71). From the basis of the answers different solutions will start to form. During the meeting the salesperson should also state the competitive advantages of SOL when needed. This can be kept as means to differentiate from competitors. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.)

In order to create a successful cooperation with the customer, it is essential to give a good impression each time when meeting. Customer oriented approach is good to keep in mind; by understanding the need and showing that the needs are being cared about the salesperson gives a good impression. In addition eye-contact, smiling and self-confidence are substantive means to give good impression, as well as having trust and will to own activities help in giving a good impression and reaching good results. (Valmela 23 September 2009.)

## 6.5 Surveying the premises

The ultimate objective of the meeting is to survey the premises (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002). It may take several meetings with the client to reach the situation where a salesperson can survey the premises in order to calculate an offer. Sometimes the surveying can be done during the first meeting. It depends on the situation. A matter that is good to remember is that meeting the client several times builds and strengthens the customer relationship (Valmela 23 September 2009).

During the surveying the salesperson and the client go through all the premises and analyze which kind of service programme is needed. The premises must be surveyed very carefully in order to calculate a competitive offer for the client. During the surveying all the necessary information about the premises are written down. As a help in writing down the necessary information the evaluation form for cleaning and facility services can be used. From the basis of the notes done by the salesperson (area to be cleaned in square meters, type of premises, level of cleanliness, how many times a week the premises need to be cleaned, supplementary services to be included etc.) the time to be used for cleaning and the price of the cleaning programme can be calculated.

For a salesperson it is important to talk, think and act in a consistent way. Otherwise the client may be confused about the salesperson. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 127.) When leaving from the first meeting it is good to give contact information, if not given already earlier, and maybe a brochure



of SOL. It also should be discussed when the next meeting or contact takes place.

## 6.6 Dimensioning calculation

### 6.6.1 Calculating the time for the given service

When the client has been met, the need has been clarified and necessary information concerning the premises of the client is obtained, the next stage in the sales process begins. In this stage the time in hours to be needed for the service programme is calculated, and the overall monthly price for the programme is being calculated. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) The time to be used in the programme can be calculated by using the SOL general Täsmä form. The general Täsmä form is particularly used in cleaning and facility services.

The general Täsmä form includes all the different types of premises and the levels of cleaning. The amount of square meters of each type of client's premises will be written down to the spot that also indicates the needed level of cleanliness. The levels of cleanliness include how many times a week the premises are cleaned as well. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2008c.)

The general Täsmä form automatically calculates the minutes to be used on cleaning in each type of premises per day. It also calculates the total amount of square meters to be cleaned and the total time in hours per day to be used on cleaning. The times that the general Täsmä form calculates are average times that cleaning requires in different types of premises. If the cleaning programme to be calculated includes some features in addition to basic cleaning, the time for these features can be calculated with the general Täsmä form as well. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2008c.)

The additional features can be for example washing the dishes or watering the houseplants. When calculating these additional jobs the salesperson should estimate how much time needs to be used with every additional job. When adding how many times a month each additional job needs to be done the general Täsmä form automatically calculates the overall hours needed for

additional jobs per month. In the end all the hours that cleaning and additional jobs take per day will be shown in the Täsmä form. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2008c.)

Because several cleaning programmes include periodical jobs, that is, jobs that are not done every time when the service takes place, it is recommended to create a timetable for each day. The general Täsmä form calculates the average time to be spent on periodical jobs per day. In real life this is not the case, because all periodical jobs are not necessarily done every time. Timetable for each day should be done in order to see how much time will be spent on periodical jobs each day. This also clarifies which periodical jobs will be done at each time. Furthermore it assists implementing the service itself, when a detailed timetable for each day can be seen.

In addition to the general Täsmä that has been given instructions above, SOL has two additional Täsmä forms. The first one is called staircase Täsmä, which can be used to calculate the working time for staircase areas. The second one is called store Täsmä, which can be used for calculating time in a grocery store. The store Täsmä is especially practical for a grocery store that has a meat counter or a fish counter or other facilities which particularly grocery stores have. Staircase Täsmä and store Täsmä forms have the same operating principle as the general Täsmä. Depending on the premises of the client, different Täsmä forms can be used together. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2008a & SOL Palvelut Oy 2008b.)

