The Role of Teamwork in Creating Customer Focus

A Case Study of Isalomin AB

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Acknowledgements

It has been a great challenge for us to attack this extensive area in business marketing. At times we have been exhausted, confused and really desperate. Fortunately there have also, as a change, been moments of great joy, satisfaction and laughter. There are some people we especially would like to express our appreciation to. First of all we would like to thank our supervisor Mr. Manucher Farhang for giving us such valuable advice and for his pedagogical way of giving hints and guidance during these past weeks. We would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Tim Foster for giving us a dash of his immense creativity in the initial phase of the writing process. This thesis would neither have been possible to accomplish without the group managing director of IMG–International Marine Group; Mr. Erik Sandberg. Therefore we would like to thank him for taking the time, providing us with valuable and necessary information and most of all for being so helpful.

Kristina would like to thank her cooperating partner Caroline for being such a great companion and complement during the thesis writing. She would also like to thank her supportive family and especially, Mikael for being straightforward, understanding and for giving constructive advices when needed.

Caroline would like to thank her writing companion Kristina for being such a valuable support in tough times and for always having a smile on her face. She would also like to thank her family and friends, and not to be forgotten, her fellow students for their contribution to the cheerful atmosphere in the computer lab.

We would also like to thank the lady in “bibblofiket” for making our brainstorming sessions in the cafeteria more amusing. The thesis writing would not have been the same without a nice cup of coffee and “Geisha”.

Luleå University of Technology, 2004-06-08

___________________________________________  __________________________
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Abstract
The aim of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of how teamwork is used within a company to create customer focus. In order to fulfill this purpose the research explores, describes and tries to explain the composition of a team in a company, how to sustain the function of teamwork, the definition of costumer focus and finally how the objective of customer focus is introduced in a company’s teamwork. A case study of a selling company in the industrial market, Isolamin AB, is performed. The aspects of team, teamwork and customer focus are being studied in depth. The case study demonstrate a new type of team set up between Isolamin AB as a supplier and one of their largest customer Pharmadule Emtunga AB. There are differences compared to theory regarding how to sustain teamwork, the mutual objective seems to be the most important factor and the glue that keeps this team together. Customer focused is defined as knowing who the customers are, what matters to them as well as meeting the customers’ needs. The customer is considered to be a long term partner and customer focus is brought into the teamwork by means of the five change agents.
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1. Introduction
This chapter will provide an introduction of the chosen topic. First, a background will be presented, followed by a problem discussion, where the research area is discussed. The chapter will end with the purpose and the research questions.

1.1 Background
According to Albrecht (1995) businesses all over the world are rediscovering the customer. For a long time management experts, business-school professors, and senior executives of large firms have concentrated on markets, marketing, market share competition, competitive strategy, products, capital and profits. The word customer has been nearly absent in the management vocabulary for a long time (ibid). Most strategists agree that creating customer value is fundamental to increased customer orientation (Slater & Narver, 1998). Creating superior customer value is a necessary pre condition for securing a niche in a competitive environment as well as a leadership position in the market. Yet for many businesses, customer focus is still nothing more than a slogan (Albrecht, 1995).

Customer satisfaction
Eggert and Ulaga (2002) explain the difference between customer satisfaction and customer value. According to the authors customer satisfaction research is mainly influenced by the disconfirmation paradigm advocated by Parasuraman. This paradigm states that the customer’s feeling of satisfaction is a result of a comparison process between perceived performance and one or more comparison standard, such as expectations. The customer is satisfied when he or she feels that the product’s performance is equal to what was expected (ibid). If it exceeds expectations the customer is very satisfied, if it remains below expectations, the customer will be dissatisfied. However the measurement of the customer satisfaction level has been criticized as being too limited and has been replaced by the value construct as a better predictor of outcome variables in business markets (ibid).

Customer value
The value concept is multifaceted and complicated by numerous interpretations, biases and emphases. There exists for instance strategic value, value as equal to revenue minus purchases and finally value of customers to an organisation, customer values and the principles of customer perceived value (Huber, Herrmann & Morgan, 2001). There is a need of being aware of the differences of the value concept depending on the context. For instance, the last three customer value definitions mentioned above, are often confused within the marketing literature since they are not synonymous. The value of customers to an organisation concerns the direct benefits that an organisation experiences as a result of customers’ loyalty and continued patronage; customer values reflect the personal values of individual consumers, and, the customer perceived value approach centers upon the utility the customer receives after purchasing a product (ibid).

Customer values that reflect the personal values of individual consumers, as stated above, is explained by Albrecht (1995) as four ascending levels. The first level is called basic, and contains the fundamental components required for the company to be in business, thesecond level, expected, offers what the customer consider “normal” for the company and
its competitors. The third level, desired, have those added value features that the customer would like to have but do not necessarily expect. This is the first level of possible differentiating and superiority over competitors. The fourth level, unanticipated, has these added-value features that go well beyond the learned expectations and desires the customer bring to the experience of doing business with the company. These are surprise features that can set the company apart from its competitors and win the loyalty of its customer, if they really do add significant value in the eyes of the customer. Customer perceived value as defined by Huber et al. (2001) is also explained by Naumann (1995) as the ratio of benefits to the sacrifice necessary to obtain those benefits. In other words, the customer’s perceived benefits (product attributes and service attributes) in proportion to the customer’s perceived sacrifice (transaction cost, life cycle cost and risk) equals the expected customer value.

Naumann stress the importance of a firm’s ability to deliver better customer value than the competitors. Good customer value can be reached only when product quality, service quality and value-based prices are in harmony and exceed customer expectations (ibid).

![Figure 1.1 Customer value triad](Source: Naumann, 1995, p. 17)

In order to be in tune with the times it stands clear that businesses has to place the customer in focus. The changing times can also be seen in the management literature. There has according to Hollensen (2003) been an evolution of customer oriented management strategies since the 1980’s. We will continue by briefly describing some of them:

According to Naumann Service Quality Management is about delivering high service quality in order to create good customer value. From the customers perspective product quality and service quality are virtually inseparable. Naumann states that the technological environment is changing rapidly, and therefore service quality holds more potential than product quality. Services can be categorized into presale services, transaction services and post sale services (ibid).

Another management theory is Total Quality Management (TQM) which is a system of satisfying internal and external customers and suppliers by integrating the business
environment (Integrated Quality Dynamics, Inc, not date). There should be continuous quality improvements and this requires universal participation from everyone in the organization (Adcock, 2000). Organizations with TQM often use teamwork in order to meet customer needs in a better way than can be done with an individual job performance alone (Rao et al., 1996).

Customer Value Management (CVM) is a management strategy that can best be explained as a judgment made by the customer (Bowden, 1998). A mental comparison is made of the product or service that is received from the company, by the customer, relative to the costs they incur for such provision in respect of the company and competitors (ibid). Customers remain loyal and the likelihood of repeat business is significantly higher when customers identify the value they receive from the company as higher relative to the value they can receive from the competitors (ibid).

The last management theory to be mentioned is Customer Care Management. This is a strategy wider than just caring for the customer according to Glynn & Barnes, (1995). It includes service to the customer, delivery/operations, employee relationships with customers and internal relationships between employees and management (ibid). With a focus on customer care quality, an organization can reach a number of benefits such as, customer loyalty, increased opportunities for cross selling and employee benefits (ibid). Leadership at all levels is a key element of effective customer care (Morris, 1996).

Macdonald (1995) states that in order to delight the customer and achieve a sustainable competitive advantage companies need to comprehend the concept of “customer focus” which goes far beyond the conventional wisdom of customer care. Customer focus means talking to customers and seeking their advice. Customer focus or understanding customer needs and wants and their specific priorities within those subjects requires a very specific and detailed approach. He suggests that a regular pattern of the business process should be the identification of key customers for individual attention and organized focus groups of customers. (ibid)

To be able to place the customer in focus and succeed in delivering customer value it is crucial that everyone in the organization think in terms of total customer value and not just their own small part of it (Huber et al.). In order to clarify the importance of the different components working together in the organization the following service triangle by Albrecht (1995) will be presented.
The customer is at the centre of the service triangle since a customer focus must be the key-stone of any effort to improve the organizations way of doing things. The element of strategy goes at the top since an unclear vision, mission and core value as well as key competitive concept of the organizations would lead to a failure of the quality program. The systems (procedures, equipment, tools, organizational structures and information-systems) are the means for achieving the ends of superior customer value. A mechanistic management style without a heart is doomed to fail since it tightens up the organization instead of loosens it up. It is necessary that the organization can empower the people to make their own individual quality commitments since they are fundamental in the service triangle (Albrecht).

**Work group vs. Team work**

There is a great difference between work group and work teams. Working groups rely on the sum of the “individual bests” for their performance, there is no need for collective responsibility in the work produced (Deeter-Schmelz & Ramsey, 1995). The group’s purpose is the same as the organizations, and they usually have a strong focused leadership. Teams on the other hand use shared leadership and a process for discussion, debate, decision making and sharing to produce work products through their joint contributions of their members (ibid). A team consists of a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves equally responsible (Rao et al., 1996).

A strong interest in organizational transformation is apparent in managerial literature. Compared to previous eras, the business environment is frequently seen as more complex, unpredictable and fast moving (Drew and Coulson-Thomas, 1996). In response, many organisations have undertaken a redesign of their business systems and the ways in which they compete. More attention is also paid to developing the strengths and internal resources of the firm than in previous eras. Teamwork, according to the same authors, is one of the most widely recommended tools for organizational transformation. Initiatives such as total quality management or new product development almost always depend on effective and high-energy team efforts. The same authors states that teamwork and team-
based organisations are likely to increase significantly in the future as a result of many strategic change programs currently under way. Especially important will be the growth of teams linking firms to customers, suppliers and international partners. The growth of teamwork will be accompanied by new organizational forms and ways of working, based on networks and clusters of skills, crossing boundaries with suppliers, customers and even competitors. (Drew and Coulson-Thomas, 1996)

Benefits of teamwork typically mentioned include: Breaking down boundaries to effective communication and collaboration, increasing the speed of action, raising the level of commitment; creating a more customer-focused culture; and increasing organizational adaptability and flexibility (ibid). The tasks for which teams may be employed can be divided into:

- Projects which have distinct objectives and end-points; and
- Routine and ongoing activities.

Examples of the former include development of a new product or service, reengineering a business process, organizational restructuring and launch of a new venture. The latter includes service delivery, order processing, logistics and purchasing. Tasks may also be categorized according to complexity and level in the organization (ibid). According to Belbin (1993) the ideal problem solving team is composed of members who jointly possess nine different team roles, which complement and supports one another.

An internal team leader is often needed to coordinate the team’s activities, to keep records and notes to coordinate training or to report to senior management. This leadership role can rotate through the team’s members over time. Sometimes the teams get support outside the team. Middle manager who used to be responsible for results that the team now has taken over can serve as administrators, coaches, or advisers to the team (Rao et al., 1996). According to Morris and Mountfort (1997) the leader has the following role in building winning teams: Utilizing team building as a cornerstone of success but also as a continues process, be a good coach who is visible and available for all team members. Furthermore, the team leader should encourage the team members to discuss behavior. The team leader should also develop a sophisticated work group where every team member is accountable and therefore involved in team building.
1.2 Problem discussion

In the industrial market there has been a transition from buying-/selling center to buying-/selling teams, this has emerged as a requirement for success (Deeter-Schmelz & Ramsey, 1995). According to Hutt, Johnston and Ronchetto (1985) buying-/selling centers constitutes of organizational members who are involved in initiating and maintaining exchange relationships with industrial customers. The organizational selling center is an informal, interfunctional decision unit. Participation in the organizational selling center is fluid, for example representatives from various functional areas enter and leave the organizational selling process in response to selling requirements. The composition of the selling centers varies from firm to firm and from one situation to another. Moon and Armstrong (1994) states that there is a lack of consensus of the precise meaning of the term selling center. Smith and Donald (1990) conclude that a selling center can be both a group and a network. Selling centers is a transaction focused group whose objectives are to successfully complete the specific sale opportunity that it has been formed to pursue (Moon & Armstrong).

The core selling team on the other hand as described by Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey can be defined as small permanent team responsible for customer relationship, sales strategy, and sales transactions and constitutes of selling organization members who possess complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and a selling approach for which they hold themselves mutually responsible. The core team may need help from an extended selling team when a role of function exists outside the domain of the core team. Membership in the extended team is temporary and transaction-specific (Deeter-Schmelz & Ramsey). According to Moon and Armstrong the core selling team is a customer focused group who’s primary objectives is to establish and maintain strong customer relationships.

The core buying team can be explained in the same way as the core selling team but off course with a focus on the buying process. The extended buying team may be required to interact with the selling team providing information so that the selling team can more effectively meet the needs of the buying team. They are assessed on a temporary basis in order to provide necessary expertise during a specific transaction. A single company will likely maintain multiple teams. Selling firms may use multiple teams to handle different product lines and/ service different types of customers. Buying firms may have multiple teams handling different types of purchases (Deeter-Schmelz & Ramsey).The core selling team consists of a selling team leader, a seller, an internal coordinator and a customer service representative. The core buying team has a buying team leader, a buyer, an internal coordinator and an external information source. Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey states that selling team members who enjoy being in a team working together for a mutual goal are likely to be more attentive to customer needs and provide more comprehensive attention to the buying team’s problems.

However, the general level of teamwork in industry is low according to Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001). Companies are in reality having problems with teamwork. This can be of both a technical and a cultural nature. Success of teams, voluntary or delegated, is greatly influenced by the technical support (training, facilitations and skills) available to employees. Recognition of team efforts and management encouragement are important in attracting employees to participate in teamwork. The most common reason for failure of
employees to participate in teamwork is the lack of time and the negative influence of company politics. According to the same author, there has also been a failure of achieving customer focus due to the inability to identify the agents (communications, employees focus, measures of for example satisfaction and complaints, relationship building and rewards to loyal customers) that bring about success and the way of introducing these agents into organizations. Still, in a study presented by Drew and Coulson-Thomas (1996) in spite of the problems, teamwork was considered to be even more important in the future of most firms. In some cases dramatically so. Organizations which are achieving transformation through increased customer focus, service and international business anticipate quite dramatic increases in team-based effort. Firms which are changing their value chain and supplier relations also anticipate major contributions through team. The greatest changes are expected in those areas of the firm which act with outsiders –customers, suppliers and international partners (ibid).

