Key Account Management

- A study of the success factors in the implementation process

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Abstract

There is a numerous of literature on Key Account Management but there is a lack of empirical research supporting the literature, especially regarding the implementation process. This study investigates five companies according to how they manage their customer relationships with main focus on their key customers. The study is based on existing KAM literature and also involves additional factors; change management and global talent management. The purpose of the study is to investigate how KAM can be more successfully implemented in Swedish companies in IT and management industry.

The study was conducted with a qualitative approach and the interviews were held with Top management at five Swedish IT and management companies in Växjö. The findings show new insights into KAM implementation; Change management and Global talent management were shown to have a direct effect on the success of an implementation, which the existing theory of KAM is not emphasizing. The result of the study is visualized in a model at the end of the study.

Keywords: Key account management implementation, Change management, Communication, Culture, Global talent management
Acknowledgements

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Louise Kvist Jeanine Osbeck
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Chapter 1

Introduction
Chapter 1

1. Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion regarding the emergent way in handling business-to-business customers, referred to as Key accounts. The purpose of this study is presented along with delimitations and the chapter concludes with an overview of the outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background

As a result of globalization, developed technology and the Internet, new strategies regarding efficient handling of business-to-business customers have arisen (Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012). Key Account Management (KAM) is one of today’s most emergent strategies implemented in companies (Gounaris and Tzempelikos, 2012). KAM takes the traditional sales force strategies to a higher degree by emphasizing the most important customers of the firm in order to create a mutual understanding and align as partners (Cheverton, 2012). KAM can strengthen the relationship with each client of the firm by creating an individual, tailored relationship with each company (Wengler et al., 2006). Moreover, strong relationships with clients can stabilize the firm’s share on the market and facilitate the growth of the business (Ibid). Key account management is therefore widely used in business relationships (Nätti and Palo, 2012) but is less successful, yet damaging, if the implementation of KAM is not performed well (Ibid).

Any business process requires good communication as well as knowledge about the people who is a part of the process (Zheng et al., 2010). National and organizational culture is to a great extent influencing the way work is carried out in a company (Cheverton, 2012), and especially present during changes in the business (Zheng et al., 2010), hence the importance of individual company knowledge when performing a business transformation. Moreover, communication and culture are two factors influencing an implementation process (Cheverton, 2012).

There is a lack of empirical research regarding KAM implementation, and due to known influential business process factors, additional research is of importance for today’s companies in order to ensure successful implementation of KAM. This study focuses on the implementation of a key account management strategy, where traditional business accounts
are transformed into key accounts. Past research on KAM implementation is together with theory of communication and national and organizational culture investigated in the KAM implementation.

1.2 Problem discussion

Despite the fact that there is much literature about KAM, there is a lack of empirical studies supporting the existing theories (Gounaris and Tzempelikos, 2012). Especially in the field of KAM implementation process (Nätti and Palo, 2012), there is a lack of both existing theories and empirical studies, which indicates a need for further investigation (Davies and Ryals, 2009), (Gounaris and Tzempelikos, 2012; Nätti and Palo, 2012; Davies and Ryals, 2009; Wengler et al., 2006).

The entire relationship with the business’ most important customers could be damaged if the implementation of Key account management is not well performed (Gounaris and Tzempelikos, 2012), and since Key account management is a long-term strategy, the damage from a bad implementation could first appear years ahead (Cheverton, 2012). Additionally, without a well-executed and detailed implementation, it is difficult to evaluate and measure the results from an implementation (Nätti and Palo, 2012), as well as noticing the financial and/or relational gains or losses from it (Gounaris and Tzempelikos, 2012). Yet, many firms today fail to manage KAM (Homburg et al., 2002). The organizational change that Key Account Management requires needs to be handled with the right skills at the right place and at the right time (McDeavitt et al., 2012) in order to manage the implementation. This is referred to as Global Talent Management and has been highlighted as vital for successful and efficient business transformations (Stahl et al., 2012). At the same time, the communication during the process of change is vital for the end result as well as for future work (McDeavitt et al., 2012). The communication process is influenced by national cultures (Eden, 2009), which is similar values, behaviours and norms among people belonging to the same national culture (Linke and Zerfass, 2011). In turn, national culture is influencing the organizational culture (Ephraim et al., 2012), making each company different from another and thereby, affecting the daily work (Zheng et al., 2010). Hence, the implementation of Key account management is therefore different between countries as well as among companies. This creates a need for individual customer knowledge for each KAM strategy, starting with the implementation (Sehoon and McLean, 2012). Past researches have not included Change
management or Global talent management in their studies and no research has been conducted in Sweden. Moreover, there is a lack of empirical investigations among Swedish companies that have implemented KAM. IT- and Management companies is the industry were the largest user of KAM exist (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2012) and it is assumed to be an increase among firms who implement KAM (Cheverton, 2012) Hence, there is a need for new information about KAM implementation in Swedish IT- and Management companies.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose is to investigate how Key Account Management can be more successfully implemented in Swedish organizations, by examine which factors of Key Account Management, Global Talent Management and Change management have a direct and indirect effect on the implementation process.

1.4 Delimitation

This study is limited to focus on how Key Account Management can be implemented in a more successful way in Swedish organizations, due to the fact that the IT- and Management industry is the largest user of KAM. All business related processes involves complexity in form of systems and theories, this research is only focusing on factors related to the implementation process. Further on, this study does not intend to make generalizations in the literature about implementation of Key Account Management due to the nature of this research and the chosen approaches. However, this research intend to show indications and present potential needs for further research in the theories of Key Account Management.

In this paper, the process of moving from a former system of managing customers into a system of Key Account Management is referred to as a process of implementation. A few articles and books have referred it to as a transition, which has the same meaning.

Finally, since it is found to be a managerial perspective in previous research of Key Account Management, this study will adopt that perspective.
1.5 Outline of Thesis

This study is divided into eight chapters, with the following structure:

Chapter 1 discusses the emergent way to handle key customers and present a purpose based on the research gap in the area of Key Account Management implementation. The chapter is concluded with the research’s delimitations.

Chapter 2 provide a literature review presenting the existing literature concerned with Key Account Management, Global Talent Management and Change Management. The chapter provide an explanation of the research gap and need for further research.

Chapter 3 proposes a research model along with research questions, which this study is based upon.

Chapter 4 presents and give justifications for the chosen research strategies and approaches.

Chapter 5 displays the gathered empirical data and present each case in accordance to the proposed research model from Chapter 3.

Chapter 6 provide the analysis of the empirical data collected and gathered in the previous chapter. A discussion is held based on the findings in relation to previous literature in the area.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of this study by answering the research questions stated in the third chapter. Further, theoretical and managerial implications along with limitations of the study, together with suggestions for further research, are discussed in this chapter.
Chapter 2

Literature Review
Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of existing literature on Key Account Management and a theoretical description of the additional factors Global Talent Management and Change Management, that will be analysed in the KAM implementation study. The implementation of Key Account Management can be seen as a rather tremendous change for an organization. Therefore it is of interest to gain further knowledge about change and the importance of managing change in a successful way. Managing a change such as implementing KAM, further involves people and the expertise of employees. Therefore, it is of interest to see if having the right people and/or the right knowledge are of importance when managing a change.

Previous research in the areas is together with definitions provided in a thematic structure in order to examine the themes concerning implementation of KAM in organizations. Finally, the chapter ends with the identification of gaps in the research areas.

2.1 KAM

An organization can identify very important customers, known as Key accounts (KA) (Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012), and by adapting certain processes targeting an organization’s most important customers the organization can create value, known as Key Account Management (KAM) (Wengler et al., 2006). The concept of KAM is relatively new and no single definition has been stated (Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012). Implementing KAM is both a long-lasting and complex process, and even though the concept is widely used in many industries, there are limited empirical studies in the area confirming the theory stated (Nätti and Palo, 2012). KAM targets four tasks, which are (1) creating trust with the customer, (2) emphasizing relationship management, (3) adapting customer focused and customer oriented strategies and (4) establishing customer satisfaction (Wengler et al., 2006). A deeper organizational change is needed when working with KAM and how organizational culture, strategy and structure need to be changed have to be considered since the KAM system should be integrated within the whole organization (Nätti and Palo, 2012). A KAM organization has compared to regular organizations turned the way of working upside down, the focus and most of the resources are put at the companies frontline, not the top management (Cheverton, 2012) Similarities are found between KAM and a supplier’s relationship marketing program since they focus on a single customer (Wengler et al., 2006).
KAM consist of additional corporate activities as well as KA managers who are in direct importance for the customers, with dedicated resources (Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012). Therefore, it is essential that the right people with the right knowledge are selected when developing a KAM organization (Nätti and Palo, 2012). KA managers have two basic functions in their mission to create value for the customer; (1) customer-related processes need to be coordinated internally in the organization, and (2) improve the fit between customer needs and the value offered by the organization (Nätti and Palo, 2012).

The process of moving from a former system of managing customers into a system of KAM when managing the most important customers is referred to as both a transitioning (Davies and Ryals, 2009) and an implementation process (Cheverton, 2012). The process of implementing a KAM system involves several interrelated activities within an organization (Nätti and Palo, 2012) and consists of several steps. Hence, the numbers of steps differs from literature to literature (Davies and Ryals, 2009).

2.1.1 KAM implementation

KAM is a long-term change management process concerning the whole organization (Davies and Ryals, 2009), from top management through service providers and product development (Cheverton, 2012). When and how KAM should be implemented are difficult decisions for managers as well as researchers (Wengler et al., 2006). Even though the use of KAM has increased, there are scarce research in the process of KAM implementation and the transition from traditional sales into KAM system (Davies and Ryals, 2009). Implementation of KAM have consisted of rather limited information (Wengler et al., 2006) and limited research on how to be implemented (Davies and Ryals, 2009). The implementation of KAM need to be devoted more attention, since the process of implementation is a critical process that evaluates the future functionality of the system (Nätti and Palo, 2012). Theoretical ideas have been formulated about the implementation process (Wengler et al., 2006), however few have been empirically studied (Nätti and Palo, 2012). It has before been assumed that organizations have the ability to evaluate the process of implementation in a correct way (Wengler et al., 2006). Although the implementation of KAM has to be emphasized and paid further attention in order to manage a successful implementation (Nätti and Palo, 2012), the implementation appears to take place without appropriate planning and evaluation (Davies and Ryals, 2009). Factors to gain a successful implementation involve actions to find and
attract the right team and management, evaluate the organization’s customers to identify KA, establish procedures and policies as well as accept and fulfil changes needed (Cheverton, 2012).