#### 6.6.2 Calculating the price for the given service

The Täsmä form calculates the time to be spent on cleaning per day. When the time for the cleaning has been calculated, the next matter to do is to calculate the costs for the cleaning programme. To calculate the costs for the cleaning programme, the SOL price calculation form is needed. When doing the dimensioning calculation, both Täsmä form and price calculation form are needed. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2009a.)

If the premises of a client require a machine or machines for cleaning, the machine investments are first marked to the price calculation form. The price

calculation form includes the time of the depreciation and the form automatically calculates the monthly expenses of the machine caused by the depreciation. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2009a.) A salesperson needs to estimate the need for machine investments during or after the surveying of client's premises.

After this the hours per day needed for the cleaning, which were calculated with the Täsmä form, will be written to the price calculation form. Also the basic cost per one labour hour must be written to the form. If the wages include additional costs, they are also marked to the price calculation form in order to calculate all the costs that wages include. The overall days per month when the cleaning is implemented needs to be written down to the form as well. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2009a.) The number of cleaning days per month according to the cleaning programme is presented in table 1.

Table 1. The number of cleaning days per month according to the cleaning programme. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2009a.)

<b>Number of cleaning days per week</b>	<b>Number of cleaning days per month</b>
1	4,3
2	8,7
3	13,0
4	17,3
5	21,3
6	25,2
7	30,4

When the wages with additional costs are calculated, the total costs concerning the tender will be written to the following part of the price calculation form. In addition to machines and wages costs will be generated for example from detergents, working clothes and equipment. After calculating the total costs the wanted contribution margin in percents will be written to the form. The price calculation form shows how big the contribution margin in

money is and what the price without value added tax is. The value added tax is calculated automatically. Total costs, contribution margin and value added tax together form the price of the tender. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2009a.) When the price is calculated the salesperson can move on to the next stage of the sales process.

## 6.7 Making of the offer

### 6.7.1 Preparing the offer for the customer

The next stage of the sales process after dimensioning calculation is making of the offer. The offer includes the tender-document itself and all the necessary appendices. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) The tender itself includes for example to whom it is directed, the price of the tender, how many times a week the service is being implemented and for how long the tender is valid. In addition naturally the contact information of the salesperson will be written in the end of the tender. The tender is printed on the SOL form base. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2007.)

The tender needs to include appendices as well. The detailed service programme must be written down and attached to the tender so that the customer sees what kind of service is included with the price. Also the terms of agreement must be attached to the tender. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) Each country has local terms of agreement and these terms are attached to the tender. The terms of agreement must not be altered in any way. The name of the client is written to the spot that is reserved for it and the terms of agreement is dated similarly to the tender. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2009b.) Furthermore the necessary supplementary descriptions about SOL operations model will be attached to the tender.

The structure of the tender and appendices need to be accurate and flawless. The salesperson needs to proofread and check the tender that everything is how they are supposed to be. It is also important that the salesperson checks that the tender responds to the invitation to tender in every respect. This matter needs to be paid close attention especially when the tender goes to

public institutions. On the whole it is important to remember that making an offer to public institutions is different from making an offer to business sector. (Sirviö 26 October 2009.)

Big competitive biddings may require that the whole sales process or parts of it are done in a team. This may happen when a client sends an invitation to tender that consists of several premises which can be located throughout the country. It may also be that client needs a service entirety and not only for example cleaning services. In these cases a specific sales team must be gathered. Big competitive biddings are separate projects and all team members have own roles and tasks in the project. The important thing in these projects is that the team leader, who in the end is responsible for the tender, makes sure that all tasks and stages are carried out as scheduled. Completing these kinds of big competitive biddings require more than making smaller tenders. (Sirviö 26 October 2009.)