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to get a deeper understanding of how teamwork is used within a company to create customer focus.

1.3.1 Research questions

In order for us to reach our purpose, we have constructed the following research questions:

1. How can the composition of a team in a company be described?
2. How does a company sustain the function of the teamwork?
3. How is customer focus defined by a company?
4. How is the objective of customer focus introduced in a company’s teamwork?

1.4 Demarcations

How teamwork can be used to create customer focus is a very interesting subject. However, it is beyond the extent of our study to investigate all perspectives that would be interesting to investigate. Due to the limitations in time of writing our bachelor thesis, we have decided to look at the subject only from the sellers or suppliers perspective not the buyer or the customer perspective. We have also chosen to focus on the composition and sustaining of teamwork together with the involvement of customer focus. The team leader as well as the management role will be mentioned but not focused upon specifically, since we consider the theory written on leadership to be very extensive, and maybe more suitable as a subject for a master thesis.
2 Literature review

In this chapter, literature related to the research questions will be reviewed. Available theories that are related to the four research questions that we introduced in chapter one will be presented.

2.1 Composition of teams

In the following section we will present a number of theories related to our first research question, namely how the composition of a team in a company can be described.

Selection of team members

Offerman and Gowing (1993) states that the increased use of work teams places new demands on selection systems, until now the methods have been fairly unsystematic when selecting people to teams. There are three reasons why selection interventions should improve team effectiveness. First, systematic selection methods can help identify individuals with greater individual skill levels. A team composed of better skilled and more highly motivated personnel will outperform other teams. The second reason why selection interventions could improve team effectiveness is because of the better mix of team members. Gladstein (1984) claims that increased heterogeneity is often recommended because it increases the range of competencies in the group. Finally, selection interventions may help team performance by identifying those individuals who will work best in a team environment. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1993) the criterion domain should be expanded to include things that go beyond one’s individual job, including factors such as helping and cooperating with others. Team assignments rely on individuals who are not only capable of performing their own task but who also possess skills and attitudes that support their team. Spencer and Spencer (1993) describe one selection method that is taking place in some organisations called the competency-based interview. During the selection interview research is conducted to determine the competencies possessed by successful individuals. This approach could be used to examine how individuals have dealt with team-related experiences and whether they have the competencies that successful team members usually possess. Another method according to Tannenbaum, Salas and Cannon-Bowers (1996) that may be useful for examining team-related competencies is some of the leaderless group exercises often included in assessment centers. Of special concern is how candidates interact, facilitate and support each others. Tannenbaum et al. concludes that these findings can later on be used to select individuals for the team assignment.

Composition of a team

The composition of a team according to Robbins (2001) includes variables that relate to how teams should be staffed. Robbins claims, regarding the abilities of members, that to perform effectively, a team requires three different types of skills. It needs people with technical expertise, problem-solving abilities and decision-making skills. This in order to be able to identify problems, generate alternatives, evaluate those alternatives, and make competent choices. Finally, teams need people with good listening, feedback, conflict-resolution and other interpersonal skills. All three types of skills need to be represented and the right mix is crucial. (ibid) According to Robbins it is not necessary for teams to have all the complementary skills from the start, since it is common for one or more members to take responsibility to learn the skills in which the group is deficient, this will
eventually help the team to reach its full potential. Robbins claims that personality has a significant influence on individual employee behaviour. Teams that are rated more highly in mean levels of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability tend to receive higher managerial ratings for team performance. It is important that all team members possess these personality traits otherwise this can result in strained internal processes and decreased overall team performance. Teams have different needs, and people should be selected for a team to guarantee that there is diversity and that the different roles are filled. (ibid) There are according to Robbins nine potential team roles:

1. Liner - coordinates and integrates
2. Creator - initiates creative ideas
3. Promoter - champions ideas after they are initiated
4. Assessor - offers insightful analysis of options
5. Organizer - provides structure
6. Producer - provides direction and follow-through
7. Controller - examines details and enforces rules
8. Maintainer - fights external battles
9. Adviser - encourages the search for more information

Successful work teams have people to fill all these roles and have selected people who match these roles based on their skills and preferences. On many teams, individuals can occupy several roles. It is important according to Robbins that managers understand the individual strengths that each person can bring to a team, select members with their strengths in mind, and give out work assignments that fit with members’ preferred styles.

Robbins states, regarding the size of the team, that the most effective teams constitutes of five to twelve people. Very small teams are likely to lack diversity of views and teams that are too large will be ineffective in its performance. Teams that consist of flexible individuals is a plus since the team-members can complete each other’s task if being cross-trained. Finally, when selecting team members, individual preferences should be considered as well as abilities, personalities and skills. High-performing teams are likely to be composed of people who enjoy working as part of a group. (ibid)

**Team roles**

According to Belbin (1993) particular individuals take on particular roles when being put together in teams. A poor balance will produce a poor outcome. Teams of able people will not necessarily produce favorable results since the balance might be wrong. On the other hand, team needs able people in order to succeed. The composition of the team is therefore of crucial importance. (ibid)
The types of behavior in which people engage are infinite. But the range of useful behaviors which make an effective contribution to team performance is finite. These behaviors can be grouped into a set of number of related clusters to which the term “team role” is applied. Belbin (1993) claims there are nine team roles, which are described in the table below.

### Table 2.1 The nine team roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and descriptions – Team-role contribution</th>
<th>Allowable weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plant:</strong> Creative, imaginative, unorthodox. Solves difficult problems.</td>
<td>Ignores details. Too preoccupied to communicate effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource investigator:</strong> Extrovert, enthusiastic, communicative. Explores opportunities. Develops contracts.</td>
<td>Overoptimistic. Loses interest once initial enthusiasm has passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Co-ordinator:</strong> mature, confident, a good chairperson. Clarifies goals, promotes decision-making, delegates well.</td>
<td>Can be seen as manipulative. Delegate’s personal work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shaper:</strong> Challenging, dynamic, thrives on pressure. Has the drive and courage to overcome obstacles.</td>
<td>Can provoke others. Hurts people’s feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monitor evaluator:</strong> Sober, strategic and discerning. Sees all options. Judges accurately.</td>
<td>Lacks drive and ability to inspire others. Overly critical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teamworker:</strong> Co-operative, mild, perceptive and diplomatic. Listens, builds, averts friction, and calms the waters.</td>
<td>Indecisive in crunch situations. Can be easily influenced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementer:</strong> Disciplined, reliable, conservative and efficient. Turns ideas into practical actions.</td>
<td>Somewhat inflexible. Slow to respond to new possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Completer:</strong> Painstaking, conscientious, anxious. Searches out errors and omissions. Delivers on time.</td>
<td>Inclined to worry unduly. Reluctant to delegate. Can be a nit-picker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialist:</strong> Single-minded, self starting, dedicated. Provides knowledge and skills in rare supply.</td>
<td>Contributes on only a narrow front. Dwells on technicalities. Overlooks the “big picture”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Belbin, 1993, p. 22

Belbin (1993) defines the term “team role” as the tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others at work in certain distinctive ways. He points out the importance to distinguish sharply between a person’s team role and their “functional role”. The “functional role” refers to the job demands that a person has been engaged to meet by supplying the requisite technical skills and operational knowledge.

To manage to build a successful team requires that there is a reasonable supply of candidates, adequate in number and in diversity of talents and team roles (Belbin, 1993). Relevant team roles together with any special skills should be well represented in a well-balanced team. If this could be done in a small group of people, so much better.(ibid)
Roles in the core selling team
As shown in the subsequent table, Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey (1995) have conceptualized four roles in the core selling team: the selling team leader, the seller, the internal coordinator and the customer service representative.

Table 2.2 Selling team roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selling team</th>
<th>SELLING TEAM LEADER</th>
<th>SELLER</th>
<th>INTERNAL COORDINATOR (IC)</th>
<th>CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (CSR)</th>
<th>EXTENDED SELLING TEAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selling team leader</td>
<td>Responsible for all team actions. Within the team, works directly with the CSR, the CI and the seller. May work directly with the buyer and/or buying team leader to satisfy customer needs. Obtains information and/or approval from management on such things as team decisions and special customer discounts, as well as information that permits the alignment of team and organizational goals.</td>
<td>The primary customer contact. Obtains customer information that is distributed throughout the team. A key source of external information regarding the marketplace, competitors, etc.</td>
<td>Responsible for the extended selling team. Works closely with the leader, the seller, the CSR and various relevant functional departments.</td>
<td>Provides installations, maintenance and other customer services. Interacts with buying team and selling team members.</td>
<td>Consists of functional experts possessing the technical knowledge needed by the selling team to meet specific customer needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey, 1995

Selling team leader
The leader is without doubt the most important role in the selling team. The emphasis on teams and teamwork will place demanding requirements on the leader. The parochial view of “my” must be replaced with the one of “we”.

Seller
The seller represents those members of the core team who serve as primary contacts for customers. The seller is also the primary source of external information coming into the team (information which can be useful in selling approach decisions, extended team composition decisions and product development decisions).

Internal coordinator
The internal coordinator is responsible for compiling and coordinating the extended selling team. The IC work closely with the seller, the team leader and the CSR to determine customer information needs. These customer needs will drive the composition of the extended selling team. The IC might contact those organizational members who can provide the expertise needed by the core team to accomplish team goals.

Customer service representative (CSR)
The CSR are those members of the core selling team who are responsible for supplying the customer with installation, maintenance and other services. When the seller is
unavailable or when information is needed that does not require the seller’s input, the CSR can step in as a customer contact. When interacting with the buying team, the CSR will receive information on customer requirements, preferences and previous customer problems and complaints.

According to Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey (1995), individual members within the core team can be responsible for more than one role. The number of roles in the team varies with the size of the company, a smaller company may have one person who acts as a seller and IC, while a large company may have numerous sellers in the same team. (ibid) A clear understanding of each team member’s role and how that role interacts with other team roles is required for a successful outcome. Team problems often occur because of the lack of clearly defined roles. (ibid)

**Type of team**

Conti and Kleiner (1997) identify a team as a group of people working (independently) together towards a single collective goal. Most of the teams have ordinary features but not many teams share a common structure. Different types of teams are created to achieve different goals (ibid):

- **Taskforce and cross-functional teams**: Members from different departments within the organization. Designed for problem solving.
- **Quality circles**: Voluntary in nature, the team selects the problem in quality, productivity or service it would like to solve.
- **Departmental teams**: Limited to the department and its problem.
- **Organizational policy-making teams**: Creative in design. Created to develop company policies and philosophy. Include members from all levels in the organization.
- **Self-directed work teams and self-managed teams**: Work together on a day-to-day basis. Set their own goals and hold greater responsibility for their own success than other teams.

**2.2 To sustain the function of the teamwork**

In the following section we will present a number of theories related to our second research question, namely how does a company sustain the function of the teamwork.

**Change agents for successful teamwork**

According to Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001) there are five key change agents represented in companies which have implemented teamwork in a successful way. These change agents are:

1. **Education** - The formation of teams is preceded by education in the need for and advantages of teams. Employees understand that teamwork is for everyone within the organisation, and by working in teams they are solving problems or seeking
improvements that affected their own functions but also the success of the company in general.

2. Training - Having been educated in the need to form teams, employees are trained in the necessary tools and techniques that make their attempts at teamwork successful.

3. Facilitation - Facilitation was provided for teams which helped to keep the team goal in focus and ensure that teamwork friction was reduced while promoting arrival at workable recommendations.

4. Encouragement - A lack of encouragement is a common reason for the failure of attempts at teamwork to progress beyond infancy. Encouragements mostly come from managers, being direct or otherwise encouragement has a distinctly positive impact on employees.

5. Recognition and reward - Recognising and rewarding team efforts serve both as an acknowledgment of contributions and a form of motivation to other employees and teams. A common mistake is to recognise only teams whose solutions meet benchmarked standards. This should be discouraged, as the companies that have achieved success at teamwork sometimes have had teams whose solutions are either marginally successful or not feasible.

Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001) states that although the concept of teamwork is widely known, achieving it is a challenge. The identification of the change agents, make the implementation easier. The activities listed below are, according to Adebanjo and Kehoe, suggestions and companies are not expected to adopt them all, but using as many as possible is a recommendation.

1. Education - Departmental briefings, company newsletters and company presentations are ways of educating all employees on the need for teamwork. Education must constantly emphasise the advantages of working in teams and all employees must also know that team membership is open to them.

2. Training - Teamwork training must include the teaching of problem-solving techniques such as cause-and–effect diagrams and praetor analysis and the use of quality tools. Training must also focus on team target setting and techniques for forming successful teams.

3. Facilitation - To ensure proper facilitation for teams, a separate training programme should be developed. Moreover, all teams should have facilitators. Facilitators may be from inside or outside the organisation, and larger organisations with many teams may utilize full-time facilitators.

4. Encouragement - To encourage teamwork, employees should be given time off for team-related assignments and allowances paid where relevant. Team membership may be left open for volunteers. To a large extent, team recommendations should be given adequate consideration and, where possible,
teams should be given the authority to make changes. Information and expertise that are outside the span of the team should be assigned as required and the organisation should develop measures against which to benchmark team performance.

5. Recognition and reward - To allow for recognition and reward, teams may be encouraged to present their findings to management. Teams may also receive company rewards. Letters of merit may be sent to teamwork participants and participation in teamwork may be notified during annual personal appraisal. Team success may also be communicated throughout the organisations by company newsletter.

**Promoting team effectiveness**

According to Tannenbaum et al. (1996) some prerequisites exist for team success. They relate to the context in which a team operates. They need to exist otherwise the following interventions discussed will have only limited efficacy:

- There must be a logical reason to use a team. If a single person can perform the task better there is no need for a team.

- Management shows they support the team. Support can be symbolic but it must also be reflected in resource allocations.