Factors for a successful implementation of KAM, according to Cheverton (2012), have together with findings from previous literature in the area (McDeavitt et al., 2012; Davies and Ryals 2009; Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012; Workman et al., 2003; Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; Brady, 2004; Homburg et al., 2002; McDonald, 2000; Ryal and Rodgers, 2007; Guenzi and Pardo, 2007; Shetcliff, 2003; Sehoon and McLean, 2012) been summarized into a model of three areas (see Table 1). The factors have been sorted into three areas, according to which area the factors relates to.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main area for factors</th>
<th>Description of factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational</strong></td>
<td>Make and manage changes within the whole organization (McDeavitt et al., 2012; Cheverton, 2012), in particular internal resources (Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have knowledge about KAM (Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012; Workman et al., 2003) and continuously strive for further knowledge (Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have to establish and adopt policies and procedures for managing KA (Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have to benchmark themselves against other organizations (Cheverton, 2012; Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top management and senior management (Brady, 2004) have to be involved through the whole implementation (Workman et al., 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational culture have to support KAM (Homburg et al., 2002; Workman et al., 2003).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Accounts</strong></td>
<td>Clearly identified KA (Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; McDonald et al., 2000; Cheverton, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have individual KA plans (McDonald et al., 2000; Ryal and Rodgers, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Account Managers/Teams</strong></td>
<td>Select KA managers (Davies and Ryals, 2009) and build a KAM team (Cheverton, 2012; Guenzi and Pardo, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have fully trained and skilled KA managers (Shetcliff, 2003; Davies and Ryals, 2009; Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have established way of motivating and rewarding KA managers (Ryal and Rodgers, 2006; Schoon and McLean, 2012).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Global Talent Management

In order to effectively manage the customers of a global and non-global organization, the right employees with the right knowledge are needed (Schuler et al., 2011). Global Talent Management, referred to as Global TM, is defined as the effort of an organization to attract, select, develop and retain key talented employees (Scullion and Collings, 2010). The term Global TM involves the organizational activities (Sehoon and McLean, 2012). Further, Global TM involves HR processes such as selecting, attracting and reducing staff, meanwhile taking into account of concerns of the workforce (Schuler et al., 2011). Cultural contexts are taken into account in Global TM. Due to meetings with different cultures and cultural backgrounds, the global talents need to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes concerning cultural differences (Sehoon and McLean, 2012). For organizations to gain and sustain competitive advantage, the organization have to more effectively and systematically manage their human capital within the organization (Stahl et al., 2012).

2.3 Change Management

Change Management is the process of preparing and motivating individuals and groups to implement and maintain new ways of working (McDeavitt et al., 2012). A clear vision has to be communicated through leaders and top management in order to ensure that each party affected understand the vision and understand the importance for them as individuals, for the group and for the business itself (Ibid). Every stakeholder involved in the change process need to know his or her role in the vision (Ibid).

2.3.1 Communication

Communication is defined as the process of a sender sending an ‘encoded’ message to a receiver whom ‘decode’ the message (Gripsrud, 2002). Further, communication is in business seen as the act between people within an organization for the purpose of carrying out business activities (Linke and Zerfass, 2011). Communication can be verbal, non-verbal or written (Gripsrud, 2002) and seen as multi-dimensional since factors such as intonation, gestures, facial expressions as well as grammatical structures and chosen words affect the outcome (Batts et al., 2012). In order to effectively communicate with another party from a different culture, nationally or organizationally, it is of importance that the other party
‘decode’ the message the way it was intended (Roosbloom and Larsen, 2003). Hence, due to the multi-dimensions of communication, there is an increased risk for misunderstandings if the message is ‘decoded’ in an unintended way (Batts et al., 2012).

2.3.2 Culture

Culture is a process created through the interaction in a certain context (Lauring, 2011). It is of great importance to understand other cultures in order to manage the relationship in the most efficient and successful way (Batts et al., 2012). Further, an organization must also emphasize its own culture in order to be able to communicate with others (Linke and Zerfass, 2011; Jameson, 2007). National culture partly determines the way individuals think, reason and value (Eden, 2009), which is based on how individuals have been raised (Ibid). Organizational culture is the shared mental software of employees within an organization (Hofstede et al., 2010). As well as national culture determines the way employees work (Eden, 2009) likewise organizational culture determines how employees’ work and how they relate to others compare to those in other organizations (Hofstede et al., 2010). It has for a long period of time been argued that culture depend on an entire context (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997). This impacts the way at looking at both national culture and organizational culture since they are created in a specific context with specific factors involved (Ibid). Therefore, in some contexts culture might have a stronger impact or greater influence than in other context (Taras et al., 2013).

2.4 Research Gap

The literature review on Key Account Management indicates that there is a need for further research when it comes to the process of implementing KAM since existing scientific literature is not sufficient (Davies and Ryals, 2009) and consist of limited information (Wengler et al., 2006). Table 1 presented a summary of the main factors from existing scientific theory. Nätti and Palo (2012) states that it is essential that the right people with the right knowledge are selected when developing a KAM organization. Further, this is argued in the theory of Global Talent Management by Schuler et al., (2011) that right employee with the right knowledge are needed to manage customers effectively.
When change is about to take place within an organization it is according to McDeavitt et al., (2012) important to emphasize Change Management, which contain preparing and motivating those involved and affected by that change. As changes occur it has to be communicated in the right way and the aspects of culture also needs to be taken into account for a change to take place in a successful way.

2.4.1 Key Account Management

The existing scientific literature in KAM indicates that there is a gap in the literature about the process of implementing KAM in organizations. The existing literature on implementation of KAM has a need for more attention since it is a critical process that determines the systems future functionality when implemented (Nätti and Palo, 2012). There are several theories and scientific literature about KAM (Davies and Ryals, 2009) but not enough empirical studies in the field of implementation (Nätti and Palo, 2012). Researchers indicate that the implementation of KAM are explained by theory in one way, however implemented in practice in different ways (Davies and Ryals, 2009; Nätti and Palo, 2012). Although existing theory implies on factors for a successful implementation of KAM, no direct implementation model are available for organizations to apply. The steps and factors of implementing KAM found in existing literature can be questioned if being sufficient. A need for further research in KAM implementation is shown and argued for in both existing literature and literature review found in this study.

2.4.2 Global Talent Management

The need for right people with right knowledge when developing a KAM organization where highlighted by Nätti and Palo (2012). This statement were further argued by Schuler et al., (2011) who implies that right employee with the right knowledge are needed in order to manage an organization’s customers effectively. When an organization’s most important customers are to be handled, it is according to theory of importance to handle these customers in the right way. The employees responsible for each customer have to have the right knowledge, however it is in the interest of the organization to attract, select and maintain these employees. Stahl et al., (2012) states that organizations have to manage their human capital for the organization to gain and/or sustain competitive advantage. However the success in how an organization handle the right employees and human capital can be
questioned if this process is involved early in an implementation of KAM, which is implied by Nätti and Palo (2012), or if the process take place after the implementation of KAM.

2.4.3 Change Management

According to literature, it is important to prepare and motivate those stakeholders involved and affected when a change is about to take place within an organization (McDeavitt et al., 2012). The change needs to be communicated in the right way if the change shall be embraced in a positive way. There is an interest in this study to see how organizations manage the change as an implementation of KAM consists of. Further, existing literature about the implementation of KAM need more research on how a change managed in a correct and appropriate way might lead to successful implementation.

2.4.3.1 Communication

When communication takes place between an organization and its customer, it is of importance that the encoded message is decoded in the way it was intended to (Roosbloom and Larsen, 2003). If the encoded message is not decoded the intended way, misunderstandings and problems in the relationship might arise (Batts et al., 2012). This is as well as important when a change occur within an organization, since the message that the leader and top management want to communicate have to be decoded by the other employees as it was intended to.

2.4.3.2 Culture

When communicating with others, an organization has to emphasize its own culture (Linke and Zerfass, 2011; Jameson, 2007). In the existing literature on implementing KAM, there are no clear guidelines regarding how culture might imply and how culture can be managed. Since it is argued that culture might have a stronger impact in certain contexts than others (Taras et al., 2013), there is a need to see if culture have to be taken into account when a change, such as implementation of KAM, occur. Likewise, it is a need to see if culture has to be taken into account if a change is to be successful.
Chapter 2

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter have presented a review of existing literature on Key Account Management, Global Talent Management and Change Management.

The literature review indicated that there is a research gap in the process of implementation of KAM since the existing literature is not satisfactory. Further the literature review indicated that it is important to retain employees with the right knowledge to manage the key customers. Hence, existing literature do not provide sufficient guidelines on when to involve these employees, as well as the existing literature do not provide sufficient guidelines on how a change, such as implementing KAM in an organization, can be manage successfully. A process of implementing KAM can be seen as a process of change, however it is a need for further investigation to see how a change can be manage to reach success and the importance of communication and culture when managing a change.
Chapter 3

Research Model & Research Questions
3. Research Model and Research Questions

The literature review in the previous chapter about Key Account Management indicates that there are three main steps in the process of implementation. It also presented aspects needed to take into account when a change is taking place and presented needs of further research. In this chapter a proposed research model, as well as research questions for the investigation are presented.

3.1 Proposed Research Model

This study has the purpose to investigate how Key Account Management can be more successfully implemented in Swedish organizations, by examine which factors of Key Account Management, Global Talent Management and Change management have a direct and indirect effect on the implementation process. In the literature review in the previous chapter, the existing literature on the implementation was presented, together with relevant theories affecting either Key Account Management, or affecting a state of change. Since an implementation of Key Account Management can be seen as a state of change, the theories were considered relevant for this study. Figure 1 shows the proposed research model for this study.

The proposed research model firstly present the main areas together with main steps involved in implementing KAM, summarized from the existing literature. This aspects represent what existing theory say about KAM and the implementation of KAM, which interpreted from the literature review have a direct effect on a successful implementation of KAM.

Secondly, the proposed research model present further aspects, which might have an impact on whether an implementation will be successful or not. This, depending on if the organization employs the right employees with the right knowledge and how an organization handles a change within the organization. Further, taking into account the factors of managing communication and culture in an effective way towards customers as well as internally within the organization. Interpreted from the existing literature presented in the previous chapter, these aspects about change can be perceived as having an indirect effect on the success of an implementation of KAM.
3.2 Research Questions

A number of research questions have been identified from the purpose of this study and the development of the literature review. The purpose is to investigate how Key Account Management can be more successfully implemented in Swedish organizations, by examine which factors of KAM, GTM and Change management have a direct and indirect effect on the implementation process.

Each question is connected to the proposed research model in order to meet the purpose of this study.

- **RQ1**: Which factors are of importance for organizations if implementing KAM?
• **RQ2:** How do factors of Global Talent Management and Change Management impact the success of an implementation of KAM?

• **RQ3:** Which factors of Global Talent Management and Change Management should be regarded having direct effect on the success of the implementation of KAM?

3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a proposed research model developed from the literature review in chapter 2. Based on the research model, three research questions were stated and these make the investigation more focused in order to meet the purpose of this study.

The individual level of efficiency is related to what extent the organization employs the right employees with the right knowledge and how an organization handles change. Factors of managing communication and culture are taking into account in these contexts, both internally within the organization and externally towards customers.
Chapter 4

Methodology
4. Methodology

*The methodology approaches chosen are argued for and justified in this chapter. A discussion is held to give incentives for inductive and deductive research as well as why a qualitative approach is appropriate for this research. The methodology chosen to collect data is described followed by a discussion of the most suitable data analysis method.*

4.1 Research Approach

4.1.1 Inductive versus Deductive research

Inductive and deductive approaches are the two essential approaches in research methodology (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Inductive approach aim to draw conclusions and form new theoretical frameworks from the collected data. Deductive approach though means that existing theories are the basis for formulating hypotheses or testing research questions using empirical data. Further, deductive approach explains the relationship between theory and research and therefore represents the most common approach to apply (Dhawan, 2010).