#### 6.7.2 When and how to hand in the tender?

The time to be used to complete the offer and when the offer is given to the client should be discussed beforehand. Bigger tenders naturally take longer time but in general the tender should be ready in reasonable time. When the tender with all the necessary appendices is ready, the tender is given to the customer. A personal meeting with the customer is the best way to give the tender. In a personal meeting the salesperson has the chance to present and explain the contents of the tender and if needed, to present the competitive advantages of the tender. In the presentation the salesperson needs to bring out the benefits that the tender includes and that the tender matches the matters that were important to the client. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.)

The client may need time to go through and consider the tender alone as well. The decision is not necessarily done during the meeting when the tender is being presented or shortly after the tender is being received. In some organizations the decision is not done only by one person but group of persons. The client may tell the salesperson directly when the decision is

ready and when the client informs the salesperson about the decision. This matter can also be discussed and should be discussed with the client.

If the salesperson doesn't hear anything from the customer in a reasonable time and the decision making has not been discussed about, it is worth calling the client what the situation is. This can also be considered as a means to further promote the offer. Especially if the client has many tenders from many different service providers, the decision making may take a long time. Discussing when the decision is presumably ready sort of justifies the salesperson to call and ask what the situation with the tender is.

A direct invitation for tenders should be answered in the same way as they were received. For example if a salesperson receives an invitation to tender via e-mail, the tender should be sent via e-mail. Some invitations for tenders may include sending instructions if the tender is given in some particular way, and the date when the tender needs to be ready. If the client does not accept the tender, the salesperson should analyze why the deal was not accepted (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002). It is worth asking the client about the reasons why the tender was rejected, if the reasons are not evident. The reasons for rejection are good to keep in mind when making tenders later on. If the client accepts the offer the next stage of the sales process is to make a service contract with the client.

## 6.8 Making of the contract

The final stage of the process after the client has accepted the tender is making of the service contract. The contract is made according to the tender and possible negotiations with the client. The figures for the contract can be found from the Täsmä form and price calculation form, which were used in dimensioning calculation. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2002.) Each country has a country-specific template for a service contract and this one is used when making the contract. The contract is printed in two pieces, one for the client and one for SOL. The contract is printed on a SOL form base. In addition the contract includes the detailed service programme and SOL terms of service,

even though they were given already along with the tender. For example the service programme may have been changed since the tender.

Before meeting the client the salesperson and the service manager go through the SOL handover plan, because in the final stage the customer is transferred from sales department to service department. Among other things, the handover plan includes going through the customer information, like invoicing address, and other practical issues concerning the object. This way the service manager gets a clear view on necessary matters about the client, the implementation of service, costs in the object and the contract on the whole. Also the service programme is needed to go through with the service manager before the meeting. When these matters are gone through, the service manager is ready to take over the customer.

The service manager, who will be responsible for the premises, is good to attend the meeting when the service contract is being signed. After the salesperson has presented the service contract the client and the service manager have a chance to through matters concerning the service programme. In the meeting the client gets an opportunity to meet the service manager face-to-face for the first time. Finally the service contract is signed by the salesperson and the customer.

## 6.9 Reporting about activities

Concerning the sales process in its entirety, all the actions, successes and results are reported. To do this there exist a SOL report basis that contains all the necessary actions to be reported. The sales report will be done monthly, and furthermore the whole year will be reported to the same sales report form.

First the information concerning offers will be listed to the sales report. This includes the amount of offers submitted, open offers and lost offers. In addition to the amount of all offers in pieces, the worth of all these offers will be written to the form. The sales report automatically calculates the average monthly worth of an offer and a cumulative average worth of an offer. After this the facts concerning actualized new sales will be listed. This includes the

amount in pieces and worth of monthly sales, monthly budget of new sales, cumulative budget of new sales and the budgeted hit rate. Hit rate means how many percent of offered cases are won in pieces and financially. In the end terminated or reduced contracts are listed monthly and cumulatively. (SOL Palvelut Oy 2009c.)

All these actions are done after each month. During the year and in the end of the year the salesperson may follow the actualized sales compared with budgeted sales. The sales report form automatically calculates the percentual realization of new sales compared with the budgeted sales. In order to do a proper sales report, the salesperson must list the actions during sales work, as well as amounts and worth of cases during each month. The figures calculated with the sales report form are also added to the operational plan, which was done in the very beginning.