- The team’s resource needs are met or being met. Even the best performing team can fail if they lack the necessary resources to complete the task. Team members need time to work on the team’s tasks and access to information necessary for task completion. Organisational policies can also inhibit team effectiveness as well as situational constraints.

- The team’s needs are appropriately diagnosed. Different types of teams have different requirements for success. Furthermore, a given team will exhibit different needs at different stages in its development. There are no interventions that will work in all situations. A team that lacks technical skills requires a different intervention than one that has communication problems or exhibits role conflict. Accurate diagnosis is critical for selecting the right tool or intervention.
Tannenbaum et al. describes their model on team effectiveness. The framework shown is an input, throughput, output model. The major categories of variables are task characteristics, work structure, individual characteristics, team characteristics, team processes, team interventions, team changes, team performance and individual changes. Specific variables are described with bullets within each box. At the top of the model is a box labelled organisational and situational characteristics. This describes the environment in which the team operate. Team inputs include individual characteristics (skills, attitude) team characteristics (cohesiveness, heterogeneity), the characteristics of the task on which the team is working and its complexity, and the structure of the work. The throughputs are the way the team interacts over time. They are the processes through which the team communicates, resolve conflict, make decisions, spans boundaries, solves problems and coordinates with one another. They are also the way the team exchange its inputs into outputs. The outputs are the indicators of team effectiveness. These include primary indicators of team performance, such as quality and quantity of products produced and services provided. They also reflect individual and team changes, improvements for example in individual skills or new group norms, which can improve...
team performance. The model finally demonstrate three team interventions, individual training, team training and team building.

Tannenbaum et al. further states that a careful diagnosis should be made before making an intervention to solve problems a team may face. The author claims that in order to improve team effectiveness one must be capable of using different types of interventions, not just always the same one. Below is a list of interventions to promote team effectiveness described by (ibid):

- Team building
- Team training
- Work redesign/structuring
- Leadership development

Team building refers to a variety of interventions that focus on the interactions and processes within the team. Some interventions focus on role or goal clarification, some on interpersonal or conflict resolution issues and others take more of a general problem solving approach. In theory according to Tannenbaum et al. team building can affect many of the variables described in the team effectiveness model. Team norms, attitudes, climate, power distribution and cohesiveness could be affected by any of the team building approaches. Many team processes, including communication, conflict resolution and problem-solving are often direct targets of teambuilding interventions.

The author explains that team training can be characterized as a set of instructional strategies and tools aimed at enhancing teamwork knowledge, skills, processes and performance. These strategies and tools are similar to those used to train individuals. However, the tends to be on teamwork, and focus is placed on the team rather than individuals. Furthermore, the unique aspects of the team context present different challenges and opportunities than those which exist when training individuals. Team training strategies and tools are designed to develop team effectiveness through their effect on individual characteristics and team processes (ibid).

Work redesign/restructuring is a category of interventions according to Tannenbaum et al. that tries to modify or restructure the way work is performed- how work flows through the team, how it its assigned, how the task is organized, and the amount of flexibility and autonomy team members have in performing tasks and making decisions. Two related work structure issues that have been examined in team environments are self-managing teams with increased team autonomy, and organic/fluid team structures with greater structural flexibility.

Leadership development refers to a variety of methods for improving a leader’s capabilities (Tannenbaum et al.). In a team environment the leader role may be a relatively stable position, or it may be more of an emergent, shared or dynamic role. Team leaders have in many organisations been asked to change from a traditional supervisor-type role to a more of a facilitator/coach-type role. This new role for the team leader is less hierarchical and more of a collaborative one, where the team leader removes obstacles, facilitates team processes and helps team members build competences. (ibid) Team leaders’ decisions and behaviours can influence almost every variable in the team.
effectiveness model, therefore interventions that improve the team leader’s effectiveness will often improve the team (Yukl, 1989).

Problems teams face
Conti and Kleiner (1997) states that teams can face several problems. The most fundamental problem teams confront is according to Conti and Kleiner an existing work structure, hierarchical in nature, which have automatized workers and put a lid on creativity. A change in organizational structure is essential in fostering good teams according to the same authors. A second problem teams are faced with is keeping sight of their goal. Individualism plays a big part in this problem. Control issues, political issues and individual agendas can become obstacles that blur the vision of the team. Group-think and analysis paralysis are both problems in achieving team goals. Group-think Conti and Kleiner claim is the ultimate conformity that stifles creativity and individual input. Analysis paralysis is when the team is in constant conflict that does not allow for the group to make a decision. Another problem is lack of visible support and commitment from top management. This lack of support seriously interferes with the morale of the team. An influential problem that team members deal with is lack of training. Conti and Kleiner claims that this is the most common reasons why teams fail. In order to achieve cohesive teamwork specific training is necessary. Communication problems and cultural barriers are other problems teams are facing.

Some of the tools and techniques that can be used to increase team performance are according to Conti and Kleiner:

- Promote an internal structure of the organisation that empowers teams.
- To avoid destructive individualism and increase teamwork, both the organisation and the team need to be committed to the team concept. Teamwork that involves all team members having the same clear goals helps considerably.
- Another concept important for successful teamwork is developing clear and elevated goals. The clarity of the goals allows members to communicate them and visualize the potential results, clear and elevating goals also keep the team focused.
- Essential to effective team working is the members themselves. Carefully selecting competent team members is one factor that accounts for the success of a team. In order to establish this, an organisation must create a job analysis that describes the behaviours, technical knowledge, skills and motivational trait that would constitute a successful performer. These characteristics can be difficult to assess in an interview; thus simulations of different types need to be included in the selection process.
- An important concept that relates to developing competent individuals is training. Training can be organized to address three categories of skills: job skills, team/interactive skills, and quality/action skills.
• Analytical tools. These tools help teams understand and improve work-flow within a function. Flow charts, work-flow diagrams, praetor charts, and other statistical concepts are examples of such tools.

**Reinvigorating mature teams**
Robbins (2001) states that just because a team is performing well at a given point in time is no assurance that it will continue to do so. Effective teams can become stagnant. Initial enthusiasm can give way to apathy. Time can reduce the positive value from diverse perspectives as cohesiveness increases. According to Robbins there are four suggestions to mature teams that need to be revitalized.

• Prepare members to deal with the problems of maturity. Offer refresher training in communication, conflict resolution and team processes.

• Offer advanced training. The skills that worked with easy problems may be insufficient for more difficult ones. It can often be beneficial to receive advanced training for mature teams to help members develop stronger problem-solving, interpersonal, and technical skill.

• Encourage teams to treat their development as a constant learning experience. Teams should approach their own development as part of a search for continuous improvement.

• Teams should look for ways to improve, to confront member fears and frustrations, and to use conflict as a learning opportunity.
2.3 Customer focus as defined by companies
In the following section we will present a theory related to our third research question, namely how is customer focus defined by a company.

*The customer relationship scale*
Nigel (1995) states that we can see customer focus varying on a scale, where different positions on the scale are associated with different types of customer relationships.

![Customer relationship scale](image)

**Anonymous buyers**
At one end of the scale, there is little genuine, real customer focus. In this situation the words market, clients or accounts are used when referring to the customer. Customers are viewed upon as some kind of anonymous entities who hopefully will buy and consume products and services that a company offers. This is possible in for example monopoly situations. Nigel (1995) further comments that never expect, loyalty commitment, or real satisfaction from customers that are treated badly, and do not expect them to stay when a better alternative appears.

**Key accounts / segments**
One move down the scale towards customer focus is probably where most marketing companies are to be found today. Some effort is made to identify and target customers as members of key market segments and/or key accounts. At least here there is some idea who the customers are, and some degree of customer focus can be introduced into sales and marketing operations.
Hostages
In the middle of the scale customers are taken as hostages. This is what most modern marketing seeks to achieve. Efforts are focused on winning loyalty through customer “satisfaction”, but by taking away customers freedom. Think of hostage-taking through:

- airline and credit card air miles programs
- machines designed to work only with one supplier’s materials
- the invalidation of warranties and guarantees if the customer dares to use competitors’ components or maintenance services.

According to Nigel this may make some sense in markets where volume is critical, switching costs are low for customers, and there is no better way to win repeat business. However, at the end, hostages want their freedom, and loyalty is a temporary illusion.

Loyal followers
One further move down the scale suggests that the customer is more in focus and they are viewed upon as loyal followers. This differs from hostage-taking since the customers’ hearts and minds are tried to be won, rather than shackling them to the product or service. The goal is similar, but the means are more subtle. Most image-based advertising seeks to achieve this effect, as do many programs of customer care and customer calling.

Partners
The extreme on the scale is where customers are seen as partners. This approach has been widely recommended in relationship marketing and strategic alliance or network theories, but has proved to have more limited appeal among practical managers who see little way of implementing this in their markets. However, if the customer issue is seriously meant it seems inevitable that this is the real point wanted on the scale.

According to Nigel, the scale can be used when discussing customer focus with colleagues, employees, distributors and even customers in order to figure out where the organizations stands right now and where it would like to be. Nigel points out that the organizations view of how customers are treated may be very different from customers’ views of how they are treated.

Moreover, Nigel presents a list of items to consider when moving down the scale of customer focus to the desired point. The first step is knowing who the customers are, the goal is that everyone in the organization know and value customers. If the employees who are responsible for providing the customer services and maintenance do not know who the customers are, it is impossible for them to understand how their jobs impact on the customer. (ibid) The second step is to become a customer and see if you like it. The best firms have managers who actually go out and see what it feels like to be treated as a customer, and then bring the experience back to the boardroom to improve it (Nigel). Knowing what matters to customers, is a difficult subject to confront as every customer have a different idea about what matters. But succeeding in this issue could be one of the most powerful sources of competitive advantage and real customer focus. Meeting customers and working with them and customers days, are important things to socialize with the customers and getting customers taken seriously in the company. Handling customer complaints, is about effectively listen to the customers, responding positively
and building customer loyalty through this care and attention. *Measuring customer satisfaction*, if you believe in customers, you will evaluate your performance in their terms. Just trying to evaluate and being seen to do so is more important than the techniques you use. (ibid) *Rewards and incentives for good customer performance*, if the company does not honor those who do things to win the customer hearts, they will not succeed in taking the customer seriously. Finally, *Customer partnership*, involve that the customer should be represented when making decisions and the supplier should also be present in the customer’s decision making to improve the service they provide. (ibid)

**Redesign to match customer needs**

According to Toombs and Bailey (1995) a lot of companies claim to be customer focused, but only a few of them are skilled at distinguishing precisely how customers make their assessment of the value the company’s products and services provide. The same authors explain that marketing organizations can use measurements of customer-perceived value, such as conjoint analysis and focus groups, to develop new products and services and improve existing offerings. Organizations can obtain precise information on the needs and values of their internal and external customers. Furthermore they can use this information to tailor products and services to meet distinct market segment requirements and assess more objectively the benefits of previously used approaches, such as traditional cost analysis. The information received can rationalize re-engineering projects and ongoing performance management programs, for example using performance measures and incentive designs, or facilitate more focused change to meet continually evolving customer requirements and finally this information can be used when defining how support functions best can add value for both the internal and the external customer. An organization that is customer focused possesses specific knowledge of the companies’ external customers and their true needs. The organization is also experts on its internal support functions and how they work together to help the company satisfy its customers. (ibid)

Pushing a company towards customer focus requires specific knowledge of the corporation’s external customers and their true needs (Toombs & Bailey). Equal expertise on its internal support functions and how they work together to help the company satisfy its customer is also required. To increase the power of management experience exponentially, conjoint analysis can be utilized. Such an analysis is based on accurate knowledge of what is going on in the company’s internal and external marketplace. (ibid)

In accordance with Toombs and Bailey there are two steps to be taken towards customer focus. The first step is learning what all the customers, both internal and external, really want from the company, how the internal market can function more efficiently, and were to allocate resources to gain bottom-line results. The second step is using the information to redesign the organization and modify the products and services to serve the customers better. (ibid)
2.4 Introducing customer focus in teamwork
In the following section we will present two theories related to our fourth research question, namely how is the objective of customer focus introduced in a company’s teamwork.

Change agents for customer focus
According to Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001) the physiological and organisational factors that can influence teamwork and customer focus are grouped into five change agents as shown in the figure below.

![Change agents for customer focus](image)

**Figure 2.3** Change agents for customer focus
Source: Authors’ construction

Adebanjo and Kehoe explain the five change agents for customer focus:

1. **Communication** - Communication is important to ensure that customers are kept in focus. The communication includes both internal and external aspects of the company’s activities. Easy and effective communication with customers, between departments and individuals are encouraged.

2. **Employee focus** - All employees know who their customers (internal and external) are. Every employee and all stages of the companies operations, not only customer service personnel as traditionally, are encouraged to have the customer in focus.

3. **Measures** - The use of customer-related measures serves as an important way of judging overall success and of gathering market information. Companies also use measures to benchmark their performance both internally and externally and in the setting of future goal. In many cases, measures form the basis of corrective action.

4. **Relationship building** - Companies realize that it is harder and more expensive to attract new customers that to keep current customers and build relationships. It is also important to not marginalize smaller customers at the expense of the bigger
ones. This will lead to discontent among the affected customers and the end result can be a defection to other suppliers.

5. **Reward** - Rewarding and recognising loyal customers is a way of encouraging customers to return but also inform customers that their loyalty is being recognised and appreciated.

Although the concept of customer focus is widely known, achieving it is a challenge (Adebanjo & Kehoe). The identification of the change agents or basic actions taken, make the implementation easier. The activities listed below are according to suggestions and companies are not expected to adopt them all, but using as many as possible is a recommendation. (ibid)

1. **Communication** - To ensure proper communication, visits may be exchanged with customers but also joint design of products should be carried out where possible. Employees should be trained in effective communication with customers, and the company should constantly review processes and structures for ways of improving internal communication. A structured approach should be adopted for communication of customer complaints and capturing of customer needs.

2. **Employee focus** - The internal customer concept encourages employees to focus on the customer. Direct contact between all employees and the company’s customers may be encouraged. Employees may also be given detailed information on who the customers are and the uses of the products.