In order for this paper to fill the present research gap in the process of implementing KAM, a deductive approach has been chosen. With the purpose of this paper in mind, existing theories in the area of KAM serve as a basis and foundation when formulating research questions. The existing theories will then be tested through empirical data. Therefore, a deductive approach is chosen suitable. Research questions have been formulated from the proposed research model that derived from the theories presented in the literature review, Chapter 2, to provide with a deductive approach.

4.1.2 Quantitative versus Qualitative research

The two research approaches, qualitative and quantitative, are classifying different approaches and methodologies within business science (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Quantitative research strategy emphasizes the quantification of analysed data, in forms of numbers and statistics (Bryman and Bell, 2005). The data is often collected through surveys, from archives or interviews (Swift and Piff, 2010). Qualitative research, on the other hand, is an interpretative strategy with focus on words rather than numbers when collecting and analyzing data (Bryman and Bell, 2005). The data is often collected verbally through
Methodology

interviews or observations (Swift and Piff, 2010). The essential focus is on understanding the social reality (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

This study holds a qualitative approach. Since this study aims to investigate how Key Account Management can be implemented in a more successful way, the focus is on words rather than numbers. It is of interest to gain deeper understanding and knowledge within the chosen area and since the process of implementation is under investigation, a qualitative research approach therefore was found to be the most suitable research approach for this study.

4.2 Research Design

Research design is used in order to make the right design for a study and its purpose. IT involves more than only the work description for what actions to do; research design seeks to validate that the collected empirical data truly help answer the research questions (Yin, 2009). There are three forms of design for a study to take; exploratory design, descriptive design or causal design (Yin, 2009). Exploratory design emphasize to observe what is already existent (Phopalia, 2010), as well as achieve or gain new understandings in an unknown process or area (Dhawan, 2010). In order to make it achievable to observe a wide range of aspects, the research idea is in need of being flexible (Phopalia, 2010). Descriptive design has as focus to find facts about a chosen subject of interest. This design is suitable when collecting and investigating behaviours, opinions as well as features or situations in certain contexts. Questions such as who, what, when, where and how are to be answered by this research design (Yin, 2009). It is necessary to be able to specify what is to be measured and what population is being investigated (Dhawan, 2010). Descriptive design emphasizes on conversation and communication between the researcher and respondent (Yin, 2009). During recent years and modern times, this research design has become popular and extensively used (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Causal design aims to explain “why” it is as it is and uses descriptive information. Discovering causal relationships between certain pre-determined variables are the focus (Gray, 2009) as well as finding relationships and gain insight in whether one variable causes or determines the value of another variable (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).
Chapter 4

This study aims to investigate how Key Account Management can be implemented in a more successful way, in order to see if existing theory in the subject is satisfying and enough. The previous discussion about the research designs and the aim of the study indicates that both exploratory and causal research design are excluded, however indicating that descriptive research design is the most appropriate design for this study.

4.3 Data sources

Data collected for an investigation or research can either be collected solely for the purpose of the investigation collected for other purposes than the concrete investigation or research (Yin, 2011). The data collected solely for the purpose of an individual study in order to answer the specific research questions included in the study, are referred to as Primary data. While data collected for a purpose other than for the concrete study, is referred to as secondary data and the information is more complicated to apply than primary data (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Organizations, researchers, market analysts and other similar authorities are the creators of the data (Ibid). Secondary data can be either internal secondary data, information within an organization through e.g. its customers, journals or business material, or external secondary data, information outside an organization through e.g. blogs, other social media or webpages not corporated by the organization of interest (Yin, 2011).

Due to the qualitative approach of this study and less amount of previous research within the subject of implementation process of KAM, as well as the choice of the author of this paper, the data source to use and collect are primary data. Further, the objective of investigate how Key Account Management more successfully can be implemented and gaining a deeper understanding within the subject of interest, decreases the opportunity to use data collected for other purposes than this study.

4.4 Research Strategy

In order to collect relevant data and answer research questions, there is a need of a proper and well-considered research strategy (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Three main conditions can be evaluated to help with finding and deciding on the most suitable research strategy (Yin 2009). In table 2 these conditions are presented. 1) Form of research question, 2) Required control of
behaviour and 3) Focus on contemporary events. The research strategies presented in Table 3 are experiment; survey; archival analysis; history and case study (Yin, 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Required control of behaviour</th>
<th>Focus on contemporary event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td></td>
<td>How, Why?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>Who, What, Where, How many, How much?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Who, What, Where, How many, How much?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td>How, Why?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td></td>
<td>How, Why?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Different contexts and situations for research strategies
(Adapted from Yin 2009, p.8)

The most proper and applicable research strategy can be determined by following the table. Depending on how research questions are formulated, if there is a need to control behaviour and/or if there is a need to focus on contemporary events, the table help deciding upon the strategy to use (Yin, 2009).

In this study, the research questions are formulated as how factors are of importance for a successful implementation of KAM, why and which factors having direct effect on success. Due to the research questions, the possible choices are experiment, history and case study. However, there is not a need to control behaviour, which excludes experiment as a possible research strategy. Contemporary events though need focus, which excludes history as a strategy and provide the study with only case study as a possible choice of strategy. A case study can be either descriptive or exploratory in its design and mostly deductive in its approach, which this current study implies (Yin, 2011). Where there is a phenomenon hard to quantify due to a wide range of measurable variables, this type of study are useful (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). Decisions made earlier concerning structure and approach are justified through this choice of research strategy. If case study consists of multiple cases the credibility
is strengthen (Yin, 2009). This induces the decision of studying more than one organization that has implemented KAM, since it provides a deeper and more valuable understanding of the subject under investigation. The findings will not be compared between organizations under investigation, which indicates that the study will not be comparative (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005).

4.5 Data Collection Method

The methods to use when collect the necessary data for a study appears to be concentrated to five main methods according to researchers. These consist of survey, observations, content analysis, interviews and focus groups (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005; Bryman and Bell, 2005; Bell, 2010; Yin, 2011). When data is collected for a study with a quantitative approach, structured interviews, structured observations, surveys and content analysis are primary used (Bryman and Bell, 2005). However, a study with a qualitative approach primarily uses in-depth or qualitative interviews, focus groups and participating observations (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Bryman and Bell, 2005). Since this study has a qualitative approach it is in-depth or qualitative interviews, focus groups and participating observations that are applicable methods to use.

In-depth or qualitative interviews are referred to as the main method in qualitative researches (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Interviews emphasize the importance of understanding the interviewee in order to deeply gain the needed knowledge, using the descriptive power of talking and communicating to the interviewee (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). An interview is the process of an interviewer asking questions to the person interviewed, the interviewee and can take place by using telephone or in person (Flick, 2011). During interviews, the interviewer has the opportunity to probe and be flexible until the needed information is gained (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). There are though both advantages and disadvantages with holding interviews over the telephone. If the interviewee is located a far distance from the interviewer, it will save both time and money when interviewer do not need to travel. Further the interviewee can not be affected by any personal characteristics such as gender, background or profession of the interviewer when answering the questions (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Hence, the interviewer is not able to see neither the interviewee’s facial expressions nor its body language during telephone interviews. It is also not possible to present diagrams or pictures to the interviewee.
Focus groups involve the interaction and discussion of a group (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) consisting of usually 5-12 people (Yin, 2009), providing with deep and valuable data about motives and thoughts (Bell, 2010). Unlike in-depth interviews, focus groups emphasize a discussion between the respondents and not directly between an interviewer and interviewee (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005).

Participating observations concerns when a researcher is part of and participating in the daily routine of an organization or person of interest (Bryman and Bell, 2005). This involves to listening and observing in order to gain understanding of behaviour and values (Bell, 2010). Though, observation can provide rather complex credibility since it is not guaranteed that the organization or person under observation say and act accordingly, or act differently if being uncomfortable when observed (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

In-depth interviews and participating observation were the methods to chose from, since focus group is not an applicable method due to the limited access to KA managers or sales managers to involve in this study. After careful consideration and evaluation, in-depth interviews were chosen as the data collection method of this study as observation requires longer time of investigation than manageable, which made observation an inappropriate and not applicable method. Further, because of the purpose to investigate how Key Account Management can be implemented in a more successful way, in-depth interviews were found to be the most suitable method. Due to the disadvantages when interviewing over telephone, all interviews were held in person.

4.6 Data Collection Instrument

4.6.1 Operationalization and measurement of variables

The concepts relevant from theory have to be transformed into understandable and clear words in order to make it possible to use and measure them within surveys and interview guides (Jupp, 2006). This process is referred to as operationalization (Bryman and Bell, 2005). The words transformed during operationalization are of importance to mean the same for both researchers and respondents in order to avoid misunderstandings or wrong answers (Jupp, 2006). The theoretical framework work is the basis from which operationalized concepts are made (Flick, 2011). Further, the operationalized concepts need to be substantial
for both the purpose of the study as well as the study’s research questions (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). Questions used in a survey or an interview guide are needed to be relevant for the research questions of the study and also needed to be measuring what it is supposed to be measured, neither less nor more (Jupp, 2006). The variables used have to cover the research questions completely in order to be applicable to the purpose of the study (Ibid). The operationalization of this study has followed and taken these requirements into consideration.

From the literature review, main factors were found and presented in the proposed research model (see Figure 1). This proposed research model served as a basis during the operationalization. The foundation for the interview questions where provided from the measure and theoretical concepts from implementation process of KAM, choice of KA managers, as well as managing change and the impact of communication and culture. The research questions of this study were developed from the research model proposed in chapter 3. As a result, the interview questions were appropriate and compatible with both research questions as well as the proposed research model. Theoretical concepts were operationalized to clear and workable words, easy to understand. Since the interviewee were estimated to possess a rather pre-understanding about KAM and the concepts involved, the questions included terms connected with KAM, choice of KA manager and management of change, as well as communication and culture. Operationalization schemes provide with an understanding of the relationship between the concepts, the measures as well as the interview questions (see Table 3 for operationalization of concepts, Table 4-6 for each concept). Table 3 present the three concepts of this paper; Key Account Management, Global Talent Management and Change Management. Table 4-6 demonstrate each measure and presents a scheme for the interview questions.
## Operationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Conceptual definition</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Key Account Management** | Adapting certain processes targeting an organization’s most important customers as well as creating value for these, known as Key Account Management (Wengler et al., 2006). | A measure that reflects the factors having a direct effect on a successful implementation of KAM. | • Organizational area (Cheverton, 2012; McDeavitt et al., 2012; Davies and Ryals, 2009; Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012; Workman et al., 2003; Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; Brady, 2004; Homburg et al., 2002)  
• Key Account area (Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; McDonald et al., 2000; Cheverton, 2012; Ryal and Rodgers, 2007)  
• Key Account Manager/Team area (Davies and Ryals, 2009; Cheverton, 2012; Guenzi and Pardo, 2007; Shetcliff, 2003; Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012; Ryal and Rodgers, 2006; Sehoon and McLean, 2012) |
| **2. Global Talent Management** | The effort of an organization to attract, select, develop and retain key talented employees (Scullion and Collings, 2010) in order to retain the right employee with the right knowledge (Schuler et al., 2011). | A measure that reflects the factors having an indirect effect on a successful implementation of KAM in the context of employees. | • Choice of KA Manager (Schuler et al., 2011; Scullion and Collings, 2010)  
• Right people (Nätti and Palo, 2012; Stahl et al., 2012)  
• Right knowledge (Sehoon and McLean, 2012) |
| **3. Change Management** | The process of preparing and motivating individuals and groups to implement and maintain new ways of working through emphasizing communication and culture (McDeavitt et al., 2012). | A measure that reflects the factors having an indirect effect on a successful implementation of KAM in the context of managing change. | • Change (McDeavitt et al., 2012)  
• Communication (Roosbloom and Larsen, 2003; Batts et al., 2012; Linke and Zerfass, 2011; McDeavitt et al., 2012)  
• Culture (Eden, 2009; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997; Hofstede et al., 2010) |
Chapter 4