## 6.10 Measurement of customer satisfaction

### 6.10.1 Collecting feedback

After the sales process is finished and a new service contract has been signed the salesperson has one thing to do: to measure his or her success in the eyes of the customer. The measurement of customer satisfaction is not done immediately after signing the service contract. It will be done soon after the service has begun. In order to develop the activities of the salesperson during the sales process it is important to ask from the new customer how the salesperson performed. In addition customer satisfaction is needed to be measured as well during the whole service contract. This way SOL receives information whether the customer is satisfied or not.

To evaluate the success of the salesperson during the sales process, the evaluation of sales activities is needed. At the same time the start of the service is also evaluated. Within the company the measuring of customer satisfaction is called ASTY and this term is used from now on. The evaluation of sales activities and object start is called sales ASTY. The sales ASTY should be done within three weeks after the service has begun.



The sales ASTY is always to be done face-to-face with the customer. A meeting must always be booked. Face-to-face meeting can be considered as the best way to go through and fill the ASTY-form. This way the client gets a feeling right away that his or her opinions have significance. Face-to-face meeting gives also an opportunity to free conversation according to the matters in the ASTY-form or about matters outside the ASTY-form. The service manager of the object should also participate in this meeting due to the evaluation of the service start as well.

During the cooperation with a client, the customer satisfaction should be measured regularly in order to get valuable information on customer's attitude against SOL and against the services. Doing ASTY during cooperation also shows that the customer is being cared about, and needs, wishes and problems are being reacted. The ASTY to be done during cooperation is called service ASTY.

How often the service ASTY should be done for existing clients depends on the client and the situation. Generally it can be said, that service ASTY needs to be done at least four times a year. In the beginning of the cooperation the service ASTY should be done rather often. The reason for this is that whether problems become evident in the very beginning, the problems can be solved quickly, and the relationship may continue without problems. This way the client does not get a feeling that he or she is not cared about especially at the time when the customer relationship is very new.

Later on if the cooperation goes on without problems the service ASTY can be done a bit more seldom. However regularity with the service ASTY must be maintained, so that the client's needs are taken care of during the whole customer relationship. Service ASTYs, as well as sales ASTYs, should always be implemented face-to-face. This allows direct conversation to find solutions to matters that aren't in order. Outside service ASTYs a client may make a complaint concerning issues he or she is not satisfied with or on the other hand, a client may give positive feedback. For handling reclamation, SOL has own operating model.

The operations of SOL after the customer relationship has ended will be evaluated as well. The reason why SOL operations are evaluated afterwards as well is to develop activities and if the customer relationship was ended due to dissatisfied customer, to find out the reasons for dissatisfaction and to prevent dissatisfaction from happening in the future. Evaluation of an ended customer relationship can be done by phone, or meeting face-to-face. Third possibility is to send the form by mail with a covering letter and a filled in beforehand envelope.

#### 6.10.2 Utilizing the information

When ASTY has been done and valuable information has been collected, the important matter is to go through and handle the information. ASTY is useless if the feedback is not handled in any way. A good way to handle the information concerning ASTYs is in a meeting once a month or once every two months with all the other salespersons, who operate in the area. In a meeting all ASTYs are gone through one by one. If the feedback is negative, the matter or matters will be written down. After this about the solutions and developmental proposals for the matters are being discussed together. When best solutions and developmental proposals have been found, they are written down as well.

It is important to identify the problems and to find out how to solve these problems. After discussing about the ASTYs, the salespersons can act according to the found solutions. It is the salesperson's responsibility to act how agreed. ASTY is effective when it is done regularly and soon after the beginning of service, the issues are discussed together and salespersons act according to the solutions. Afterwards in later meetings it is important to bring out whether the solutions or developmental proposals have worked out. If not, new solutions must be found. The essential matter is that the implementation of developmental proposals in practice is being monitored within agreed period of time. One means to monitor the implementation of developmental proposals in practice is to make an ASTY visit again, or to call a client and ask if the solution has been workable.