3. **Measures** - A comprehensive approach to customer-related measures should be adopted. Measures may include satisfaction, complaints, product delivery, product return, customer requirements, sales, benchmarking of operational performance and where it is possible, response time to customer enquiries.

4. **Relationship building** - Building a customer database and adopting a structured approach to customer visits are methods of developing relationships with customers. Social contact, sharing of business information, technical assistance for smaller or less develops customers, and customer training is other methods.

5. **Reward** - Loyal customers may be rewarded with company awards, sales discounts or simply letters of recognition.
Team work and customer focus

Henry (1998) states that teams need to concentrate on customer focus, direction, understanding and accountability as illustrated in the figure below.

![Figure 2.4 Team fitness](image)

Source: Henry, 1998, p. 10

Customer focus means understanding the expectations, values, and priorities of those who receive the company’s work and ensures that those expectations shape the requirements for the products and services the team provides. Customer focus has two parts according to Henry, identification of customers and clarification of the customers’ requirement and expectations. Henry claims that successful team leaders are well aware of their customers. They know who the customer is and what the customer wants and needs. Systems are in place to define customer expectations and track performance against those expectations. According to Henry customers may be internal people or departments or the entire organisation. Some customers are the final, ultimate buyer of the products and services, sometimes the customer is a supplier. The customer is seen as a partner.

Direction defines the unique contribution of the team, form its broadest purpose to its specific actions and activities. Directions show the fit between the team’s purpose and the organisations purpose. Direction is composed of the following four factors:

- Charter - formally putting the team into existence
- Vision - creating a mental image of what the team is expected to contribute with in the future.
- Mission - defining the purpose and unique contribution to the enterprise
- Goals and objectives - broad statements of the desired end results with objectives that clarify the specific actions and activities to obtain those results.
Understanding means according to Henry learning and interpreting the inherent nature of ourselves, our team members, and our organisation. Understanding is composed of the following three factors:

- Self and others
- Teams
- Organisation

Teams meet regularly to share results and learning. The leader often acts as a liaison to the rest of the organisation.

The last area to cover, accountability, is the willingness to be responsible for the results the team is expected to achieve, specific projects and plans, and to be responsible to one another. The following four factors influence the team’s accountability: (ibid)

- Values and beliefs - the beliefs, held by the organisation and the team, by which the team is expected to live.

- Operating agreements - the ways team members agree to behave and work together.

- Project planning - the planning methods used to ensure that the right things are done and that they are done right, in the right sequence, and on schedule.

- Implementation planning - The planning methods used to ensure that the project plans and the work of the team will be accepted by the rest of the organisation.
2.5 Conceptual framework

Based on the literature reviewed in earlier sections of this chapter we can design a model to describe the role of teamwork in creating customer focus. This model will serve as a guideline for our data collection.

![Diagram showing conceptual framework]

**Figure 2.5 A conceptual frame of reference**
Source: Authors’ construction

The overall objective for the company is to achieve customer focus and thereby understand the customer’s needs and wants in a better way. The first step towards customer focus is the selection and composition of the team. The tools necessary to sustain teamwork in the long-run and the tools available to gain a long-lasting customer focus are viewed as a parallel process, we believe this is logical since the company is dealing with internal as well as external customers simultaneously. The toolbox for the teamwork consists of education, training, facilitation, encouragement, reorganization and reward. All of these are important according to Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001) when maintaining team performance. The toolbox for gaining customer focus consists of communication which involves both internal and external aspects of the companies’ activities, employee focus, customer related measures, relationship building, reward and
recognition of loyal customers. Following this roadmap in an appropriate way would increase the possibilities for a company to reach customer focus.

**Describing the composition of a team in a company**
For our first research question the literature does not provide any systematic approach to the selection of team members. However, several sources insist on its importance when creating a well performing team. In order to receive information on the selection process, the questions in our interview will be constructed based on what the literature has provided. The type of team will be described according to the definition by Conti and Kleiner (1997). The size of the team as well as the abilities of team members will be explained by Robbins (2001). Furthermore, our interpretation is that the composition is built upon two layers; first the nine team roles defined by Belbin (1993), secondly the roles which define the different work tasks of the team members defined by Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey (1995). We have chosen to pay attention to both theories.

**How to sustain the function of teamwork in a company**
To answer our second research question we will explore the five different components in the toolbox for sustained teamwork by Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001). We chose this model since it is not so complex and it covers the most important things brought up in the literature on how to sustain the function of teamwork.

**Customer focus as defined by a company**
We will use the customer relationship scale by Nigel (1995) when answering our third research question. When selecting theory we found this model to be the most appropriate one. This model is very interesting since it covers how companies define their relationship with the customer and it is also illustrated on a scale.

**How customer focus is introduced in teamwork**
Our intention is to answer the fourth research question by using the tools to gain customer focus, which are the five elements used by Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001). We consider this model to be complete since it covers all variables we have found to be important during our literature review.


3 Methodology

The methodology chapter provides a structure for answering our research questions. First the research strategy, the method and the tools we used in the research will be described. Finally validity and reliability are discussed.

![Methodology elements](Source: Authors’ construction)

3.1 Research purpose

There are three different categories of research: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Yin, 1994). The exploratory stage is used when the researcher wants to explore questions and/or hypothesis of a subsequent study. Descriptive research is a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. Finally, explanatory research explains causal relationships between cause and effect. (ibid)

Our thesis is to be seen as descriptive since the purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of how teamwork is used within a company to create customer focus. Since there is no identical research done before the study is also exploratory. Our thesis is also explanatory since we intend to draw conclusions based on our research questions in the final chapter.

3.2 Research approach

Qualitative and quantitative methods are the two main research approaches within social sciences. The quantitative method is controlled and structured and suitable for statistical research. It tends to make generalizations based on the results of the research. The qualitative method, on the other hand, describes the situation as a whole. It gives the option to collect plentiful information and to investigate several variables from a few numbers of entities. (Holme & Solvang, 1991)

This thesis is of a qualitative character since a detailed research is made to gain a deeper understanding of the role of teamwork in creating customer focus. In order to fulfill our purpose we investigated several variables in a relative small company. We do not strive to make generalizations and the result can not be measured in how much and how many, therefore the qualitative approach is suitable for our research.

3.3 Research strategy

The three major research strategies is, according to Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (2001); experiments, surveys and case studies. Yin (1994) complements these strategies with history and archival analysis. He also states that what strategy to use is determined by three different conditions. These conditions are: what form of research question, the extent of control an investigator has over behavioral events and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events.
The subsequent table illustrates how Yin (1994) relates the five research strategies to every condition.

**Table 3.1 Relevant situations for different research strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Strategy</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Requires control over behavioral events</th>
<th>Focuses on contemporary events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>How, way</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Who, what, where, how, many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival analysis</td>
<td>Who, what, where, how, many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yin, 1994, p. 6

Following Yin’s discussion and given that we want an in depth situation picture, it appears that a case study would be the most suitable research strategy for this thesis. All the research questions posed in chapter one begins with “how”, which also indicates that case study is the right strategy to use.

### 3.4 Data collection method

In the following table, Yin (1994) describes six different sources for data collection. Even though interviews are the most important source of case studies, he points out that the strength with case studies is the opportunity to use different sources of data.

**Table 3.2 Six Sources of Evidence: Strengths and Weaknesses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>*Stable: can be reviewed repeatedly</td>
<td>*Retrievability: can be low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Unobtrusive: not created as a result of the case</td>
<td>*Biased selectivity: if collection is incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Exact: contains exact names, references and details of an event</td>
<td>*Reporting bias: reflects bias of author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Broad coverage: long span of time, many events and many settings</td>
<td>*Access: may be deliberately blocked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Records</td>
<td>*(Same as above)</td>
<td>*(Same as above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*(Same as above)</td>
<td>*Accessibility due to privacy reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>*Targeted: focuses directly on case study topic</td>
<td>*Bias due to poorly constructed questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Insightful: provides perceived causal inferences</td>
<td>*Response bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Inaccuracies due to poor recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Reflexivity: interviewee gives what interviewer wants to hear</td>
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Methodology

| Direct Observations | *Reality: covers events in real time  
*Contextual: covers context of event | *Time consuming  
*Selectivity: unless broad coverage  
*Reflexivity: event may proceed differently because it is being observed  
*Costs: hours needed by human observers |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Participant Observation | *(Same as above)  
*Insightful into inter-personal behavior and motives | *(Same as above)  
*Bias due to investigator’s manipulation of events |
| Physical Artifacts | *Insightful into cultural features  
*Insightful into technical operations | *Selectivity  
*Availability |

Source: Yin, 1994, p. 80

For this thesis, an interview was the appropriate method for collecting the data. This foremost since the purpose was to gain in depth information. Furthermore, an interview also allows closeness to the respondent which is preferred in qualitative studies. An interview guide was created based on our conceptual framework in chapter two. A face to face interview, divided in two sections, was performed to gain the data necessary for our thesis. The choice of conducting a face-to-face interview is that the result is more reliable, than for example conducting a telephone interview. The interview was semi-structured, which gave the respondent the opportunity to give more details about the subject we brought up. Our assignment was to comprehend team work and customer focus and in order to accomplish our goal, personal interviews were a good way to understand the phenomenon better. The interview was conducted in Swedish, which is the mother tongue for both the respondent and for the researchers. According to recommendations by Yin (1994), a tape recorder was used during the whole interview in order to register the empirical data. The respondent was aware of the recorder but had no objections. Notes were also taken during the whole interview. Moreover, documentation was as another source of data in our study. To gain general information about the company investigated, the homepage and documents provided by the respondent was utilized.

3.5 Sample selection

The subject of this thesis, customer focus and team work, can be conducted in several ways. There are many interesting segments to perform our case study on, among them the service sector, health sector and the industrial market. The subject can also be looked at from the sellers’, buyers’ or both perspectives. However, we have chosen to look at it from the sellers’ point of view since we find this perspective the most interesting. We have selected the industrial market since we have taken the course in industrial marketing and realized through article studies that there is a lack of research considering team work in the business to business sector. In the course business strategy, the notion customer value was brought up and highlighted as an extremely important issue in order or a company to stay competitive. In fact it is here where the battle is. Therefore we were interested in performing our case study in a small manufacturing company where team work was performed. Isolamin AB in Överkalix turned out to be suitable for our study. When contacting the company we understood that they applied team work with their largest customer. Additionally, Mr. Sandberg and one of the researchers have a personal
relationship this we thought gave us better guaranties that we would receive the necessary information, but also facilitate the interview process.

3.6 Analysis of data

According to Yin (1994) there are two different analytic strategies to choose between before actually analyzing the data:

- **Relying on theoretical propositions**: the results from previous studies concerning the research questions are compared with the researchers’ findings from the case study.

- **Developing a case description**: used when there is little previous research on the subject.

Since there is previous research made on teamwork and customer focus, we relied on theoretical propositions when developing our analytical strategy. A within-case analysis will be performed since we are only analyzing one company. This is done by comparing the data collected from the case study with relevant theories presented in the conceptual framework. After having conducted the data reduction, we displayed the data and finally we draw conclusions based on the findings in our study.

3.7 Quality standards

In order to establish the quality of the research, there are four commonly used tests which Yin (1994) describes:

- **Construct validity**: establish correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.

- **Internal validity**: establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.

- **External validity**: establish the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized.

- **Reliability**: demonstrate that the operations of a study, such as the data collection procedures, can be repeated with the same results.

To increase the construct validity, there are three tactics to consider. The first is the use of multiple sources of evidence, in a manner encouraging convergent lines of inquiry. In this thesis we have used interviews and documents. The second tactic is to establish a chain of evidence. For this reason, references have been made to all sources we have used throughout this thesis. The final tactic is to have the draft of the case study report reviewed by key informants. In order to eliminate possible misunderstandings or misinterpretations the draft report was reviewed by our respondent. Furthermore, the draft report has been reviewed by our supervisor regularly. The interview guide was also reviewed by our supervisor, who considered the questions stated to be valid. We proceeded by e-mailing the interview guide to our respondent. This was done two days
before the interview was conducted, in order to give our respondent an opportunity to prepare himself.

In order to achieve internal validity, we have chosen to use the analytic tactic of pattern matching where empirical data is compared to theory. Since our thesis is mainly descriptive we therefore have not.

According to Yin (1994), external validity deals with the problem of knowing whether a study’s findings can be generalized or not. A single case study is a poor base for generalization. Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (2001) identify the dilemma of knowing if the respondent is answering correctly as another problem to obtain external validity. In our thesis we have taken this into consideration when choosing respondent for our interview. We judge Mr. Sandberg to be the most suitable respondent, due to his position as a former manager director of Isolamin AB and present Group Managing Director of IMG. He has a good insight in the company’s business situation, as well as internal organization. Furthermore, he has a good knowledge of modern theories and concepts in business science. His attitude towards the subject of this thesis was that he found it very interesting and suitable for Isolamin AB. He was also interesting in collaborating by helping us with information on this specific topic.

Reliability has to do with whether another researcher will get the same result if performing the investigation at another point of time, or not (Yin). The goal is to minimize the errors and biases in the study (ibid).

The interview took place in a calm and relaxed environment, and neither the respondent nor the interviewers were stressed. A tape recorder was used during the interview, which lasted for one hour. Notes were taken simultaneously, which gave us the opportunity to double check the information in order to reduce the risk for misinterpretations. We also paid attention to the respondent’s body language and reactions in addition to his words. This added silent information gives surplus value because there exist a possibility to confirm that there is concordance between the spoken word and the corporal expression. The interview was conducted in Swedish, but the result was translated into English which might give translating errors and threat our reliability. In order to facilitate the interview process, one researcher was conducting the interview, while the other was handling the tape recorder as well as taking notes. Due to the personal relationship between Ms. Torfve and the respondent, Ms. Torfve did not have a prominent role in the interview, this in order to reduce response bias. After we had compiled the data, we sent a copy of the chapter to our respondent in order to avoid eventual misunderstandings. He added and changed some facts and we also asked some additional questions where we felt it was needed.
4 Empirical data

In this chapter we will present our empirical data. First we will begin with a brief presentation of the company and then present our empirical data in the order set by the conceptual framework. As already mentioned in chapter three, we have chosen Isolamin AB for our case study. The interview was divided in two sections. The first one was conducted with Erik Sandberg on the April 18, 2004, and the second one took place on the May 9. Mr. Sandberg was the Manager Director of Isolamin AB during 2002 and from January 1st 2003 acting as the Group Managing Director of IMG – International Marine Group. Beside the interview he also provided us with useful background information about the company.