Concept 1. Key Account Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure and theoretical construct</th>
<th>Questions (see)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Make and manage changes within the whole organization (McDeavitt et al., 2012; Cheverton, 2012), in particular internal resources (Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
<td>1.1, 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have knowledge about KAM (Oezgovic and Sarac, 2012; Workman et al., 2003) and continuously strive for further knowledge (Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
<td>1.3, 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have to establish and adopt policies and procedures for managing KA (Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have to benchmark themselves against other organizations (Cheverton, 2012; Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Top management and senior management (Brady, 2004) have to be involved through the whole implementation (Workman et al., 2003).</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organizational culture has to support KAM (Homburg et al., 2002; Workman et al., 2003).</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Account area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clearly identified KA (Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; McDonald et al., 2000; Cheverton, 2012).</td>
<td>1.9, 1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have individual KA plans (McDonald et al., 2000; Ryal and Rodgers, 2007).</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Account Manager/Team area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Select KA managers (Davies and Ryals, 2009) and build a KAM team (Cheverton, 2012; Guenzi and Parco, 2007).</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have fully trained and skilled KA managers (Shetcliff, 2004; Davies and Ryals, 2009; Oezgovic and Sarac, 2012).</td>
<td>1.2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Have established way of motivating and rewarding KA managers (Ryal and Rodgers, 2009; Sehoon and McLean, 2012).</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Key Account Management

Concept 2. Global Talent Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure and theoretical construct</th>
<th>Questions (see A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choice of KA manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attract and maintain employee (Schuler et al., 2011; Scullion and Collings, 2010)</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Involve employee (Natti and Paio, 2012)</td>
<td>2.1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right People</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Characteristics (Natti and Paio, 2012; Stahl et al., 2012)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Previous and learned experience and knowledge (Sehoon and McLean, 2012)</td>
<td>2.3, 2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Operationalization Global Talent Management

Concept 3. Change Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure and theoretical construct</th>
<th>Questions (see .)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Manage change (McDeavitt et al., 2012)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decode message in intended way (Roosbloem and Larsen, 2003; Batts et al., 2012)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Communication with customer (Roosbloem and Larsen, 2003; McDeavitt et al., 2012)</td>
<td>3.2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Communication internally (Linke and Zerfas, 2011; McDeavitt et al., 2012)</td>
<td>3.2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- National culture emphasized (Eden, 2009; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997)</td>
<td>3.6, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organizational culture emphasized (Hofstede et al., 2010; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997)</td>
<td>3.4, 3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Operationalization Change Management
4.6.2 Interview Guide

In order for an interviewer to improve consistency of the information received during an interview and in order to make sure that the relevant topics are covered, the interviewer can receive help from an interview guide (Bryman and Bell, 2005). The subject and the topic of the interview or conversation are specified in the interview guide. The guide present in which order the topics are suppose to be focused on as the interview goes by. The topics can either be described more generally or be well-formulated questions (Jupp, 2006). However, it is of importance that flexibility is given to the interviewee (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). According to Bryman and Bell (2005), in-depth interviews can be unstructured or semi-structured, providing different outcomes of the data. The unstructured interview does not follow a complete interview guide with questions (Bell, 2010), instead themes or topics can be loosely provided (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Unstructured interview provide the interviewee with great flexibility, hence it demands great knowledge and skill from the interviewer (Ghauri and Grønhaug 2005; Flick, 2011). Semi-structured interview on the other hand can be seen as a combination of both the structured quantitative interview and the unstructured interview presented above. The semi-structured interview follows more specific questions, while it also leaves room for an open dialogue (Yin, 2011). This allows the interviewer to have less experience and knowledge as an interviewer. Due to the planning of the technique rather than the session itself, the interviewer bias is minimized (Ghauri and Grønhaug 2005), indicating that the interviewee are less affected by the interviewer and the interviewees answer is more likely to be accurate and true (Yin, 2011). Semi-structured interview implies for the possibility to probe and ask follow up questions when needed (Gray, 2009).

According to the less restricted need for knowledge and experience in conducting in-depth interviews, together with the minimized risk for bias due to more specific questions, semi-structured interview is the chosen interviewing approach for this study. A semi-structured interview guide was developed thereafter (see Appendix I). The interview guide includes an introduction followed by direct and indirect questions concerning Key Account Management, Global Talent Management and Change Management. These involve factors from the implementation process of KAM, choice of KA managers, right people, right knowledge, manage change as well as the impact of communication and culture. Further, guidance to eventual probing and follow up questions are given.
The interview guide was constructed in a table format with question numbers, area of theory as well as the questions. This type of structure and content was regarded to be the most suitable and best fitting the study and the participating organizations in order to receive data needed for this study.

4.6.3 Pretesting

In order to prepare the data collection, pretesting or pilot study are good techniques (Yin, 2011; Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). The pretesting provides the researcher with valuable information on whether the questions are difficult or understandable (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). After a pretest, the interview guide shall have been more refined and improved than the original version (Yin, 2011). The research questions of a study have to be credible in order to ensure their reflection of what is going to be studied (Ghani and Gronhaug, 2005). Questions asked during the method needs to do the same (Ibid). A pretest of the questions can be done by letting sources from outside view the material (Yin, 2009). Most common reviewers are experts in the research subject being investigated or individuals with the right academic knowledge (Ibid). Outside experts can provide the research with a good review several times during a big study in order to eliminate problems when interpreting the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Ghani and Gronhaug (2005) recommend the interview guide in qualitative studies to be tested among knowledgeable individuals from the industry. The result from a pretest should be reviewed and, if needed, questions should be revised to serve the analysis with the right answers (Yin, 2009).

In this study, four pretests have been carried out. Two pre-tests were held with managers at two companies in the IT industry, based within Växjö. Another pretest was held with a former student and graduate at Linnaeus University, as well as a pretest with a Ph.D. employee at MittUniversitetet.

Due to the small size and scope of the study, no further experts in the field have been pretested. Five companies have been interviewed and transcribed in the timeframe of a week.

4.6.4 Data Collection Procedure

The interview guide was sent by email to the interviewees after a meeting for the interviews were set, hence before the interview. Due to the complexity of some questions and with
regard to possible changes among the employees at the organizations or knowledge outside their area, the interviewees were provided with the questions in advance. This opened up for the opportunity to prepare, gather specific information or react on certain questions.

In order to make sure to avoid misunderstandings or not miss any questions (Yin, 2011), the interview were recorded by using a smartphone. The recordings were made in total agreement with the interviewees. Since focus could be on the interviewee and the answers, the interviewer could pay attention to the interviewee and probe when needed. Each participant was given the opportunity to be anonymous in this study.

4.7 Sampling

A case study is when the research is studying an individual organization, person, location or event (Bryman and Bell, 200) It enhance the possibility to discover and uncover meanings behind the phenomena (Ibid) and is the most common research in qualitative studies (Yin, 2009). To increase the reliability of the findings, several cases can be studied in a so-called multiple case study (Ibid). The cases has to have the investigation topic in common and the study objects is chosen according to purposive sampling, which is a case chosen according to certain characteristics that the research is aiming at investigating (Ruane, 2005). A representative sample study is usually chosen where you bound the study to a few of the total population, mostly due to limitations in time and resources (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

4.7.1 Sampling Frame

Qualitative samples are small due to the rich amount of data that it generates (Ruane, 2005). It is important to collect detailed information in order to be able to uncover the meaning behind the behaviour, as qualitative research is aiming for (Yin, 2009). Since this study uses a multiple case sample, the sample frame has to make sure all cases involved are related to the issues under investigation of this study (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Gray, 2009). The purpose along with theories and research questions shall be used to make such frame (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

With this in mind, the frame consists of Swedish organizations working solely or partly business-to-business, targeting their most important customers in a certain way. The
organizations chosen and meeting these criteria where found by the help of two networks located within Växjö; Business Network International and Nätverket Expansiva Växjö. These two networks provided this study with contact and branch information concerning suitable organizations to involve in interviews.

4.7.2 Sample Selection

In business research, people and organizations are the sources of information (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008) and the right ones are depending on the topic of the study (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Quantitative research is usually broad and seeks to generalize behaviour (Raune, 2005). This creates a need for a bigger sample than in qualitative studies, were the aim is to conclude the meaning behind the behaviour (Ibid). In quantitative research, sampling often occurs systematic to be able to collect as many as possible (Ibid). In qualitative research, the sampling process is more vital and the participants are carefully chosen according to certain characteristics that match the research’s subject, called purposive sampling (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

A qualitative sample is often small in size due to that a phenomenon only needs to appear once to be included within the analysis (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Also, it does not need any statistical representation and the data are rich in details (Ibid). However, in order to provide this study with sufficient and adequate data and receiving information giving a rich analysis, more than four interviews were decided to be collected. Hence, due to the estimated time and resources to accomplish and process the interviews, and to the small size within qualitative sample, no more than 5 interviews could be conducted. Therefore the researchers for this study decided on 5 interviews as an appropriate size.

The Sample

This study has chosen a small sample in order to analyse how Swedish organizations can implement KAM in a more successful way, with a qualitative method. Five in-depth interviews have been conceded with companies within IT and Management industry, such as accountants and document management. All companies have had different experiences in the process of managing their most important customers and were therefore able to contribute with the right knowledge according to the research subject.
4.8 Data Analysis Method

Data gathering and data analysis are two different processes but relate to each other due to their purposes; to serve the research with a framework and provide the research with practical tools (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). In qualitative research, several theories and methods are used for the study and therefore require a flexible data gathering method in order to serve the data analysis with sufficient material (Ibid). The data gathered in a qualitative study can be analysed through a summary, pattern making or selection (Miles and Huberman 1994, Yin, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggests that the data gathering and the data analysis occur simultaneously in a three-step process, were the collected data is organized and presented ready for immediate conclusions in the following three steps;

**Data reduction**

The part of an analysis that discard, sort and organize the data collected according to what is being investigated, i.e. what is asked for. Data reductions generate the most important data gathered in an organized way.

**Data display**

The material from the data reduction shows how the design of a matrix with rows and columns should be created. The data from data reduction is inserted and the result is compressed data, displayed in an easy way were conclusions can be seen.