The collecting of feedback in service ASTY can also be done by the service manager. If it is done this way, he or she should also participate in problem solving, the implementation of solution and monitoring of the found developmental proposal. Important matter is that the service manager and the salesperson make a clear distribution of tasks concerning the service ASTY from the beginning to the end.

A part of handling the information of sales ASTYs is to file both positive and negative feedback. This helps developing the overall operations of SOL in the long run. If a certain matter in ASTYs is seen to repeat itself several times and a good working solution has been found to it, actions in the future can be anticipated when the matter and the working solution to it are filed. The filed information can be used as a ready database for a salesperson to find possible solutions to problems in the future. Filing positive feedback from ASTYs assists compiling statistics from successes.

#### 6.11 Doing sales in a consultative way

When thinking about the sales process and collaboration with customers in its entirety, some different ways for this can be stated. These ways or even combination of ways can be used in sales work and customer service depending on the situation, the client and the status of the customer relationship. The ways can be called consultative styles and each style has an affect on the relationship as a whole and different styles have also consequences. The consultative styles that can be used in customer service and sales work are acceptant, catalytic, confrontational and prescriptive style. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 79-80.)

The acceptant style focuses on empathic collaboration and understanding the feelings of the client. The focus is also in the listening of the client; without good and genuine listening skills the problems of the client cannot be solved. In many cases in customer service and with many different customers feelings are involved in the cooperation and the acceptant style supports bringing out the feelings and finding a solution to the problems when feelings are involved.

When the customer has the will to clarify the problem and the client is accepted as he or she is the acceptant style can work. The task of the salesperson is to help the client and without accepting and listening the help won't succeed. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 81-83.)

To be able to use the acceptant style the client has to have the will to talk about the situation, the customer doesn't get along with the problem the, client must have needed resources to clarify the situation and the client and the problem must be accepted. When these criteria are fulfilled the acceptant style can work. The need to use this style is not always apparent. For example the situation may develop so that the use of acceptant style is needed. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 87.)

The catalytic style concentrates on helping the customer to make decisions. The idea of this style is that the client is speeding the decision making. This can be caused by too little relevant information or too much information from which the relevant information can't be found. The salesperson's task is to arrange and gather the information so that the decision can be made. The decision is to be done by the customer. The salesperson speeds up the decision making and as with the acceptance style, the purpose is to help the client. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 91.)

In order to effectively use the catalytic style the client has to have the will to clarify the problem. The second thing is that the gathered information is relevant, structured and sufficient, and that it has a distinct effect on the decision making. The client must also be prepared to invest energy on the problem and to consider the options and finally, to make the decision. In the end the client makes the decision, not the salesperson. This can be assured by setting intermediate objectives and that the client makes the decision after each step. This enhances the commitment. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 98.)

The purpose of the confrontational style is to bring out the contradiction between customer's thoughts, beliefs, values and actions in reality. In some cases these matters differ from each other. The use of this style is

challenging, because the client may experience the situation uncomfortable. Stating the contradictions should be very gentle and so that it helps the client in decision making. One purpose of the confrontational style is to make the customer understand the contradiction and to get along with it. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 102-103.)

The confrontational style is effective when it is evident that the client's problem is caused by the discrepancy between thoughts and actions. It can also be necessitated that the salesperson must have the will to assist the client to move forward. Another matter is that the customer relationship must endure the confrontation. Sufficient level of trust in the relationship is a prerequisite for enduring the situation. The third matter is that the data to be illustrated is accurate. The salesperson must also be sure that the customer is capable to deal with the data and solve the problem on his own. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 108-109.)

It can be said that the prescriptive style is the most used consultative style. The idea is that a client has a certain problem and the salesperson tries to solve this problem with giving advice and proposals. To be able to use the prescriptive style the salesperson must be an expert and to have a great amount of information in order to give expert advice and solutions. The second matter is that the chosen solution must be satisfactory for the client. In prescriptive situations the salesperson sometimes makes the decision for the client. For example the client may not have the needed skills or knowledge to make the decision. Due to this matter, the salesperson acts as a consultant so that the decision can be made and solution can be found. (Cockman, Evans & Reynolds 1999, 113, 118.)