4.1 Company background

Isolamin AB was founded in 1979. It is a subsidiary company to IMG AB, which itself is a subsidiary company to Karlsvik International AB, situated in Stockholm, Sweden. The head office is situated in Överkalix, and the two sales offices in Luleå and Tyringe. Isolamin AB has two market departments, they produces floating floors and wall- and ceiling panels for the Marine/Offshore market and walls and ceilings in system with windows and doors for the Building Industrial Services market. 70 per cent of the company’s production is exported. The Marine/Offshore products are sold worldwide and the Building Industrial Services products are sold in the north-western part of Europe. The company has customers of varying size, from SEK 50.000 to 20 millions. The company has a turnover of SEK 135.000.000 and produces 300.000 m$^2$ panels with 120 employees.

Isolamin AB’s business mission is to develop, manufacture and market wall-, ceiling and floor elements, also different types of systems of their products for the marine-, offshore-, building- and industry market. The products, know-how and service that Isolamin AB offers will provide the customer with maximum value, and also improve their productivity and profitability.

Isolamin AB has a wide product programme and produces everything against order. The systems of products are based completely on customer’s requirements and produced with modern production methods. The company continuously tests to further optimize the products and the production technology. Isolamin AB has experienced personnel to quote and specify optimal solutions and produce on request complete engineering, take-off specification and installation drawings.

Isolamin AB does not use the theory of Total Quality Management. However, the management spread the message to their employees that the company has a quality-thinking through everything they do. This is well implemented and they have a low rate of complaints. Isolamin AB does not apply to the Service Quality Management theory either, but they constantly try to infuse and implement a high rate of service in the company. Service is the Achilles’ heel of Isolamin AB and there is a need of substantial improvement. The reason behind this problem is that Isolamin AB works in a municipality that lack an industrial tradition, moreover people are not familiar with service culture. The CVM concept is not utilized either, but management believes that the most important thing is that the employees understand that the company constantly have
to produce value to the customer. Isolamin AB works with this issue daily, foremost with the department of product development and the sellers.

### 4.2 Composition of teams at Isolamin AB

Isolamin AB established teamwork a year ago with their largest customer, Pharmadule Emtunga AB. Pharmadule Emtunga AB is a world-leading supplier of turnkey modular facilities, primarily to the pharmaceutical & biotech, oil & gas and telecom industries. The team objective is to develop the wall panels, which Isolamin AB produce, to be suitable for the highest class of hygiene possible. For instance, medical- and electronic factories or premises within the food industry must not contain any dust and therefore one should be able to spray against windows and doors with compressed air, and dust must be easy to wash away. This implies that the team invent solutions for corners, transitions from walls to ceilings and from floor to walls by adding a 4 mm wet room mat on the wall panel. The only way to deal with these problems is to set up a team with representatives from the users and manufacturers. If they mutually can manage to solve these problems it will be a huge surplus value for the customer since they, by means of a low-cost technique can construct very high standards regarding cleanliness. Isolamin AB has established this teamwork in order to be the leader of product development within their industry and strengthen their image as an innovative company. This teamwork will bring about that a great deal of existing problems in the industry can be mutually handled and properly solved.

It is not the first time Isolamin AB use teamwork in cooperation with one of their customers. There has been teamwork with customers in the marketing department during the years. Work groups are also commonly used within the whole organization. For example through various projects within the product- and market development departments.

The team is composed of employees from Isolamin AB and Pharmadule Emtunga AB. It is build up by marketing personnel with commercial responsibilities, and technical personnel, consisting of product development personnel. Product development at Isolamin AB signifies working with the quality of the material, at Pharmadule Emtunga it stands for working with the assembly technique. These two fields bleed into each other and therefore teamwork is very suitable, since the companies can brainstorm together without having anyone controlling the scene. Mr. Sandberg’s role in the team is as a member in a reference group once in a while.

Concerning the work roles the tasks of Isolamin AB is to develop the products and for Pharmadule Emtunga AB it is to work with the assembly part and together create a system. In other words they are moving from product- to system thinking. One could also say that Isolamin AB is taking a step forward when it comes to the manufacturing process of a medical factory, abandoning its previous role of being just a supplier, because what really matters to the customer is the total cost of the wall when finished.

The selection process is not a complicated matter since Isolamin AB is a company of only about one hundred employees. The team members are selected on behalf of the work assignment. Those who are working with product development are the one to be selected because they possess the technical competence.
When shaping a team and it comes to product development and technique, Mr. Sandberg believes that one have to be conscious about the fact that the people who work within this field, and are great specialist, unfortunately sometimes not possess the social competence needed. These personality traits are placed a bit apart. Mixing the right personalities is important, but since Isolamin AB is such a small company they can not make a special selection. Nevertheless, the task of Mr. Sandberg as a manager is to keep track of some of the members in Isolamin AB’s part of the team. This in order to certify that they put an extra effort in opening themselves and not withhold information, suspecting the customer of abusing the information communicated within the team. In this group, Mr. Sandberg believes, that there are personalities that do not fit in teamwork but since they possess those specialist competences required they have to be part of it, and Isolamin AB has to be able to handle this social deficiency.

Mr. Sandberg agrees that team performance is better if build upon employees that have more of an extrovert personality. However, he believes that there are disadvantages with this personality types, because extrovert personalities do not normally possess specialist competences. They have not had that peace and quietness needed to build up the high technological competence requested, but of course there exist exceptions. He has met some during his career and has for example the experience that administrative skills in salesmen also falls a long way apart, salespersons are often a real catastrophe when it comes to administration he states. Mr. Sandberg adds that there exist exceptions also here. He believes that everywhere when it comes to marketing, one have to pay attention to personalities.

The team does not have a clearly defined leader, and the role as secretary change regularly in order to maintain the equilibrium in the team. The latter is according to Mr. Sandberg, rather important when running this kind of teamwork. Normally there are four employees participating from Pharmadule Emtunga AB and three employees from Isolamin AB but this is not static in any way, because expert competence can be required if the team runs into a more complicated issue. The team meet approximately every third month due to the long distance between them.

Since it is extremely important to maintain the equality in the team, no team leader has been appointed. Instead Isolamin AB has given their manager for the product development department the role as their “first man”. This means that he is responsible for Isolamin AB’s contribution to the team, unlike a team leader who would have been responsible for the outcome of the whole team.

The team is very independent since their task is so clearly defined. Mr. Sandberg describes the team as a loosely composed team with the same responsibility and authority for every person and every role. Regarding the team’s independence there is only one reservation, to not forget about the main target. Teamwork always delivers great value to a company. In this special case, the teamwork provides a natural feedback from the customer, how they perceive the product of Isolamin AB, and how they want Isolamin AB to use it, and Mr. Sandberg is absolutely convinced that the customer see the effect of synergism in the same way. The customer understands how a supplier of sandwich panels thinks and works with product development, but also how the supplier should work in
order to meet the expectations of the customer so they can be mutually satisfied. This is symbiotic in every aspect.

4.3 Sustaining the function of teamwork at Isolamin AB

The teamwork at Isolamin AB has been introduced to the employees through information-meetings. The company management emphasize that they are proud that Pharmadule Emtunga AB has chosen Isolamin AB as a partner for their mutual project. Only a few employees can be members of the actual team, therefore the introduction process is more to be seen as an information process for the whole company. Those who will be actual team members are informed later. The self-esteem in the company rises since Isolamin AB look at themselves as a little bit “high-tech”. The advantages with teamwork have been brought up to illuminate the effects for the individual and for the company. Every situation has to decide whether the collectiveness of the teamwork is given priority to instead of an individualistic development. Isolamin AB really do not oppose the former against the latter, instead it is the situation in itself that decides what method to use.

The first time Isolamin AB and Pharmadule Emtunga AB had a team meeting was in Överkalix February 2003. To get to know each other in a better way they had teambuilding activities, and the end result was the formation of a really good team. Teambuilding is usually up to the seller since it is rare that the customer have a budget for this kind of activities. Isolamin AB will probably have another set of teambuilding activities with this team when the project is over. It is likely that they will have further cooperation with this customer. Isolamin AB has not given the team members lessons in conflict resolution and problem-solving techniques. There have not been any problems with conflicts within the team so far. This foremost since Isolamin AB and Pharmadule Emtunga AB have a common interest and goal which reduces the risk for conflicts. Furthermore, this is a relationship between customer and supplier which implies that Isolamin AB, as a supplier, has to yield to the customer – the customer is always right.

Isolamin AB does not have a special working method regarding their teamwork, they deal with the customer in a conventional way – with all the elementary skills that a seller should have. It is important to remember that in this team everyone is a seller, even the members from the department of product development. The management constantly try to remind the team members that they should listen very carefully to the customer. The team objective is very clear. They have to develop a hygienic room, within two years, which fulfill the highest standards of hygiene. The objectives was set up and entered in the minutes when the managerial director was present at the first meeting. The teamwork is evaluated regularly to see what is done and what is left according to opinion of the team members.

The team and their work is frequently encouraged by the management, who show their interest by asking questions and giving feedback. The team is also encouraged to present their findings to the management. The first man meets with the management and informs them about the current work. An example of this is when the first man suggested that Isolamin AB should build a module to show the customer how their work proceeds and how their solutions work in real life. The management agreed to this even tough it was costly. The team receive recognition frequently but only by words, there have been no
individual rewards except for the manager of the product development department who received an economic reward in addition to the monthly salary.

The three employees from Isolamin AB who participate in the team, work with other assignments as well, the teamwork is to be seen as something in addition to their regular work. Isolamin AB does not apply any theoretical method to evaluate the teamwork. Instead, their first man regularly report how the team’s progress to a managerial body. The team has the authority to carry through changes as long as they are heading for the target. This is regularly followed up and controlled by management.

Furthermore, Mr. Sandberg has almost thirty years of experience as a leader and has developed his own management style, which he describes as “a method of walking and talking”. He explains that he has a wide organization chart which means that he works with many people directly under him. He describes his own role as a coach who likes to share his knowledge with the employees.

4.4 Customer focus at Isolamin AB

Isolamin AB does not have a clear worded customer focus. According to the manager, it is not complete due to an insufficient personal service to the customer. Nevertheless, there is customer focus thinking since Mr. Sandberg always reminds the employees that it is the customer that pays their salaries.

Mr. Sandberg likes the rules and theories in academic literature, combined with working experience and common sense it constitutes a good philosophy. A company should maintain a high attention of customer focus, even though it behaves like waves, it goes up and down. This Mr. Sandberg believes, happens with everything, time attention for example. It is a task for management to overcome those down-turns; and he thinks it is possible to maintain a constant enthusiasm.

Isolamin AB implemented a large project called ISAK during the year of 2003. The project was partly financed by EU and involved all employees, both blue and white collars. The purpose of the project was to discuss how to place the customer in focus. The discussions took place in working groups which later on presented a package of measures. All working groups received feed-back and after the follow-up work has been completed, there will be a follow-up meeting later this spring.

Mr. Sandberg explains that Isolamin AB strive to treat their customer as a long-term partners. They believe that they treat their customers well concerning reliability but are aware of the fact that they are insufficient when it comes to service. It is clearly stated to the employees that the customer must be treated as an important partner, although that philosophy might not always be assimilated by the employees.

4.5 Introducing customer focus in teamwork

Isolamin AB have regular communication with their customer, this is obvious since the team consists of both customer and supplier. The customer carefully evaluates the cooperation when following the regular written protocols, and is of course anxious to see that the teamwork make progresses and move forward. Mr. Sandberg does not experience
that they have had any complaints from this customer so far. Generally speaking the company’s attitude towards customer complaints is that this is the best way for Isolamin AB to advance its position. If there is a reclamation all service measures possible have to be taken, Isolamin AB even send replacement material by air. The general philosophy is that reclamation always occur, all suppliers have it, but the difference between a good and a bad supplier become visible in the actions being taken afterwards. It is here the company has the possibility to demonstrate their skills.

Regarding the teamwork, there have not been any complaints because they work so tightly and make adjustments regularly. The collaboration is continuous and constitutes the teamwork in itself. The team has to meet highly set hygienic standards from the authorities. The customer requirement is that Isolamin AB develops a product in collaboration with them where the main purpose is that it works in tough environments regarding, cleanliness, tightness and absence of dust. Isolamin AB meets the customer’s desire by setting up a mutual team and fulfills the requirements from the authorities by developing their product in cooperation with their customer.

Isolamin AB has the following structure regarding this team; the department of product development has been put at the customer’s disposal, as well as their competence regarding sandwich panels. That is the customer needs and he wants an expert that solves the problem. When it comes to team training, customer focus and understanding customer needs, Mr. Sandberg refer to the ISAK project once again, since it definitely was a way of making the employees aware about the fact that the customer has to be placed in focus since the customer pay their salaries. The team has been trained in groups.

Isolamin AB tries to update their employees regularly about new customers. The whole organizational chain has to be informed about who is hidden behind this new customer name. The vision of Isolamin AB is to be able to send every employee to a customer during a financial year. Since, Isolamin AB does not have one single customer in their immediate surroundings this is only possible the day they can financially afford it.