**Conclusions drawing and verification**

During the data collection, the researcher might notice irregularities, casual flows or patterns that are preliminary drawn as conclusions. Though, they are not final until the last data is gathered. The final conclusions have to be verified, which is done through arguments and justification for each individual conclusion. This enhances the validity of the research findings.
The research questions determine the required type of data analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). In qualitative studies where the data is rich and descriptive, a linguistic and interpretive way of analysing is needed in order to uncover meanings (Yin, 2009). In quantitative research on the other hand, there is usually a more narrative and correlational approach in the analysis of the data due to the more concrete and measurable answers a quantitative research generates (Ibid).

In this study, the three-step process is used for the analysis of the data gathered from the five in-depth interviews. After each interview, the data gathered has immediately been transcribed in an organized way.

4.9 Quality Criteria

4.9.1 Content Validity

Content validity is the measure of whether a research’s test accurately reflects the tested area or not (Ruane, 2005)

In this qualitative study, content validity is enhanced by conducting three pre-tests from the population of interest and by allowing experts in the management and IT field review the material before the research was carried out.

4.9.2 Construct Validity

The questions used in the research’s methodology should reflect the actual subject of the study (Ruane, 2005). What is being asked must be relevant and measure what the research is
aiming at measuring, known as construct validity. It is a vital aspect of the validity of a research since there can be no external validity or reliability without actually a correct measurement between questions and theory (Ibid). The construct validity is preferably shown in an operationalization (Bryman and Bell, 2005)

This study has developed questions for the interviews from the theory chapter, where theory of KAM implementation has been collected. In Table 3 there is an operationalization where the theory has been broken down into definitions and explanations on what each theory is and with what question it can be evaluated.

4.9.3 External Validity

External validity, also referred to as generalizability, is the extent to which the research’s findings and conclusions can be generalized in other contexts or to a larger population (Bryman and Bell, 2005). In qualitative research, the external validity is difficult to achieve since individual situations are studied in their particular context with causes that are not general for the whole population (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). However, if the study includes findings that are not typical for only one situation, the external validity can be argued (Ibid). The process of a study can have external validity for others aiming to investigate the same subject (Ibid) and the more cases studied, the greater the external validity (Bryman and Bell, 2005). According to Yin (2003), external validity can be strengthened through theory building by viewing each study as a single experiment, adding together the extremes from each study into new theory.

In this study, theory of KAM implementation is tested and analysed on real firms and the research’s findings can therefore be viewed by those interested in implementing KAM in their organization. The research process is fully described, which enhances the possibility for external firms, different from the ones studied, to adapt the study to fit their context. Due to that the research has conducted five interviews among management and IT firms in Sweden, other organizations in the same industry in Sweden can relate to the findings. The research is also aiming at adding new information to the existing theory on KAM implementation, which is done by seeing each interview as an experiment and then analysed and compared against each other to notice similarities and differences.
4.9.1 Reliability

Reliability is described as the repeatability and consistency of a study (Daymon and Holloway, 2011), meaning that each time the study is carried out, the findings are the same (Ibid). It requires the study to be described in detail so as others can carry out the exact same study (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

In this study, the methodology process is presented in detail so as other researchers can conduct the same material. An interview guide is attached as an appendix to provide others with the exact material and questions asked in this research.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter have presented choices taken regarding methodology. The research has a deductive and qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Primary data are collected through case study as the research strategy. Further, semi-structured in-depth interviews with a qualitative sample are chosen. The method for data analysis is data reduction and validity as well as reliability are argued in quality criteria. See Table 7 for a summary of research methodology.

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Table 7. Research Methodology
Chapter 5

Empirical Data
5. Empirical Data

This chapter presents the empirical data that have been gathered from five organizations in Växjö, Sweden. Each organization will be presented individually, starting with a brief introduction to each organization and interviewee. Thereafter, the answers given during the interviews are presented in accordance with the structure given in the second chapter, Literature Review. The structure will start with Key Account Management, followed by Global Talent Management and end with Change Management. Each organization is given anonymity and will be presented as Company A-E.

5.1 Company A

Company A is a locally owed company based in Växjö within accounting and auditing, in the Management industry. The company is owned by two of the members within the board and was established 1989. The interviewee is part owner and an auditor with previous experiences in similar organizations as well as active in the company since it was founded. Table 8 present a summary of Company A and the interviewee.

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Table 8. Company A

5.1.1 Key Account Management

5.1.1.1 Organizational Area

Company A states that the process of starting to handle the most important customers in a certain way more or less were done in the same way, regardless the importance of the customers. They give an offer to the larger customers while smaller customers are handled through contacts or a personal relationship. The customers are not categorized or divided. Instead they have a motto of treating all customers as if they are the company’s’ only customer. Company A argue the importance of doing a good job each day at work. Since Company A operates in a small town, Växjö, things and rumours are spread rather quickly.
The company think it is possible that the discussion of categorizing customers will arise in the future since they strive for treating each customer as an important customer.

Company A have been open for discussing and involving employees in the discussion about KAM in order to gain knowledge about how their customers can be managed in a certain way. However they have not gathered or stored any information within this field. Further the company states that employee involvement in internally discussions makes the organization develop and grow.

Policies or procedures have been established in how the company manage difficult customer issues, such as briefing a customer. This policy, or procedure, is to involve a colleague and debrief with him or her. However, this policy or procedures have been more formal during the years. Further the company arrange an internal quality check once a year in order to detect deviations.

Company A have used both employees and members of the boards to benchmarks, as well as conversations with other similar companies within Växjö. This have given them insight into what other companies use and how work can be carried out in different way.

The two part owners of the company, also members of the board, have been involved in all dialogues, discussions and processes in how to manage customers. Company A believe that decisions can take rather large amount of time in larger companies. In Company A however, there are faster and more efficient decisions taken since the part owners are involved in all processes.

The organizational culture is perceived as open and not repelling changes occurring within the company. Further Company A argues the importance of understanding the customer’s cultures in order to deliver quality and understanding the customers.

5.1.1.2 Key Account Area

Company A perceive the customers delivering the highest revenues to be the most important customers and the company further think that this is a possible classification of their customers. However, the company have no preferences concerning branches. The customers
Empirical Data

perceived as more important, those with higher revenues, are not informed. Instead these customers will probably notice a more frequent communication and greater attention from the company. Company A wants to show their customers that they care and value them.

No specific plan or document exists about how to manage the most important customers. Furthermore, Company A do not consider themselves to have any specific approach towards the most important customers.

5.1.1.3 Key Account Managers/Team Area
At Company A each employee are responsible for his or her customers and are suppose to manage these to 100 per cent. However, if some larger projects arise more than one employee will be involved but still with one employee in charge and responsible. The one responsible for a customer is the one who manage all communication with this customer. Company A expect their employees to be on place and available for the customer. It is perceived to be a combination of previous experience and education when someone is selected or employed. It is further argued to depend on the person itself. What is missing in form of knowledge or experience will have to be provided by the company. During the latest recruiting Company A employed a person without the previous experience required but possessed all other characteristics of value.

New employees are provided with an introduction in the beginning. However, Company A states that the approaches towards customers shall be “in the walls of the firm”. This means that employees will learn during the years in what way the company approaches its customers. The educations provided for employees are all about to educate within the subject, since it is where the company have its competence. New employees have someone within the company to ask as a backup and it is stated that the employees learn rather quickly what is the more successful and beneficial approach towards customers.

Motivating employees do not significantly exist in Company A. The company states that rewarding employees for doing their best is misleading. Each day performing your best is what is asked. However, gratitude from customers is seen as a reward enough.
5.1.2 Global Talent Management

5.1.2.1 Choice of KA manager

Company A believe their foremost argument towards new employees are their flat organization, having each employee responsible for its own customers. If applying for a job at Company A that is what attracts people, that they in a relatively early stage are given responsibility for their own customers. Company A recruit those willing to work independently.

5.1.2.2 Right People

The right employee shall instil confidence and have a high capital of trust among the customers. Trust can be perished fast but take a large amount of time to restore. Company A further states that the right employee shall be available for the customers, give good answers, be competent and give good advice. The employee has to be willing to work independently and be responsible for customers. Being able to communicate is the foundation according to Company A.

5.1.2.3 Right Knowledge

Company A states that the required experience and knowledge differ depending on the employ needed. Further the company argues that personal chemistry and softer values comes before experience or knowledge. The employees are encouraged to learn from the relationships with their customers. If an approach towards a certain customer was not preferable, this will be a useful experience. The approach towards the next customer may then differ from the previous customer. Company A emphasizes a try and learn situation with customers.

5.1.3 Change Management

5.1.3.1 Change

Decisions concerning changes belong to the part owners and because of their participation as members of the board they can take short-term decisions. It is a short decision making process within Company A since there is not a large amount of people to consult or involve. However, Company A believe they are being more aware and more reflective, which should result in more long-term decision that their employees will appreciate and value. Company A think it is of importance to discuss changes and believe they are in need of a more frequent
discussion concerning change. However, the company states the importance of having commitment and time required if discussing and managing change.

5.1.3.2 Communication
Company A have strived for to custom-made the communication with their customers. Due to the lack of time it is easier to use general templates which leads to that communication is not further developed. However, since email is a growing communication both email and phone calls are used towards customers. The company appreciate using the email because the emails are stored. The internal communication is exclusively through emails. The company have monthly meetings but due to an internal policy that the employees shall prioritize customers and visit the customers, very few of the employees can attend the meetings. Priority is to visit the customers. The company do not have any intranet but each employee can access the company’s servers. According to Company A the internal communication have moved from monthly meetings to emails while the external communication is up to each employee to manage in a proper and smooth way. The company states that it would be preferable to get indications in time if the communication is not working. In that way, the company could have a better rotation within the company by letting a colleague take over a certain customer. Company A perceive communication to be the foundation in their work and emphasize the importance of communicating what is expected and demanded by the customers. In order for the company to manage their daily work they are in need of information concerning changes within regulations in their field.

Company A argues the importance of continuously working for and have knowledge of what the customers are in need of. Further the company suggest that the way they present information to customers can be done in other ways in order to attract those customers not interested.

5.1.3.3 Culture
The company believe that each citizen is living by the rules within the society since few customers are willing to break the rules. However the company believes that different cultural backgrounds can lead to a cultural crash when moving to the Swedish community where the majority are living by the rules. Company A have serious customers, willing to do the right thing.
Chapter 5

On the larger customers there are more employees involved from Company A, which according to the company automatically means that their organizational culture will follow. For the smaller customers the responsible employee will instead present his or hers individual values and the way they are, which is brought into the relationship. It can be previous working experiences or other experiences and how they are as individuals.

Company A believe that culture has to be taken into consideration when managing changes and that culture is a determining factor for the success of the change. The company states that the culture is what is within the organization, and hopefully strong enough to manage changes. Further the company argues that culture is what makes the company to hold together.

5.2 Company B

Company B is one of four offices in the same business network operating in southern Sweden since 1994. The field of work is financial accounting, within the Management industry. The other offices operate in Karlshamn, Kristianstad and Karlskrona while Company B is active in Växjö. The interviewee is Office Manager in Växjö as well as an International Financial Advisor with 13 year of experience within the company. The interviewee has more than 30 years of previous experiences within banking, finance and insurance. Table 9 presents a summary of Company B and the interviewee.