## 6.12 Business culture in target countries

### 6.12.1 Estonia

Although this is a general handbook for sales department, it is still important to recognize the main business culture features of the countries where SOL operates excluding Finland. Sales work is customer service and during the

sales process customers are met several times. It is good to know how to act in business life in different situations in these certain countries.

In Estonia when meeting with people shaking hands with everyone is a common manner. Also eye-contact should be maintained when meeting. If a man greets several people at once, women are greeted first and older people before younger people. While greeting kissing on the cheeks is not a common manner. It is polite to use last names especially during the first meeting, but if you are called by first name it is suitable to call by first name. Titles should be used both when speaking and writing as well. (Bosrock 2006, 145.)

Many Estonians know how to speak Russian. English and Finnish are spoken and understood as well. The tone of the speaking should not be too loud. Sarcasm and irony should not be used while discussing about business matters. (Bosrock 2006, 146.) Estonians speak directly and small talk is not used if the situation doesn't require it. It is acceptable to stay quiet as well. (Mole 2004, 133.)

Estonian people are punctual and in business life punctuality needs to be fostered. Other people need to be informed, if a business person will be late from a meeting. Meetings are seen as possibilities to search different options and opinions. Having debate is totally acceptable and usually the atmosphere accepts free conversation. Concerning this Estonians like better that decisions are made in mutual understanding. (Bosrock 2006, 151.)

The Estonian way of dressing is conservative and business dressing is formal. Like in normal Western business life men wear suits and women wear skirts or dresses, especially when it comes to the crunch. Brand names do not play an important role, but the quality of clothes needs to be good. In business meals everyone is served before eating may start. Discussion during meals is a natural manner. When eating in a restaurant the tip is usually included to the bill. In other similar situations giving tip comes with the territory. (Bosrock 2006, 148-149.)

Gifts in business life are not a common manner. Even so, giving and receiving business gifts is acceptable. If gifts are given, they should have only a symbolic meaning. For example items from home country, home region or items from company are good options as business gifts. Giving notably expensive gifts in business life is not suitable, because they can be regarded as bribes. Also giving food items is not suitable. (Bosrock 2006, 150.)

### 6.12.2 Latvia

Greeting people happens in the same way in Latvia as in Estonia. They shake hands and keep eye contact. Kissing on a cheek is not suitable if a person is unknown, but good friends may use this manner. (Bosrock 2006, 254.) When greeting for the first time it is good to use formal language and last names. But later on usually first names are used. If titles Mr. (Kungs) or Mrs. (Kundze) are used they are placed after last name. (Mole 2004, 136.)

In Latvia Russian is widely understood among population. In addition English and German are rather commonly used, but it should be remembered that in rural areas these languages are not used as much as in urban areas. (Bosrock 2006, 255.) Latvians are polite people, but speaking directly and freely is used only among friends, not necessarily in formal situations. Humour is also not used in business life, but only among friends. (Mole 2004, 136.)

Latvians are punctual in both business occasions and in free time activities. This matter should be remembered by foreigners as well. Companies in Latvia have a structure that is very hierarchical. When having a meeting, a list of attendants should be sent to the one who organizes the meeting. Doing business in Latvia is rather formal. Introductions, exchanging business cards, addressing people etc. take place in an appropriate way. When doing business with Latvians they prefer facts and figures rather than emotions. Latvians make decisions in mutual understanding. During discussion moments of silence are normal and acceptable. (Bosrock 2006, 261-262.)

The way of dressing in Latvia is formal and fashionable clothes are generally used. Business clothing is based on the standard Western clothing style.

Business suits are used among men and among women dresses or pantsuits with high heels are used. Depending on a company, casual outfits may also be used. During business lunches it is not extraordinary to have wine or beer. The Latvian habit is that women don't pour alcoholic beverages. It is considered rude. Eye-contact is used when toasting and clinking glasses. Tips are given in various occasions especially in Riga. In rural areas giving tip is not as common habit. (Bosrock 2006, 258-259.)