Regarding the evaluation of variables, a customer enquiry was made the first six months of 2003 to test customer satisfaction measured on various parameters such as quality, safety of delivery, service. Mr. Sandberg does not remember the exact result only that it was relatively high. The quality system of Isolamin AB requires that reclamations by customers are followed up, as well as complaints, because they are deviations and measures need to be taken, otherwise there will be objections. If there are too many complaints the company will loose its quality certification. Regarding delivery, this was mentioned in the previous question. When it comes to sales performance this can be viewed in two ways; the sales performance at the customers place and how the salesperson is working and serving the customer, they are not making any evaluation on this performance. Instead managerial satisfaction is being measured on sales performance. Fridays Mr. Sandberg receives an activity chart from every salesman, which he looks through. This chart gives information about the activity rate of each particular salesperson. Regarding product returns Isolamin AB never receive anything in return. The company has a level of reclamation of only 200.000 SEK based on a turnover of 140 millions SEK last year. This is too low according to Mr. Sandberg’s opinion. He believes that the safety margin is sometimes too high. Right now they are in the process
of reassessing because it is quite possible that they overdo to avoid damages when transporting goods. The packaging may be too expensive. They don’t measure customer need requirements at Isolamin AB because these are followed up regularly. Isolamin AB delivers against rules that are set up by international classification societies concerning the marine side and they have to meet construction standards in different countries regarding the construction side and traditional construction industry. Considering benchmarking and operational performance Mr. Sandberg explains that it is very difficult to carry out benchmarking at their place irrespective of what it is because there is no resemblance between suppliers. Some suppliers buy laminia sheet metal, and Isolamin AB cover sheet metal themselves, some buy cleaning services and they do the cleaning themselves. This has according to Mr. Sandberg to do with the degree of outsourcing. He also explains that it is very difficult to compare the number of employees in a company with another, in order to do so, one have to be very careful. When making their next customer enquiry, Isolamin AB will compare data as being better or worse than their competitors.

Business performance measure, according Mr. Sandberg can best be traced to the last line in the profit and loss account. But a lot of things can be measured for example productivity, cash flow, return on capital employed etc. At twelve o clock every Monday Mr. Sandberg has a follow up regarding the company performance on order intake, invoice and production. He will look at the preceding week separately, but also accumulated from the beginning of the year, compared to budget. These figures can also be compared to the previous year. Mr. Sandberg states that they are well equipped concerning statistics for follow ups. Isolamin AB does not measure the time it takes to meet customer requirements. Nevertheless, Mr. Sandberg says that he is very straight with the sellers in that they have to respond within minutes, rather than hours, on mail received from customers.

Isolamin AB utilizes a customer support system called SuperOffice. In this system all the customers and activities are being registered and accessible for other employees than the seller in charge of the customer. Isolamin AB make customer visits frequently in order to develop customer relationship. The philosophy of Isolamin AB is to meet the customer as much as possible. Social relations with the customer are considered to be very important so they are practicing a method which Mr. Sandberg calls constant communication. It is the philosophy of Mr. Sandberg that customers should be contacted by phone even if there is no reason for calling, because that is how they can overhear if something is going wrong. Another philosophy is to use a broad contact net with the customer which signifies that not just the seller should establish social relations but also the product developer, the delivery follow up responsible, the freight organizer, the invoice department. All of them has a mission of listening and giving feedback by sending an e-mail saying that the customer were not satisfied with this or that, in order for Isolamin AB to make the necessary adjustments. Isolamin AB and its three sister companies also assist each other by immediately informing if for example relevant piece of information has been picked up from the customer.

Information is shared with their customers, what Isolamin AB receives in return is customer loyalty. The company has a special selling technique. Their customers are installers on boats, who undertake reparations, for example recently on Ymer in the
harbour of Luleå. These installer- and construction companies buy Isolamin AB’s products. Occasionally Isolamin AB is inquired to make installation work. But since they are not, installers they send this inquiry over to one of their customers. The customers get delighted. Recently one customer thought that Isolamin AB had been so helpful in giving his company information that he thought Isolamin AB should sell his products, furniture for ships. Two weeks ago they were in Norway, where this customer company is located, to discuss this cooperation. This is an example of how Isolamin AB is integrating customers by using their marketing organization which is broader than their customers. Mr. Sandberg states that the customers cannot be as worldwide as Isolamin AB, because they are only local installers.

Isolamin AB offers technical assistance in various ways as well as customer training. Recently they offered to send employees for x dollar a day to a customer in Iran who was about to start constructing. According to Mr. Sandberg they deliver personal service on every level.

Isolamin AB reward loyal customers by telling them that they appreciate their relationship this will be done at special occasions. Mr. Sandberg states “You can’t encourage in so many other ways, because this would be considered as bribing”. "Lowering our prices isn’t possible either, because we have to stay commercial and we have our limits”. They meet their customers sometimes when visiting international trade fairs. The employees of Isolamin AB are there as visitors as well as their customers. One of the evenings when not being so busy, they take the chance to invite a big customer of theirs to entertainment of customers. That is one way of encouraging loyal customers.
5 Data analysis

This chapter will analyze the collected data presented in chapter four. A within-case analysis for the case is made and the gathered data is compared to previous research discussed in the conceptual framework.

This analysis relies on theoretical propositions and the analytical strategy chosen is pattern matching as proposed by Yin (1994). Pattern matching signifies that the empirical data is compared to previous research presented in the conceptual framework (ibid). In this within case analysis the objectives are to discover similarities or differences between the collected data and previous research.

5.1 Composition of teams

In the section below collected material will be compared with theories connected to research question one in the conceptual framework.

Type of team

In accordance with Conti and Kleiner (1997) a self managed team is a team where the members work with each other on a day-to-day basis. They set their own goals and they hold great responsibility for their own success. This statement corresponds with the team at Isolamin AB to some extent. The team members have frequently contact even though they are situated on different places. The goals are set up together with the management, but they have authority to make changes as long as it corresponds with the goals. The teamwork will continue for two years. The team members at Isolamin AB have other work assignment a part from the product development in cooperation with Pharmadule Emtunga AB.

Type of selection

Offerman and Gowing (1993) identify several reasons why a systematic selection of team members should increase effectiveness in the team, and he also describes a selection method called the competency-based interview. Within Isolamin AB we could not identify any systematic selection systems at all, thus deviating from Offerman and Gowing’s findings. The team members are selected on behalf of their work assignment. The selection process can not be executed in a different way since Isolamin AB is such a small company. The team is composed by employees from Pharmadule Emtunga AB and Isolamin AB. It is built up by marketing personnel with commercial responsibilities and technical personnel from the department of product development.

Team roles

According to Belbin (1993) there are a number of behaviors that is needed to make an effective contribution to the team performance. These behaviors are grouped into a set of number of related clusters to which the term “team role” is applied. He identifies nine team roles which together will form a well balanced team. The management is aware of problems that can occur when mixing several personalities in a team, but due to Isolamin AB’s limited selection there is no possibility to pay attention to this during the selection phase. He experiences that one have to be conscious about the fact that people who are great specialists within product development and technique unfortunately sometimes not
Data analysis

possess the social competence needed. These personality traits are placed a bit apart. His role as a leader is to certify that the members put an extra effort in opening themselves and not withhold information.

Robbins (2001) claims that when it comes to the abilities of members, a team requires three different types of skills. The team needs people with technical knowledge, problem-solving abilities and decision-making skills. All three types of skills need to be represented as the right mix is crucial for the team’s outcome. (ibid) Furthermore, Robbins claims that the most effective teams constitutes of five to twelve members. This in order to get the right diversity of views without getting ineffective. As mentioned, there is no special selection process at Isolamin AB. This means that team roles and personality traits have not been taken into consideration. Instead Isolamin AB pays attention to technical skills. It is important that the most competent personnel work in this team since Isolamin AB stands for the technical knowledge and product development part while Pharmadule Emtunga stands for the assembly part. After all, this is in accordance with Robbins since he suggests technical skills to be one of the skills needed to increase the team’s outcome. Regarding the number of team members, this special team corresponds well with theory. There are a total number of seven members, Isolamin AB have three representatives and Pharmadule Emtunga have four representatives.

**Selling team roles**
The four selling team roles conceptualized by Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey (1995) is a model of how team members should identify their roles and how they should interact with each other. Isolamin AB and their largest customer Pharmadule Emtunga AB have set up a team with members from both companies. Every team member and team role has the same authority and responsibility. In this team everyone is a seller, even the members from the department of product development. The respondent constantly reminds them that they should listen very carefully to the customer. When there is no real leader in the team, Isolamin AB consider their manager of the product development department to be their first man. He has the whole responsibility for Isolamin AB’s contributions to the team. The first man is the manager of the product development department and has therefore suitable experience for the role as a leader.

**5.2 Sustaining the function of the teamwork**
In the following section empirical findings will be compared to the theory of Adebanjo and Kehoe, authors connected to research question two in the conceptual framework.

**Change agents for teamwork**
According to Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001) there are five change agents represented in companies that has developed teamwork in a successful way. These change agents are education, training, facilitation, encouragement, recognition and reward. The activities listed within every change agent are suggestions and companies are not expected to adopt them all, but using as many as possible is a recommendation, because the difference between success and failure is the amount of emphasis attached to the activities. A comparison between Adebanjo and Kehoe’s change agents and the situation at Isolamin AB is illustrated in the subsequent table.
### Table 5.1 Change agents for teamwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change agents for teamwork</th>
<th>Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001)</th>
<th>Isolamin AB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Departmental briefings</td>
<td>Information meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company newsletters</td>
<td>Advantages on both individual as well as company level have been discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasise advantages of teamwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team membership open for all</td>
<td>Team membership not open for everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Problem-solving techniques</td>
<td>Have not been practised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on team target setting</td>
<td>Clear objective of teamwork. Evaluations made regularly with team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Techniques for forming successful Teams</td>
<td>One occasion, when starting up the teamwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td>Separate training program</td>
<td>Does not exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All teams should have facilitators (may be from inside or outside the organisation)</td>
<td>Internal management facilitate, by asking questions and giving regular feed-back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>Time off for team-related assignments and allowances paid when relevant.</td>
<td>No time off, teamwork is managed in their regular work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team membership left open for volunteers.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team recommendations are given adequate consideration</td>
<td>Encouraged to present their findings to the management. Management gives adequate support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teams are given the authority to make changes.</td>
<td>Yes, but only as long as they are heading for the target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information &amp; expertise should be assigned as required</td>
<td>Yes, expertise can be called for when necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measures to benchmark team-performance</td>
<td>No, theoretical method used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition and reward</td>
<td>Present findings to management</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teams receive company rewards.</td>
<td>The team receive recognition frequently by means of spoken words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters of merit to teamwork participants</td>
<td>The manager of the product development dept. has once received an economic reward on top of his monthly salary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation in teamwork notified during annual personal appraisal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team success communicated throughout the organization by company news letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ construction

The activities listed within the first change agent *education* correspond partly to Isolamin AB. All employees at Isolamin AB have been informed through information meetings on the advantages of the teamwork, which has been set up with Pharmadule Emtunga AB. The main difference with theory is that team membership is not open for all. Team
membership is only devoted for those employees at the development department which possess the technical skills required.

Regarding the second change agent training, there also exist differences with theory. According to Adebanjo team training must include the teaching of problem-solving techniques, besides the focus on team target setting and techniques for forming successful teams. At Isolamin AB the teaching of problem solving techniques does not exist. The explanation given for not introducing problem solving techniques are the fact that being a supplier Isolamin AB has to give the customer right if there is some sort of disagreement. Another explanation given was that the mutual goal which has been set up, reduces the risk for conflicts between the companies in this teamwork. On the other hand and corresponding well with theory is the existence of a clear focus on objectives. Regular follow ups are also being made on behalf of both the customer as well as supplier part of the team. Regarding techniques for forming successful teams Isolamin AB has practiced teambuilding at one occasion. In theory there is more focus on training techniques for forming successful teams. The explanation given here is that it is the supplier that normally finances this type of training not the customer part. Isolamin AB does not use any special working method regarding the teamwork. They deal with the customer in a conventional way with all the elementary skills that a seller should have. Another clarifying statement made is that in this team, partly made up of Isolamin AB, everyone is a seller so even the department of product development. Management also constantly tries to remind the team members that they should listen very carefully to the customer.

The third change agent facilitation, corresponds partly to theory. A separate training program for the team does not exist. On the other hand the team receives regular support by the internal management. Regarding the fourth change agent encouragement there also exist differences when comparing Isolamin AB to theory. Teamwork at Isolamin AB has to be managed in the regular work, there is no time off given for team-related assignments. As stated earlier team membership is not left open for volunteers. The team is frequently encouraged by management to present their findings. The team also has the authority to carry out changes as long as they are heading for the target. If information and expertise from outside is required this can be called for when necessary. Team performance is evaluated through regular reports from Isolamin AB’s first man to the managerial body, which then control that the goals and strategies are followed. The last change agent recognition and reward does correspond to theory even though everything stated is not adopted. The work is presented and followed up regularly to management. The team is rewarded mainly by spoken words. One exception has been made for the product development manager who has received an economic contribution on top of his ordinary salary.

Another interesting contribution from Isolamin AB is the reflection over the collectivism of teamwork versus a more individualistic approach. Depending on the specific situation a decision has to be made whether to give priority to the collectiveness of teamwork instead of an individualistic focus. Isolamin AB does not oppose the former against the latter, it is the situation itself that decides which approach to use.
5.3 Customer focus
Here we will present our collected material on Isolamin AB and compare our findings with theory connected with research question three in the conceptual framework.

Customer relationship scale
According to the relationship scale created by Nigel (1995) different positions on the scale are associated with different types of customer relationships. The scale is used when discussing with employees, distributors or even customers in order to figure out where the company stands right now and where it would like to be.

![Customer relationship scale diagram]

As shown in the figure above, Isolamin AB defines their relationship with their customer Pharmadule Emtunga AB as partners, this foremost since the product, they are developing together, demands such a close cooperation. Isolamin AB believes that they treat their customer as a long-term partner. Management has been told by the customer that Isolamin AB treat them well concerning trustworthiness, but when it comes to service there is still improvements which could be done. It is clearly stated to the employees that they should treat the customer as an important partner, although the employees still have not adopted this philosophy completely. The list with important items when implementing customer focus presented by Nigel corresponds well with Isolamin AB. Isolamin AB has the vision that all employees should know who the customers are, they know what matters to their customer and they meet their customer and work with them. In this special case, the teamwork provides them with natural feedback from the customer, how they perceive the product and how they want Isolamin AB to use it. Pharmadule Emtunga understands how Isolamin AB thinks and works with their product development. Isolamin AB also handles customer complaints immediately, and they reward loyal customers.
5.4 Introducing customer focus in teamwork
In the following section empirical findings will be compared to the theory of Adebanjo and Kehoe, authors connected to research question four in the conceptual framework.