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Table 9. Company B
5.2.1 Key Account Management

5.2.1.1 Organizational Area

Company B have during the years been working with how to categorize their customers. They had different ways to identify their most important customers, which opened their eyes for the issue of where to prioritize and where to spend their time. The company decided to categorize according to volume and based on what have been done for the customer. Further the company identified who can be regarded as important customers, and who could in the future be seen as important customers. However, this is contrary to their daily business.

Company B have special events for their customers, different level of service provided and appointments with the customers. The company still work with the focus on who their most important customers are and who are not. The company states that 20 per cent of the customers generate 80 per cent of the revenues. The other customers are therefore given less attention from the company. According to the company, the classification of the customers are to be done during the meetings with the customers but is not completely implemented.

Further the company states that the implementation of classifying and categorizing customers would be both easier and more frequently done if this had been made from the start. Company B believe that they have knowledge of their most important customers even though the categorization is not complete. The company are unsure of the benefits of restarting or retrying to go through an implementation. The company exchanged experiences internally, between the advisers at the different offices. These exchanges of experiences have continued in order to allocate and learn from experiences and the knowledge they have within the organization.

Company B have policies for how these categorizations and classifications of customers shall be done, which was partly discussed and decided internally. The employees were informed during meetings, by email and through conversations.

No external benchmark were made, however the company held discussions internally in order to gain benefits from the internal experiences. The company could learn from previous mistakes concerning how to manage their customers.

The board consists of three people that exchanged experiences and were more or less involved during the entire process. The initiative came from the board and the discussion was firstly between the three members of the board, each having responsibility for an office. As it
became more relevant and an operative process, more employees were involved. According to Company B it was important that the whole organization approved this process.

Culture is seen as an important factor to either support or question a change. The company exchanged experiences internally due to the belief that some customers should be managed in a certain way in order to be more efficient. Company B further states that it was important to manage some customers in a certain way in order to gain better turnover on these customers.

5.2.1.2 Key Account Area
Company B states that no matter your industry, some customers are more important than others often due to margins and revenue. Some customers will have greater value and become more valuable in terms of income. However, the company also states that some customers can provide values based on their position or connections within networks, such as an important person or employment position. Even though this customer not significantly will generate money, it can still be an important customer. Company B will prioritize these important customers to a greater extent than other customers but no further notification will be given to these important customers of them being valued as important for the company. There are some activities for some customers who are being treated and cherished a little bit extra, such as showing attention to birthdays, send them give away or serve them lunch now and then.

Company B have not had any specific plan for the most important customers. The company have instead acted on instinct and cherished those customers that can exchange benefits within a near future.

5.2.1.3 Key Account Managers/Team Area
The company have not chosen any specific employee to manage a specific customer. Instead it has arisen over time as customers have been added. Since Company B is a rather small organization some of the responsibilities have been shared between employees. Those in contact with customers have to have at least two years of branch experience before it is of interest for the company to employ that person. Having the education needed and experiences are important as well as the personal characteristics.
The company provide advisory meetings, which is entirely focused on exchanging experience between the offices. Additionally, the company arrange sales meetings twice a month were cases are discussed and problem solved. This is seen as an internal education for Company B. The basis is that employees need to have the right education and knowledge before they are employed at Company B. The company states that employees need knowledge about their daily work, however not a greater knowledge in how to manage customers.

Company B strives for motivating the employees internally and between the offices. This is done by giving appreciation and by inspiring each other. However, any certain reward is not given except some additional appreciation and credit to those employees having a driving force. Further, Company B explains this driving force as an instinct to sell and deliver.

5.2.2 Global Talent Management

5.2.2.1 Choice of KA manager
The company strives for to have a good atmosphere, a good mood and being an enjoyable organization. Further, Company B wishes to be a place for new employees to thrive and feel at home. The employees were involved from the start when the company started to manage and categorize the most important customers. Reflections were exchanged among the employees even though the responsibility was among the top management and board.

5.2.2.2 Right People
Company B states that age determines which characteristics that are important. The requirements need to be adapted to the person, however it is important that the person have a nice, fresh and proper manner. The company argues that the first seconds during a meeting are very important and therefore Company B value an organized and pleasant person. A driving force and ability of doing business are further requirements, as well as being creative yet humble and do not boast. Company B states the importance of listen and get understood by the customer.

5.2.2.3 Right Knowledge
Employees need relevant education and some years of experience from competitors, insurance company or other relevant place. Company B must pass educations provided by Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority.
5.2.3 Change Management

5.2.3.1 Change

Regular meetings are held, called advisory meetings. During such a meeting the idea of managing the most important customers were taken. The board formed the details and for a given date they decided to start trying to manage customers in a certain way.

5.2.3.2 Communication

Company B use different ways to communicate externally with customers. It can either be by mail or email, text message or phone calls. Internally, the company to a large extent use email. Some uses text messages but most often the company communicate through email or by adding assignments in the enterprise system. Further, Company B arranges events for the most important customers. Due to the willingness from the company to cherish some customers this communication differs from the regular communication held with customers.

Company B strives for to make their messages and communication more efficient by being more specific, straightforward and clear. The company argues that they will decrease misunderstandings both internally and externally by this.

5.2.3.3 Culture

According to Company B, the culture will differ depending on where a person is located. Further, the culture will change over time and can depend on what age category that is in focus. The geographic location can affect people but Company B does not notice any greater effect from culture. The company states that the national culture do not seem to have any impact on customers living in the province of Småland. The scantiness of people in Småland is not further distinctive according to Company B. Further, the company consider it to be a bias among those living in Småland, so called ‘smålänningar’. A common prejudice among the people living in Småland is that they are afraid of costs. However, Company B states that culture differ between cities and geographical locations.

Company B have a policy that emphasizes ethical and moral values. This policy consists of dress codes and proper behaviour. The company has an open and friendly atmosphere in order for the employees and the company to move forward.
It is of importance for the company that employees in contact with the customer behave according to the customer.

Further, Company B believe culture have to be taken into account if change is to be made, especially the support from the organizational culture and ability to accept changes. The company also believes that culture can be a determining factor for a successful change.

5.3 Company C
Company C is based in Växjö and part of a nationwide business chain, based in more than 40 cities in Sweden. The company operates in the field of data, IT and documentation management in the IT industry. The interviewee is sales representative as well as part owner with 25 years of experiences in inventory and maintenance. See Table 10 for a summary of the company and the interviewee.

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<td>Previous experiences</td>
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Table 10. Company C

5.3.1 Key Account Management
5.3.1.1 Organizational Area
Company C have had a certain KAM education for the entire chain. This education was in several steps and included an examination and thereafter a certification. The company states that the organization gained a better structure on the sales and how to manage the larger customers in a better way. This KAM education provided the company with useful knowledge to assure long-term collaborations with customers. Company C was satisfied and perceive the implementation quite successful. However, the company have found it hard to allocate enough time to purpose each step towards the customers.
Before the KAM education, the company based their business on previous beliefs and a structure for sales. Though, it is after this KAM education that the company could increase its qualities. Company C gain knowledge about KAM by following the structure of the education together with working in their customer relationship management system and by having sales meetings.

During the implementation, Company C has established a strategy of having a key account manager, an employee responsible for each customer. The key account manager takes decisions for how frequently meetings shall be held, together with the customer. The general idea is that this shall be decided together with each customer, however the company say it is hard to follow through due to time limits. Therefore, the most important customers are prioritized. This strategy is primary communicated within the sales department, however each employee within the company is aware of them. Company C argues that each employee having a role of merchant towards the customer or in some way managing a customer shall be service minded and listen to the customers. Having a strategy for management of customers and the long-term relationships is to invite the most important customers to events. These events are held because of the benefits, the pleasure or a combination of these.

Company C exchanged information and knowledge during the education and continue the process through future meetings with other sellers within their nationwide organization. Further the company argues the benefits of exchanging new ideas.

Top management were involved in the implementation process, especially the managing director and the head of sales. Those were involved during the entire implementation since the members of the board actively work with sales and the most important customers.

According to Company C, their organizational culture means that each employee at the company understand that everyone have to manage their customers in order not to loose these customers.

5.3.1.2 Key Account Area
Company C decision on who should manage the most important customers by go through each existing customer and then deciding who will be in charge for this specific customer. In
some cases, Company C has two key account managers who together manage some customers. The decision on which their most important customers are was based on turnover, revenue and opportunity for development.

The most important customers were booked on a meeting where Company C explained the importance for the company to develop and expand the collaboration with the customer. Having long-term collaborations was to decrease the risk of loosing the customers to a competitor. Further, the company had interest in asking the customers. Some of the questions concerned how the customers perceived Company C as a supplier, what is important for the customers and how Company C can change or improve. Company C also had an interest in knowing if they are seen as a strategically important supplier for the customer’s operations and expansions and the impact of the pricing.

Company C have not established precise objectives concerning turnover and revenue for each customer. However, the company have a plan of becoming a key supplier towards many customers. With some of the larger customers Company C have agreed to have either monthly or quarterly meetings.

5.3.1.3 Key Account Managers/Team Area
The company established the responsible key account managers. These decisions were based on which employee that was most suitable to manage new customers, administer smaller or larger customers. The characteristics of the person or seller helped the company to determine these decisions.

According to the company, the employees and the key account managers were trained and educated through the KAM education. The content of the education is wide and comprehensive with the focus on having the customer’s perspective in mind. Further it was emphasized to both ask and understand the customer in order to satisfy the needs and demands of the customers. All this would lead to becoming a strategically important supplier. Company C argues the importance of understanding that each employee is important in the operations with the customers. Each employee has to understand and clearly see the responsibilities and division of work. Having routines, clear division of work and education will increase the efficiency according to the company.
Since the owners are part of the customer relationships, Company C states that it is a great motivation to see both employees and customers pleased and satisfied. Rewards are given to employees and owners through dividends.

5.3.2 Global Talent Management

5.3.2.1 Choice of KA manager
Company C have during the year’s attracted and searched for new sales people having the competence to sell from day one. Further, some new employees have also brought some customers to the company, which they have had an especially good relationship with. The responsible employees, called key account managers, were either involved during the implementation or as new employees have been recruited.

5.3.2.2 Right People
Company C values calm and moderate people in their organization. Further analytical and service minded characteristics are favourable.

5.3.2.3 Right Knowledge
The company states that they value having service minded employees who realizes that satisfied customers are those paying the companies salaries. Company C demand their employees to have high competence within their field as well as gaining further knowledge and education through the company. The employees are provided with internally educations within the organization.

5.3.3 Change Management

5.3.3.1 Change
Company C have established routines for the management of change. This routine contains division of responsibilities in order to make it clear and decrease irritation among the employees.
5.3.3.2 Communication

The external communication held with customers is foremost based on the meetings held each month, quarter, half year or whole year. These meetings are held for most of the customers. Further, Company C have weekly meetings internally. These meetings are for each employee, regardless department. The company also have an internal meeting once a month for the board and the owners. Company C have not identified any problem in the communication with their customers. Internally, the company is open for discussion concerning establishment or change of a routine that is not effective or working. Further, Company C have found it important to have a communication with their central business developer as well as other organizations providing external education. Company C states that routines and clearness have made their communication more understandable and easy to interpret.

5.3.3.3 Culture

The national culture is shown through each employee’s manner of behaviour and accordingly being proud of his or hers job. The employees have been striving for orderliness and keeping promises internally and externally.