In business life gifts may be given. As in Estonia, in Latvia giving too valuable gifts is not suitable. Instead symbolic items from own company with a company logo are suitable. Single-malt Scotch whisky or good wine as well as items from home country or region are also acceptable as business gifts. In Latvia gifts are not generally opened when they are received, but symbolic gifts that are visible through the wrapper can be opened when received. (Bosrock 2006, 260.)

### 6.12.3 Russia

In Russia in formal occasions greeting and meeting happens by shaking hands. In addition own name is mentioned. Greeting good friends and relatives happens with embracing and kissing on both cheeks. First names should not be used if this is not suggested. As the relationship deepens, generally the use of first names begins. If titles are used, they are mentioned before the surname. (Morrison & Conaway 2006, 424.)

In Russian business life many people know how to speak and understand at least some English. Older Russian people aren't necessarily able to speak or understand English. Also other languages, like German and French may be spoken and understood. (Foster 2000, 356.) Some expressions in Russia have a different meaning than in the Western countries but in general Russians speak directly. Among many Russians the style of speaking is scarce. (Mole 2004, 331.)

Russians are not always punctual in business meetings. Even then the businessperson from outside Russia should always be punctual and Russians expect this. Organizing a meeting in Russia may take a long time and is not



always easy. Business meetings may take longer time than originally planned, so time for meetings should always be allowed rather much. (Mole 2004, 331.) When having a meeting in Russia, all details should be brought out and the presentation needs to be factual (Morrison & Conaway 2006, 421).

When more than one person participates in a meeting, all team members need to be totally aware and agree of the objectives of the meeting. A deal can only be considered as 100% agreed when the formal agreement has been written and signed. Compromises during a business meeting are set against. (Morrison & Conaway 2006, 421.) First meetings may only be about weighing each other's prowess, and decisions are not normally done during the first meeting (Foster 2000, 370).

The business dressing style in Russia is conservative. The dressing style is rather much influenced by the European styles. When preparing to a business meeting, the outfit should always be decent and nice. (Morrison & Conaway 2006, 425.) Business meals are, depending on the situation of the relationship, moments to close the deal. It is not anymore a time for negotiation. During business meals, as in informal meals, vodka is normally served. During a meal toasting many times is a common habit. During toasting eye-contact should always be maintained. (Foster 2000, 365-366.)

Gifts in business life are a common manner. Especially in New Year's time gifts are most appreciated. Suitable business gifts are items that can be used in the office, for instance pens. Gourmet food presents are also appropriate gifts. (Foster 2000, 367.) In addition items from home country or home region are suitable as business gifts (Morrison & Conaway 2006, 424). Usually gifts are not opened when they are received (Foster 2000, 368).

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

During the process of writing this thesis it has become clear how an important role the sales department has within the company. Not only it is the main element in generating profits for the company, it is also in most cases the first

department to meet the future client for the first time. The first impression sets the basis for the customer relationship so in order to create successful relationships and to reach goals, it is vital to impress clients from the very beginning.

I feel that all the required questions, problems and developmental issues have been answered in this thesis. A coherent handbook for sales in international subsidiaries furthers the familiarization of new employees and on the whole, describing the overall actions. Having only a frame of the process description in the beginning set a challenge for describing the actions in detail during the stages of the sales process. I have experience on sales work in SOL and I considered this matter as a huge advantage when working with the handbook. I also feel that now when I almost have finished this thesis, my knowledge about business-to-business marketing and sales work has extended outstandingly.

As a biggest challenge I considered the further developing of the measurement of customer satisfaction. Making a proposal for using the feedback received from the customers felt difficult and challenging at first. After thinking the issue quite a lot and keeping the approach to the issue and ideas down-to-earth the solutions began to take shape. Furthermore I consider the method useful and practical for the salespersons.

This work had a certain objective all the time. Keeping the basic principle in mind each time furthered me during the thesis. Altogether making the thesis was challenging but on the other hand also very rewarding. The objective and demarcations of this work where very clear and setting the focus accurately on the objective assisted me very much in making the handbook. The topic of the work itself was the main motivating factor that pushed me forward all the time. As a whole I feel that the objectives of the work have been fulfilled; sales work has been given instructions clearly and in detail and the ASTY-process has been further developed in a practical and useful way.

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