Change agents for customer focus
According to Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001) the differences between the successful and unsuccessful companies regarding customer focus were the possession of a comprehensive and highly structured approach to using customer-related data and the ability to make employees “work for the customer”. There are five change agents for customer focus, communication, employee focus, measures, relationship building and reward. The activities listed within every change agent are suggestions and companies are not expected to adopt them all, indeed, some may be irrelevant to some organisations, but using as many as possible is a recommendation, because the difference between success and failure is the amount of emphasis attached to the activities. A comparison between Adebanjo and Kehoe’s change agents and the situation at Isolamin AB is illustrated in the subsequent table.

Table 5.2 Change agents for customer focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change agents for customer focus</th>
<th>Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001)</th>
<th>Isolamin AB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>To ensure proper communication visits maybe exchanged with customers</td>
<td>Regular communication since customer part of the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joint design of products</td>
<td>Yes, the existing teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees trained in effective communication with customers</td>
<td>Yes, trained in groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company constantly review processes and structures for ways of improving internal communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structured approach for communication of customer complaints and capturing of customer needs</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee focus</td>
<td>Internal customer concept</td>
<td>By setting up a team with the customer. Broad contact with the customer. All levels should develop social relations with the customer, not just the seller. All of them have the mission to listen and give feedback so necessary adjustments can be made if the customer is not satisfied. Isolamin AB and sister companies assist each other if they overhear that a customer is not satisfied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct contact between all employees and the company’s customers</td>
<td>ISAK project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employees given detailed information on who the customers are and the uses of the products.</td>
<td>No, but their goal is to be able to send every employee to a customer, during one financial year. So far not been possible financially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regular updates about new customers. The whole organizational chain is being informed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Measured 2003 on quality, safety of delivery and service. Next one will be comparing data as better or worse than their competitors. Quality system requires that reclamations by customers are followed up as well as complaints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer complaints</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product delivery</td>
<td>Very low rate of product return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product return</td>
<td>Does not measure at Isolamin AB. This is followed up regularly since deliver against certain rules and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer requirements</td>
<td>Activity charts on every salesperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Difficult to carry out due to low resemblance between suppliers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benchmarking of operational performance</td>
<td>Is not measured. Very straight with sellers that they should respond within minutes rather than hours on for ex mail received from customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Response time to customer queries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship building</td>
<td>Building a customer data base</td>
<td>Isolamin AB utilizes a customer support system called Cesar. In this system all the customers and activities are being registered and accessible for other employees than the seller in charge of the customer. Makes customer visits frequently in order to develop customer relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adopting a structured approach to customer visits</td>
<td>Considered to be very important. Practicing “constant communication” and contacts customers even if there is no reason for calling, this enables them to overhear if something is going wrong. Broad contact with the customer. All levels should develop social relations with the customer, not just the seller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social contact</td>
<td>Yes, information is shared with the customers. Receives in return customer loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing of business information</td>
<td>Yes, in various ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical assistance for smaller or less developed customers</td>
<td>Yes. Also delivery of personal service on every level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer training</td>
<td>Reward loyal customers by telling them that they appreciate their relationship. Can also invite a loyal customer to entertainment, when visiting the same international trade fair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>Loyal customers may be rewarded with Company awards, sales discounts or simply letters of recognition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ construction

The activities listed within the first change agent communication correspond fairly well between Isolamin AB and theory. Through the established teamwork a regular and close communication is taking place. The customer is carefully evaluating the cooperation by following the regular written protocols. There exists a joint design of products since the task of this teamwork is to develop the wall panels of Isolamin AB to be suitable for the
highest class of hygiene possible. A great deal of contemporary problems in the industry can be taken care of and properly solved by this teamwork. There exist a structured approach for communication of customer complaints and the capture of customer needs. Regarding the teamwork there has not been any complaints so far. The explanation given here is that they work so tightly and make adjustments regularly.

The second change agent, employee focus, also corresponds partly to activities that have been made at Isolamin AB. Regarding the internal customer concept, Isolamin AB conducted a large project in the year of 2003 which involved all employees both blue and white collars. The purpose of the project was to discuss how to place the customer in focus. The discussions took place in working groups which have presented a package of measures. All work groups have received feedback, and after the follow up work has been completed, there will be a follow up meeting later this spring. For the time being direct contact does not exist between all employees of Isolamin AB and the company’s customers. There is continuous information about new customers to the whole organizational chain.

The third change agent, measures, corresponds fairly well between Isolamin AB and theory. Measurements of customer satisfaction have been made previously on quality, safety of delivery and service. The next customer enquiry will focus on comparing performance of Isolamin AB as better or worse than the competitors. Regarding product return Isolamin AB hardly receive anything in return. This is too low according to Mr. Sandberg. It is quite possible that they overdo to avoid damages when transporting goods, the packaging may be too expensive. Benchmarking of operational performance is not possible to carry out irrespective of what it is because there is very low resemblance between the suppliers. This has to do with the degree of outsourcing. There is no measurement of response time to customer requirement either but Isolamin AB has a clear policy; to respond quickly.

Regarding the fourth change agent, relationship building, Isolamin AB corresponds to theory in every aspect. There seems to be a well developed relationship building with constant communication and broad contacts. The sharing of information is making many customers that are installers delighted, for example when Isolamin AB, who is not an installer, hand information over to them about job enquiries. Isolamin AB is integrating customers by using their marketing organisation which is broader than their customers. Isolamin AB is worldwide, the customers are only local installers. What Isolamin AB receives in return according to Mr. Sandberg is customer loyalty. Technical assistance, customer training and delivery of personal service are also provided by Isolamin AB. Personal service though, as previously mentioned, is the Achilles heel of Isolamin AB.

The fifth change agent, reward, does not correspond to the activities that are being listed in theory, customers are rewarded by words or by actions taken such as inviting a loyal customer to entertainment if they for example coincide at the same international trade fair. Mr. Sandberg states ”you can not encourage in so many other ways because this would be considered as bribing, lowering our prices is not possible either, because we have to stay commercial and we have our limits”.

Data analysis
6 Conclusions and implications

In the previous chapter an analysis was conducted where the collected data was compared to the theories in the conceptual framework that was presented in chapter two. This chapter will first present the main findings and conclusions based on research conducted in this thesis. The purpose of these conclusions is to answer the four research questions. Each of the research questions will be answered in separate sections. Finally implications for management, theory and future research are presented.

6.1 How can the composition of a team in a company be described?

We believe that we have a fairly good picture of the composition of the “supplier part” of the team but we do not have a complete picture of the large team since we have not made research on the roles of the customer part, their personality traits nor their working tasks in the team.

Type of team

Our interpretation of teamwork was in the beginning when writing this thesis that of a constellation set up within a company. Our empirical findings have demonstrated the constellation of a team which we have not found the corresponding description of in theory. In theory though, the formation of team linking firms to customer have been mentioned as a result of strategic change programmes. We believe that the teamwork set up between the investigated company and one of its largest customers exemplifies this kind of a team. In some parts we can conclude that there exist similarities with a self-managed team because the members work independently over a relatively long period of time, towards a single collective goal. On the other hand there exist differences with a self-managed team. The team members have frequent contact with each other, but they work at different locations. The team members from the investigated company also have other work assignments simultaneously. Another interesting finding is that the team does not have a team leader, instead they have a first man. They also have a rotating secretary ship. The reason behind not having a team leader as well as having a rotating secretary ship is to maintain the same level of equality between the supplier- and customer part.

Type of selection

The selection process for becoming a team member has not been systematic. When selecting team members the company, due to its small size and scarcity of resources, is obliged to choose employees from the product development department that possess the appropriate technological skills, necessary for accomplishing the mutual goal set up for the team. This rules the selection process.

We find it quite realistic that SME:s due to a smaller number of employees practice an unsystematic rather than systematic selection process. Larger companies with greater resources can apply a more sophisticated and systematic selection process in order to achieve the right mix of personality traits.

Team roles

Management is aware of the fact that important personality traits such as extraversion are missing in the supplier part of the team due to the unsystematic selection process that
have taken place and try to compensate for those by communicating the importance of being more open towards the customer part of the team.

The type of team work which we have made our research on is loosely structured. The companies also seem to pay more attention to team effectiveness than team composition. Rather than assign roles, it seems to be more empowering to teach all team members how to manage teamwork effectively. They focus on achieving their mutual goal and on behalf of the supplier part – be customer focused. We have difficulties in finding Belbin’s team roles appropriate in this kind of teamwork.

The large team is composed of three members for Isolamin and four team members from Pharmadule Emtunga AB, a total number of seven, which coincide with the number between five and twelve stated as an ideal team number in theory.

**Selling team roles**

Besides possessing technological skills the team members belonging to the investigated company are all working as sellers. The members from Isolamin have the same responsibility and authority for every person and every role apart from their first man who is in charge of reporting regularly to management, but also for the contribution from Isolamin to the team. Expert competence can be required from outside if a complicated issue occur which can not be solved within the team.

According to our opinion the selling roles in the investigated company are bleeding into each other and there is a high level of flexibility between team members of the supplier part. Our interpretation is also that there is no complete correlation between the roles of the selling team as stated in theory and the supplier part of the team.

**Conclusions:**

- The team is composed of members from two companies. It is a new type of team; however the main features correspond to a self managed team.

- This new type of team emphasises on equality between the two companies.

- There has not been a systematic selection process of team members on behalf of the supplier.

- Work task skills such as technological competences has been given priority to rather than team roles and personality traits when the supplier has made their selection for the team.
6.2 How does a company sustain the function of the teamwork?
As already mentioned, this is a new constellation of team. In order to sustain the function of teamwork, we have found that there are differences compared to the theory stated by Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001).

**Education**
Our research shows that the employees at Isolamin AB are educated through informational meetings on the advantages of teamwork, the advantages both on an individual level as well as company level are highlighted. The team members of the actual team will beside this general information also receive separate information.

**Training**
Our empirical findings show that there has not been any specific training of team members in for example problem solving techniques. Another interesting discrepancy regarding the aspect of training is on team building activities. Our research demonstrate that the practice of team building activities are up to the supplier to provide for, and this training has been performed only in the initial phase when the team work has been set up. It has not been practiced afterwards. On the other hand, the investigated company has a strong focus on team target setting which according to our opinion seems to be the glue that keeps the teamwork together. The teamwork has a clear objective and evaluations are being made regularly.

**Facilitation**
The internal management support the team when needed. This is done buy asking question, giving feedback and constantly showing interest in the teamwork.

**Encouragement**
There is a strong support by management. The team is independent up to a certain degree; changes can be made as long as there is no deviation from the final target. Bench marking of team performance does not exist as a theoretical method; instead there is a regular evaluation of accomplishments made in written protocols.

**Recognition and reward**
Team work is recognized and rewarded frequently by words, but there also exist individual economic rewarding.

**Conclusion:**
Our empirical findings do not correspond to theory regarding training. There is not sufficient training of team members when compared to theory. There is no training at all regarding problem solving techniques. We are a bit puzzled over why there is so little need for team training. On the other hand there is a clear and strong focus on team target setting and fulfillment of goals, but this according to our opinion can not fully compensate for the lack of team training. Our reflection is that fulfillment of customer needs seems to be placed in the foreground and prioritized in this kind of teamwork. Arguments concerning the mutual project are therefore settled by always giving the customer right. The teamwork receives strong support by management when it comes to encouragement but also regarding recognition and reward. According to our opinion rewards that are directed towards the team in general is more preferable than individual
economic rewarding. The latter can also according to theory have a negative effect and jeopardize the harmony of the teamwork. This individual rewarding though coincide with the management’s opinion on this teamwork: depending on the specific situation a decision has to be made whether to give priority to teamwork instead of an individualistic focus.

- There is a lack of team training.
- Strong focus on team target setting.
- Management plays an immense role when it comes to encouragement, recognition and reward.

6.3 How is customer focus defined by a company?
We believe that we have a fairly accurate picture of how customer focus is defined by Isolamin AB.

The relationship scale
Customer focus is defined by the investigated company as knowing who the customers are, what matters to them and meeting customer needs. The manager of the investigated company also expressed that “after all they are the ones who pays our salaries”. Costumer focus is not complete, this company has problem regarding their performance on customer service. Still our opinion is that the teamwork set up with the investigated company and their customer Pharmadule Em tunga AB, is a good example of how the company strive to deliver value for the customer. Furthermore, management of the researched company constantly reminds the employees to treat the customer as an important partner and remind the employees of having the customer in focus. The fact that Isolamin AB considers Pharmadule Em tunga AB to be their long term partner demonstrates a high level of customer focus. We believe that this kind of teamwork between two companies exemplifies customer focus when it is managed in a favourable way.

Conclusions:
- Defined as knowing who the customers are, what matters to them as well as meeting their needs. Also defined as “the customers has to be placed in focus since they are the ones who pay our salaries”.
- The customer is considered to be a long term partner.
6.4 How is the objective of customer focus introduced in a company’s teamwork?
The investigated company match the theory of Adebanjo and Kehoe (2001) in almost every aspect. Therefore, according to our opinion, this is a good example of how customer focus can be introduced in a company’s teamwork.

Communication
By setting up teamwork for joint design of products, customer focus is optimized as far as communication is concerned. Still in order to delight the customer, the team has to be well performing, there also has to be a structured approach according to theory for meeting customer complaints, as well as the capturing of customer needs. In the investigated company the rate of customer complaint is none existent since disagreements and misunderstanding are straightened out within the teamwork.

Employee focus
The company has provided all employees not solely the team members with the action plan of ISAK. Discussions concerning customer focus have taken place among the employees in smaller groups and this work will be followed up by management. There are also regular updates to the whole organizational chain, not just the team members, on new customers and their specific needs. Direct contact between all employees is a stated goal but has not been possible to achieve due to limited financial resources and high expenses for long distance travelling.