Company C states that the clearer it is internally, the more satisfied and happy are employees. The organizational culture has had an impact on the implementation of KAM through former routines within the company. Therefore it has been easier for Company C to work even more customer oriented.

The company believe culture has to be taken into account when managing a change, since the company are in need of understanding the customer’s culture in order to develop it. Further, Company C states that organizational culture is a determining factor for a change to be managed in a successful way.

5.4 Company D

Company D operates in Växjö and are part of a nationwide business chain in 34 cities throughout Sweden and work with IT solutions, within the IT industry. The interviewee is the sales representative from the company. The representative have 21 years of experiences,
including experiences as sales man in other IT-related organizations. Table 11 presents a summary of the company and the interviewee.

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<th>Company D</th>
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<td>Industry</td>
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<td>Field of work</td>
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<td>Year of experience</td>
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<td>Previous experiences</td>
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Table 11. Company D

5.4.1 Key Account Management

5.4.1.1 Organizational Area

Company D states that the process of managing their most important customers have emerged over the years. Managing their most important customers is something that the company has improved on. The company states that every company having a selling role need to decide from the start that each customer can not be given the same amount of energy, as for example a larger customer. However, Company D does not state that smaller customers are unimportant but those can not be given the same amount of energy and time. The company have developed more efficient ways to create routines and processes in order to have enough time for the customers. For Company D it has been important to focus on internal workflows since emails have been given a too great capacity. The process of starting to manage the most important customers in a certain way have helped Company D to sharpen their prices and gaining more orders as they have become more competitive.

A customer had a request of more formalized agreements with the company, which emerged into a discussion with the owner of the company. The process of managing customers in different way started due to this one customer, seven to eight years ago. Company D have gained increased knowledge from 80 per cent of other customers, partly through surveys and interviews with customers. It is the responsibility of each sales person to ask his or hers customers. The company receive knowledge from other colleagues within the chain through CEO-meetings, sales meetings as well as technique meetings. This is conducted as an exchange of experiences in order to gain new ideas. Company D have more frequent
communication with the other geographically closer offices. Since each employee at the company have an interest for IT and technique employees read webpages and magazines in order to get further inputs.

Company D have had discussions about involving more representatives from the company in the management of larger and more important customers. In that way, more capacity and knowledge are brought into the meetings. As a procedure to manage the most important customers in a certain way, Company D have offered the opportunity for customers to access Company D’s systems. The customers can then access their own information and statistics concerning their cases. This has emerged in order to manage the most important customers in a different way.

According to the company, information has been provided to their employees through monthly meetings. These occasions are not firstly for discussion but for information. Instead Company D has other occasions in order to discuss processes, routines and daily work. They have travelled, had conferences each or every two years. During these occasions the focus has been on customers, processes, routines and their daily operations.

Company D have been working with Lean production. In order to be more efficient and become better there has to be procedures and policies established internally. Since the company have customers working with Lean production, Company D think it is valuable and important to know that language and understand their situation.

Company D have had a steering group or committee within the chain. This steering group have acted as a benchmark. Further, the company have had communications with others within the chain as well as reading the Internet, studies and tests. Company D have also used their suppliers in order to benchmark. The company have during a year or two utilized a council consisting of six to seven local and successful business people. The CEO mobilizes the council twice a year. This council provide truthful information and act in order to question the company. Company D highly value these opinions since it provide the company with useful information. Some of their opinions have provided concrete decisions concerning certain systems or procedures.
Chapter 5

Top management have to a large extent been involved and operate the questions concerning how to manage the most important customers. Due to the company’s shared ownership these two have been responsible for same areas in order for the company to operate smoothly even if one of them are absent.

Company D have an open atmosphere and emphasize employee opinions. The company express a greater relationship with the other offices within the chain with similar structure, size and customers. These colleagues act as a sounding board.

5.4.1.2 Key Account Area
Company D do not have a certain categorization of their customers. Instead the most important customers are valued as important due to certain events held for customers. The company arrange many events for customers perceived to be important to have a good relationship with. However, Company D does not only value money, economics and numbers as being of importance when deciding on important customers. There are many other factors than size of the customers, money and the number of employees. Factors such as valuable contacts and networks are of importance as well. Further, Company D states that a smaller customer can be interesting for the company and might contribute as well as a larger customer. The company request conversation and interaction between customers during their events. Company D encourage the customers to interact and network. However, the most important customers are not informed that they are valued as important customers. Instead these customers might understand it due to meetings and invitations to the different events held by Company D. More focus is put on the important customers.

Company D is not interested in the customer’s turnovers or revenues and is therefore not using a plan for their collaboration with a certain customer.

5.4.1.3 Key Account Managers/Team Area
The employees are not given certain customers. Instead the customers belong to the employee that find or attract the customer in the first place. It is only customers in public administration that might demand a wider knowledge of the employee and those customers therefore belong to a specific employee. That employee needs to have a good relationship with the county council. The other employees have however decreased their focus on IT and
increased the focus on communicating with enterprise and top management. Company D states that it is more beneficial to be a good seller to top management rather than be good at IT. The company think it is easier to gain the technical knowledge while the process of selling and managing top management at customers is more difficult.

Company D want their employees to be ready as sales people when employees are recruited. However, some sales courses have been provided for the employees. Further the company believe that sales courses were more common in the past than it is today. The company have instead emphasized to learn along the way. By asking questions and practicing the employees will gain further knowledge. As responsible for customers it is however of importance to know how to talk about economy, money and general values that a business owner listens to. Company D also argues the importance of mediate trust to the customers.

During the monthly meetings top management can highlight contributions from each department, where employees have done something exceptional in their work or effort. Each employee shall have the same mindset and strive towards the same objectives. Therefore, some motivations within Company D can be salary and attention from the company itself.

Company D states that it should not be seen as exceptional that employees manage their job, however a good reputation are given. The company can communicate good work by display it on the internal billboard.

5.4.2 Global Talent Management

5.4.2.1 Choice of KA manager

Company D do not attract potential employees from their customers. Instead new employees are advertised in newspapers or through the company’s wide contact net. The company say it is important to manage the daily work and being successful, however it is also important to have fun at work, otherwise the company do not think it will work in the long run. Company D therefore arrange events and travels for the employees and uses surveys conducted among the employees. The employees have the opportunity to express their opinions, still being anonymous. The company have involved the employees from the beginnings since agreements of cooperation are written with some customers.
Chapter 5

5.4.2.2 Right People
Company D values employees being comfortable and relaxed with talking to top management and talking economy with customers. The company states that IT is easier to talk about but employees being comfortable and able to mediate the company’s messages are valuable.

5.4.2.3 Right Knowledge
The company prefer previous experience in the field of selling towards top management. This has further been the focus in their previous advertisements for new employees. However the company do not request certain knowledge within software or IT related systems. The employees are provided with informational education one evening per month. These educations can contain new products on the market, calculations to use towards customers or technique related questions.

5.4.3 Change Management
5.4.3.1 Change
Company D have managed change by involving top management and thereafter basically inform the employees as well as communicated through the company’s intranet. Advertisements of new recruitments are one example of change within the company that is communicated through the intranet. Head of sales and head of technologies have been working on different processes and work flows at the company. These two were the main drivers while other employees were involved if needed.

5.4.3.2 Communication
The external communication Company D has with customers are foremost through phone calls, meetings or emails. The company also uses events and seminars for customers where the company can inform about changes or new happenings. However, the webpage is rarely used as a source of communication since it is kept as common, general information only. Instead the company have begun to offer a service to some customers in order to inform about problems, disruptions and keeping the customers updated with information. Company D arrange quarterly and half year meetings with customers they have an agreement of cooperation with. As the customers become more comfortable and educated in different techniques, meetings are held through Skype and via computers. Internally Company D uses
its intranet, which is seen as a library for documentation, as well as meetings with employees. Beside the intranet and meetings, Company D further sends a Friday mail to the employees with information about each department.

Company D perceive it to be too many emails internally and they are continuously looking for other ways to communicate. It is a common opinion from owners and top management to attend more meetings with customers, in both formal and informal structures. Visit the customers, talk to them and ask them questions as well as solving problems that might have occurred for some customers.

Concerning procurements for public administration the responsible employees have close communication with suppliers. Company D’s suppliers are involved in the larger projects in order to offer the correct solution and price to customers.

The company have been striving for to make the communication and information as easy, informative and concise as possible. Facts and information not of interest or importance are not communicated. Company D tries to mediate a message of less technique and instead more conversations about costs and the solution in money.

5.4.3.3 Culture
Company D states that it is common to talk about money and costs due to the fact that they operate in Småland. In some cases the company communicates a perspective of being a cheap and financial solution for customers since Company D believe that the customers can relate to that and be attracted. Further the company emphasizes the pressure of informing the customers that they are not the first one to buy the solutions offered by Company D. This is communicated towards customer with the expectation of receiving more customers willing to try. Company D provide the customers with the opportunity to end their agreements once a year, in order for the customers to feel that there are solutions and a way out if needed.

The organizational culture within Company D is perceived as free of concerns and that the company are willing to correct errors. However, the company states that they have a continuously present problem with the lack of insight and track of the stocks have been a
problem during inventories. The culture within Company D is to be available for customers and help them, but as a consequence having less control over their own stocks. Company D perceive themselves as generous in their management of existing customers. The company want the customers to feel easy and comfortable when turning to Company D. However, this perception creates additional work internally due to the lack of order and structure in the stocks.

The company states that culture probably has to be taken into account to a greater extent than they do today. Company D do not perceive themselves as knowledgeable or to a greater extent aware of the cultural impact on the company and its changes. Further Company D states that they more or less have ignored the customer’s culture but the company believe they have to be aware of customer’s cultures if they are suppose to work with larger companies. Company D perceive themselves as prone to change and ductile at the same time as they are walking in the same footsteps as in the past. However the company believe that culture can be a determining factor for managing change in a successful way.

5.5 Company E

Company E operates in Växjö and is one of the two offices within their business chain. The company was founded 1985 in Växjö and work in the field of IT and telecommunications, in the IT industry. The interviewee is owner, marketing- and HR manager as well as sales representative with 19 years of experiences. Previous experiences are within service and technique. See Table 12 for a summary of the company and the interviewee.

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<td>Previous experiences</td>
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Table 12. Company E
Company E states that they value each customer as important and therefore have not had a specific process to manage their customers in a certain way. Foremost, this is because the company do not perceive themselves to have the financial resources needed. The company believe that they need to cuddle and take care of customers more than they do today. Further, Company E states that there is not enough time to treat and take care of customers, as they would want to. There are no margins or resources available to allocate an employee responsible and maintain a contact with customers. However, Company E states that the positive and understanding customers are given greater attention while the loudest customers are not wanted. Therefore the positive customers are to a greater extent invited to events instead of the loud and noisy customers who often are not invited.

Company E states that they wish they could be able to do more of everything. However, they recently started to call customers once a week in order to see how they are doing. During these phone calls there are always some concerns or problems that arise which the company can help with. Further, Company E say it is very important that customers can feel the spirit of Company E. Therefore, it is required that the person calling the customers know how the company work and what values and beliefs they have. Company E think it is important to be present and take care of the company’s customers. The customers are the most important priority for the company. If the customers are not maintained, Company E find it hard to be present.