Measures
Our research matches theory in many respects regarding measures in use when it comes to customer focus. On the activities where the company has chosen not to use measures, for example benchmarking of operational performance. There has been a logical decision why it has been excluded. The next customer satisfaction inquiry will be comparing the performance of Isolamin AB to their competitors.

Relationship building
The company consider relationship building as being of high importance. Relationship building with customers takes place on every level in the company not solely on team level. There is a special focus on social contacts and the sharing of business information to customers.

Reward
Loyal customers are rewarded mainly by words, but there exist occasionally entertainment activities as well.

Conclusions:
- Customer focus is brought into the whole organization, every employee is aware of who the customers are and their needs. At the same time, customer focus is transmitted to the teamwork.
- In the teamwork itself with the joint design of products, customer focus is being optimized and managed on a very close and straightforward level.
6.5 Implications

Based on our conclusions we will continue by presenting a few implications for managers, theory and for future research.

6.5.1 Implications for managers

In the investigated company, when introducing teamwork, technical skills and team effectiveness have been prioritized before personality traits. Team members have been taught the importance of being open minded and customer focused. We recommend management to pay extra attention to the behaviour of team members and the team process, when the selection has been unsystematic. The same is recommended when teamwork has been set up for the first time between a supplier and a customer part, since this is a new and unfamiliar situation, compared to traditional teamwork.

We believe that team training is needed when starting up a team but also in order to maintain a high performance of the teamwork. In this kind of teamwork the supplier side provide for the team training, moreover, the training is very brief and lack vital parts such as problem solving techniques. We would like to see more emphasise put into team training and maybe this also could be divided up between both the supplier and the customer part since both have interest in that the teamwork functions smoothly and efficiently.

When introducing customer focus in teamwork we stress the importance of communicating who the customers are and what they need, through projects within the organization, but also by careful listening and dialoguing with the customer. Treating the customer as a long term partner is the ultimate goal. Effective measurements of performance as well as relationship building and rewarding of loyal customers are all important tools for becoming a successful company with a teamwork that are customer focus oriented.

6.5.2 Implications for theory

In this thesis we have explored, described and started to explain how customer focus is introduced in a company’s where teamwork has been set up with a long term partner. We have explored the composition of the supplier part of the team, sustention of teamwork, the definition of customer focus and how to bring customer focus in the teamwork. Then we described our findings and finally draw our conclusions on the matter. This thesis has contributed to theory by investigating the teamwork set up by two companies. The picture has proved to be more complex than that of a teamwork set up within just one company. We can sense a multidimensional relationship with only team members but also another level where suppliers and customers are acting, with in this team work. We believe that these different layers within the teamwork also affect the tools applied when starting up and sustaining the teamwork. We believe that teamwork set up between customers and suppliers require new skills of individuals and groups. For instance; development of trust, appropriate openness, honest communication and co-operation in settings where competitive and contractual issues traditionally have encouraged caution. With the findings of this study as a base, this area of research can be further tested.
6.5.3 Implications for further research

This study has given us an idea of the extensiveness of the area of teamwork but also customer focus. This is a vast and interesting field to make further research on. The following are some recommendations:

- Improved understanding of the relationships within and between teams in the industrial market.

- The role of the customer part and supplier part in a teamwork set up by two companies (cross-case analysis).

- The role of trust, honest communication and the role of the first man in a teamwork set up between two companies on the industrial market.

- The connection between team training and team performance.

- Teamwork and customer focus in the service-, or health sector.

- Teamwork and customer focus in a global setting.
List of references


www.isolamin.com

www.pharmadule-emtunga.se


Intervju guide

Intervju 18 April, 2004

Företagets namn:
Respondentens namn:
Respondentens befattning:

**Generella frågor om företaget**
- Hur ser företagsorganisationen ut?
- Var är huvudkontoret placerat? Filialer?
- Hur många anställda har Isolamin?
- Inom vilken industri är Isolamin verksam?
- Vad är Isolamins affärsidé?
- Vilken typ/typer av produkt och service tillhandahåller Isolamin?
- Vilken typ av kunder har Isolamin? (stora eller små, svenska eller utländska)

**Angående existerande management teorier:**
- Använder Ni er av Total Quality Management (TQM) på Isolamin? Om så är fallet, när introducerades det?
- Använder Ni er av Service Quality Management? Om så är fallet, när introducerades det?
- Använder Ni er av Customer Value management? Om så är fallet, när introducerades det?

**Teamwork – urval och sammansättning**
- Hur länge har teamwork tillämpats och var i organisationen förekommer detta?
- Hur ser sammansättningen av teamet ut?
- Hur många personer ingår i teamet?
- Beskriv hur teamet ser ut, arbetsroller?
- Hur väljs team medlemmarna ut? Hur går urvalsprocessen till? På vilka grunder?
- Finns det någon tanke bakom urvalsprocessen? Personligheter – komplettera varandra?
- Är ni nöjda med det sätt som urvalsprocess till team är upplagd? Kan det göras på något annat sätt? Om så är fallet – hur?
- Hur självständigt är teamet? Typ av team?
- Vilka är teamets arbetsuppgifter?
- Har teamwork tillfört något värde för organisationen? Synergieffekt av teamwork?

**Vidmakthållande av teamarbete**
- Hur har teamwork och arbetsformerna för team introducerats till de anställda?
- Har fördelar med teamwork lyfts fram för att belysa effekterna för den enskilde men också för företaget i dess helhet?
- Förordas team kollektivet framför individen?
- Hur hanteras konflikter i teamet?
- Har konfliktlöningsteknik eller dylik läts ut?
- Team target setting – hur sätts mål för teamet och hur utvärderas dessa mål?
- Hur kommuniceras målen?
- Vilka arbetsmetoder finns det för att uppnå bra teamarbete?
- Teambuildning – om detta erbjuds team medlemmarna – vad ingår och när har det erbjudits? Hur har det påverkat team performance på kort och lång sikt?
- Ytterligare hjälp, kan vara såväl inifrån organisationen (management) som utifrån kommande (konsulter) som underlättar teamarbetet. Hjälper till att fokusera mot mål och reducerar problem inom teamet?
- Uppmuntras och stärks teamarbetet på något sätt?
- Uppmuntran från överordnade?
- Rekommendationer som ges till organisationen av teamet – hur bemöts detta?
- Erhåller teamet erkännande eller belöning på något sätt?
- Om så är fallet – när? Varför? Hur/ på vilket sätt?
- Förekommer individuell belöning?
- Finns egen tid avsatt för teamuppgifter?
- Finns metod för att utvärdera teamarbetet?
- Har teamet befogheten att genomföra egna förändringar?
- Presenteras teamets arbete för högre chefer? Hur?
- Specifik träning av teamets ledare? Ex. Ledarskapsutbildning med inriktning mot teamarbete?

**Definition av kundfokus**
- Hur definierar Isolamin kundfokus?
- Vad har Isolamin för handlingsplan när det gäller att placera kunden i fokus?

**Introduction av kundfokus i team arbete**
- Hur kommunicerar teamet med sina kunder? Är ansvaret gentemot kund delat av alla i teamet?
- Finns det någon möjlighet för kunden att utvärdera samarbetet?
- Hur mottas kundens synpunkter vid klagomål? Vad gör man av klagomålen?
- Sker något samarbete mellan team och kund? Om så är fallet - när? Hur går detta samarbete till?
- Hur bemöter teamet kundens önskemål?
- Hur ser struktur och process ut i företaget för att tillgodose kundens behov?
- Hur tränas teamet att sätta kunden i fokus och förstå kundens behov?
- Vet alla i organisationsskedjan vem/vilka kunden är?
- Finns det någon direkt kontakt mellan teamet och kunden?

Utvärderas följande variabler? Om ja, hur?
- Kundens förnöjsamhet
- Kundens klagomål
- Företagets leveranser
- Försäljnings prestation
- Återlämnade varor
- Kundens behov/krav
- Benchmarking of operational performance
- Företagets prestation
- Tid det tar ett bemöta kundens behov/krav

- Har Isolamin någon kund-databas?
- Gör Isolamin kundbesök för att utveckla relationen men kunden?
- Sociala relationer med kunden? På vilket sätt? När?
- Delas information med kunden?
- Erbjuder Isolamin teknisk assistans till kunden?
- Customer training?
- Erbjuder Isolamin personlig service till kunden?
- Uppmärksammas lojala kunder utav företaget?
- Om så sker – När? Hur? På vilket sätt?

_Tack för att Du tog dig tid att besvara våra frågor!_
Kompletterande frågor  

9:e maj, 2004

- Är det första gången som teamwork används mellan Isolamin och en kund?
- Hur sker samarbetet rent praktiskt då ni befinner er på olika orter? Hur ofta träffas ni?

- När det gäller Isolamins 3 anställda som medverkar i teamet, arbetar de endast med den här arbetsuppgiften eller finns också andra åtaganden vid sidan om?

I intervjun nämnde du att ni inte har någon egentlig team ledare i teamet, men att produktutvecklings chefen är eran ”förste man”
- Vad skiljer en team ledares uppgifter från en förste mans uppgifter?
- Varför har ni valt en sådan lösning?
- Har denne förste man fått någon speciell träning/utbildning, eller har han någon tidigare liknande erfarenhet som gör honom extra lämplig?
- Har teamwork använts på någon annan plats i organisationen?

Var anser sig Isolamin ligga på ”Customer relationship scale”?

Tack för din medverkan!
Appendix B

Interview guide

Interview 18th of April, 2004

The name of the company:
The name of the respondent:
The respondent’s position:

General questions about the company
- Please explain the organizational chart of the company?
- Where is the head office located? Are there any branches?
- How many employees are there at Isolamin?
- In what industry is Isolamin active? Please describe the industry.
- What is the business mission of Isolamin?
- What type of products and services does Isolamin provide?
- Please explain the type of customers that Isolamin has?

Regarding existing management theories:
- Do you use Total Quality Management at Isolamin? If this is the case, when was it introduced?
- Do you use Service Quality Management at Isolamin? If this is the case, when was it introduced?
- Do you use Customer Value Management at Isolamin? If this is the case, when was it introduced?

Teamwork – the selection and composition
- For how long has teamwork been applied and where in the organization does it exist?
- Please explain the composition of the team?
- Please explain the different working tasks of the members in the team?
- How many people does the team consists of?
- Please explain how the team members are selected?
- Describe the selection process? On what circumstances are the team members selected?
- Is there a strategic thought behind the selection process?
- Regarding personalities, are they supposed to complement each other?
- Are you satisfied with the selection process of the team is organized? Can it be done in a different way? If this is the case, please explain how?
- How independent is the team? How would you categorize the type of the team?
- What are the working tasks of the team?
- Have the teamwork provided any surplus value for the organization? Do you see any synergy effects of the teamwork?
Appendix B

**Sustaining the function of teamwork**
- How has teamwork and the work process been introduced to the team and to the companies employees?
- How has the advantages of teamwork been brought up in order to highlight the effects for the individual and the entire company?
- Is the collectiveness of the team prioritized before the individual team member?
- How are conflicts managed in the team?
- Have the team members been trained in problem solving techniques or other techniques?
- Regarding team target setting, how are the objectives set up for the team and how are they evaluated?
- How are the stated objectives communicated?
- Have there been any training of techniques for forming a successful team?
- Teambuilding, if this has been offered to the team member, what does it conclude and when has it been offered? What has the result of team performance been in short- and long-term perspective?
- Has there been any internal (management) or external help (consultancy) in order to facilitate the teamwork, for example to help to keep the team goal in focus and ensure that the teamwork friction is reduced?
- Is the team encouraged in any way?
- Does encourage from managers exist?
- Is the team encouraged to present their findings to management? What is the response?
- Is the team recognized or rewarded in any way? If this is the case when/way/how/in what way?
- Does individual rewarding exist?
- Are the employees given time-off for team related assignments?
- Are there any methods for measuring team performance?
- Has the team been given the authority to make changes?
- Is the team outcome presented to management? In what way?
- Does there exist any specific training for the team leader? For example leadership training focusing on teamwork?

**Definition of customer focus**
- How is customer focus defined by Isolamin?
- What kind of strategy does Isolamin have in order to place the customer in focus?

**Introducing customer focus in teamwork**
- How does the team communicate with its customers? Does the whole team share the responsibility towards the customer?
- Is there a structured approach for customer complaints?
- How are customer complaints received by the company? How are customer complaints handled?
- Does there exist any cooperation between team and customers?
- How does the team capture customer needs?
- Please describe the structure and the process in the company in order to meet customer needs?
- How is the team trained in placing the customer in focus and understand customer needs?
- Does everyone in the organizational chain know who the customers are?
- Is there a direct contact between all employees and the company’s customers?

Regarding measurements are there any evaluation of:
- Customer satisfaction
- Customer complaints
- Delivery performance
- Sales performance
- Product return
- Customer requirement
- Benchmarking of operational performance
- Business performance
- Response time to customer requirements

- Does Isolamin have a customer database?
- Are customer visits performed in order to develop customer relationship?
- Are there any social contact taken with the customer? How/ when?
- Are business information shared with the customer?
- Does the Isolamin provide technical assistance to the customer?
- Does Isolamin provide customer training?
- Does Isolamin provide personal service to the customer?
- Are loyal customers recognized by Isolamin? If this is the case, when does it occur? Under what circumstances?

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions!
Additional questions       9th of May, 2004

- Is this the first time that teamwork is set up between Isolamin and a customer?
- How is teamwork organized since you are located in different parts of Sweden? How often do you meet each other?

Regarding the three team members from Isolamin, are they exclusively working with the mutual project set up with Pharmadule Emtunga or do they have other working tasks at the same time?

When we had our first interview it was mentioned that the team does not have a clearly defined team leader in stead the manager of the product development department has been appointed to the role as “Isolamin’s first man”.
- What are the differences in working tasks between a team leader and the “first man”?
- What is the reason behind the solution to have a “first man”?
- Has your first man received any special training, or does he possess any previous experiences which make him extra suitable?
- Have teamwork been performed in any other part of the organization?

- Where do you consider yourself to be positioned on the customer relationship scale?

  Thank you for your cooperation!