In order to gain knowledge about how Company E’s customers regarded the company they conducted a market research. Except for this, the company do not attempt to gain further knowledge other than information found on the Internet, discussed internally or mentioned by customers.

Company E have not established any policies, procedures or strategies concerning their management of customers. Instead short-term decisions from week to week are taken. If a good idea is developed, the company is ready to try it and determine the success by testing it. The company do not think they have long-term strategies concerning where they are heading or how the following year will look like. This is because the company believe they do not have enough time. However, Company E would like more planning if manageable.
Except the researches conducted by Company E, they also observe how other companies manage different situations. Foremost, the company use the knowledge and ideas within the company on how to act or behave. The company have listened to the customers in order to gain knowledge of what is good or not. They have noticed that a silent customer in most cases is a satisfied customer, as long as they do not hear any complaints. Company E states that it is easier to complain than give compliments.

Top management and the owner of Company E have always been involved in changes such as process of sales and how customers are managed. The owner of the company are also head of sales, with a background within technique, which have provided Company E with a broad thinking and deep insight.

The company emphasize to never betray a customer and instead focus on honesty, which is a great part of their organizational culture. Company E states that they rather loose a deal with a customer due to their honesty than are untrue to customers. Further, the company states that the truth will appear sooner or later.

5.5.1.2 Key Account Area
Company E believe that it is the meeting with the customer and the people within it, no matter how many employees, that is of importance. A smaller customer might not generate the same amount in income but this might be an important person to know in the future. The company discusses that smaller customers can not be seen as less important than larger customers. However, some customers might be more or less suitable for different products or solutions provided by Company E. Therefore, categorization of customers are instead based on what solutions that is best suitable for the customer than other factors such as their importance or size. Company E wants a win-win relationship with its customers. They select customers to invite to their events according to which customers might be of highest interest and in need of a solution from the company. However, in these cases Company E states that it is the money that determines which customer that is invited. The company have for some events invited customers that have solutions offered by Company E, so those customers can act as ambassadors and talk to other customers. Customers are not informed that Company E
have a specific interest in them rather than being invited to events, such as cinema or hockey. The company wants the events to be a nice and enjoyable happening.

Company E have not used a specific plan for their customers, however they have been using satisfied customers as references or ambassadors. For the customers who are asked to be a reference or ambassador, Company E have an informal plan but not affecting the management noticeable.

5.5.1.3 Key Account Managers/Team Area
Company E believe that their employees shall not sell if they can not manage the products or solutions. If the employees leave each problem to someone else, it might occur dissatisfaction among the customers. Instead Company E states that they rather take a step back and are honest with the customers.

The company possess technical competence internally and because there are few or none educations available externally, the company help and share knowledge internally. This help the employees to have new and updated information and new employees will learn in a good way. The employees in contact with customers have to have technical knowledge but Company E think it is important that sales people have an overall knowledge. An overall knowledge will provide the employees with a wider view and be better at solving problems. The employees are given attention and credit during the Monday meetings held at the company, if something good has been made. The company can discuss future or upcoming activities that will act as a motivation to make a good job and deliver what is expected. However, the company do not offer any particular reward to employees other than attention and credit.

5.5.2 Global Talent Management
5.5.2.1 Choice of KA manager
New employees are attracted to Company E through advertisements, but foremost through the networks and contacts the company have. The company employed a new sales person only based on its technical competence. However, the recruiting firm warned Company E that this new employee does not possess social competence. This employee does not fit into the group of other employees and take more energy than providing to the company. This
employee was given warnings in order for him to adjust and change. Therefore, Company E emphasize that the intuition and gut feeling are important when employing new people. The way in which Company E act, behave and manage their customers have emerged progressively. When new employees are employed that employee have to learn and listen to the old employees. In that way, the company provide new employees with spirit of the company and its values.

5.5.2.2 Right People
Company E values creativity among employees and employees with their own will and a driving force, instead of regular ‘yes men’ without own thoughts. Further, the company think it is important that their employees have personal competence as well as dare to say no if something is not working. Other characteristics of importance are to come up with ideas and most important of all is to fit into the group.

5.5.2.3 Right Knowledge
The company think that logical thinking and personal competence are the most important knowledge their employees can possess. However, the employee has to be able to manage a customer and have a technical mindset. Company E does not perceive it to be a benefit that employees have five years in university as an experience. The salary will automatically differ drastically and that person will move forward, to other companies in a close future. Company E believe that some competence within sales is congenital, however it can be developed. The company provide its employees with educations such as sales educations in order for the employees to further develop their expertise.

5.5.3 Change Management

5.5.3.1 Change
When Company E manages change the process is divided into smaller steps. Meetings are held in order to evaluate and divide work tasks to conduct before the next meeting. The owners are responsible for such processes and do not want to involve too many employees. Therefore the owners involve others if required. Company E thinks it is both time consuming and energy consuming, therefore the employees are foremost informed rather than involved in the processes. Such information is provided on the company’s internal forum or during Monday meetings.
5.5.3.2 Communication
The external communication with customers is basically through news messages, the webpage as well as the company’s Facebook page. Company E has also started to contact customers by phone. The company have ideas of starting a blog, which would help increase the statistics and readers to their webpage. A blog is by the company seen as a good way to meet their customers. Internally the company use their own forum where employees can take part of information or discuss. Everything that is communicated internally goes through the Monday meetings. The company states that the worst situation is when people do not get the right information, however Company E is not concerned that employees might miss important information. Important information will be spread within the company and the information will be provided to each employee. Company E think that the communication primary has to be held with the customers and employees. Further, the company states that competitors and possible cooperations are important to be open to and keep an eye on.

5.5.3.3 Culture
Company E believe that if a swede have decided on something it is agreed. The same goes for the company if they have taken care of something that will be delivered, everyone can count on it. Further, the Swedish culture is common and present according to the company. However, since the company do not operate in foreign markets they have no experiences of other national cultures. Company E discuss that they have heard that there might be differences even in Swedish market and Danish markets. Swedes are in the eyes of Company E more honest and trustworthy than Danes.

Company E argues that culture is a spirit within organizations. The organizational culture within Company E has progressively emerged from managing customers and the relationships with customers. Company E want to be a comforting and stable partner for the customers to rely on. The company further identify their organizational culture as honest, by building a personal contact with customers and by operate in a local context.

Company E does not think national culture has to be taken into account when managing change. However, the organizational culture and spirit within the company are important so that no one is working in the opposite direction. Further, the company think it is important
that each employee is heading towards the same goals. Decisions taken within the company has to be comparable with the spirit. Company E states that customer management can be improved if employees adjust the way they present offers in a better way for customers.

5.6 Chapter Summary
This chapter presented the data gathered from the five interviews held with organizations in IT and Management industry. Each organization was presented individually.
Chapter 6

Data Analysis
6. Data Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of the empirical data gathered in the previous chapter. Each participating organization is presented individually with the same structure and headlines in order to make it easy to follow. The structure follows the same structure presented in the second chapter, Literature Review, starting with Key Account Management, followed by Global Talent Management and finally Change Management. In order to compare the data gathered from each organization, the chapter ends with a final summary analysis based on all the participating organizations. The analysis in this chapter strives to answer the research questions stated in the third chapter.

6.1 Company A

6.1.1 Key Account Management

6.1.1.1 Organizational Area

Company A is a small size company with the traditional hierarchic government from top to bottom but with the top management involved at the frontline with the most important customers, which according to Workman et al. (2003) is a requirement in order to fulfil the whole implementation throughout the company.

Company A does not have a specific time for when KAM was implemented, it seems to have gradually been implemented in the company since it is described as something that has progressively been managed in the company’s daily work. It seems as the company has a policy to treat all their customers equally since this is the answer to several questions regarding their key account management. Though, it seems as internally they value them according to how much money they generate since they differentiate them accordingly by inviting the most profitable customers to certain events hosted by the company. This could be seen as if there is not a clear organized work with customers and no strategic treatment of key customers. The differentiation between their external and internal categorization of a customer could create a gap between the company and the customer, and not create a strategic fit as Cheverton (2012) explain is the ultimate business relationship strategy for long-term profitability. Due to the fact that the owners of the company manage the most important customers it can be an indication of a tendency to take short-term decisions instead of making long-term strategies.
Chapter 6

6.1.1.2 Key Account Area

The only clear KA plan, policy and strategy description to be found is when problems occur and in the strategy of how to communicate with the customers, which can be seen as Company A is weak in terms of KAM strategies. Due to Company A’s explanation about the lack of time when it comes to their customers and the expression of a desire for more strategies and long-term thinking, it seems as Company A does not have a successful KAM. This could be a result from the weak strategies and goals in both customer relationships and among skilled employee’s, which however are of importance according to Gosselin and Bauwen (2006). The lack of description of KAM strategies could be seen since there are no routine based KAM strategies for the employees to follow in their daily KAM work. This might lead to small errors in the management of each customer and could be damaging for the business relationship in the long run, which is argued by Davies and Ryals (2009). The lack of strategies is also to be found in the answers regarding how the company manage their customers, which can be seen as Company A does not have a mutual fit between them and their customers.

6.1.1.3 KA Managers/Team Area

Due to the fact that Company A describes that it is up to each employee to manage their customer relationships “in the most suitable way”, there seems to be a lack of strategies and goals for the management of the company’s customers. Thereby, there is no emphasizing on the most important customers. This could also mean that there are no clear goals for each relationship and therefore, it can not be seen as the company is moving forward towards a successful implementation. According to McDonald et al. (2000) and Ryal and Rodgers (2007) it is important to have a clear KA plan with stated goals if the implementation and also the relationships are to be managed in a successful way. Ryal and Rodgers (2006) and Sehoon and McLean (2012) emphasize the importance of motivational rewards, however there are no motivational rewards mentioned and Company A is answering no to the specific questions regarding potential rewards to the employee, which can be seen as Company A does not motivate their employees to extra efficient performance in their daily work with customers.
6.1.2 Global Talent Management

6.1.2.1 Choice of KA Manager, right knowledge, right people

As all customers are to be treated equally, it can be seen as all employees put a lot of energy on all customers. Thereby, the right amount of energy on the right customers by the right employee is not performed. Therefore, it cannot be seen as Company A has strategically or systematically employees and divided their employees in what Stahl et al. (2012) describes as an efficient way. This is also strengthening by the explanation on which terms new employees are employed, which is mostly based on personal chemistry and soft parts, supported by Nätti and Palo (2012). Company A employed an employee based on his fit within the company and did not require the right knowledge. Since no problems were mentioned derived from this, it can be seen as the right people is in advance of the right knowledge.

As there is no specific training for client management to go to or any motivational rewards that create clear guidelines on what is expected of them, which is emphasized by Sehoon and McLean (2012), this could lead to the employee not doing more than they need. In the company's point of view this does not create efficiency or competitive advantage regarding customer management.

6.1.3 Change Management

6.1.3.1 Change

The employees have recently been involved in discussions regarding changes, which might be an indication of that Company A sees positive results from involving the whole company during a change. Therefore, it might be seen as Company A has the possibility to enhance efficient changes in the company, which is argued by Nätti and Palo (2012). Though, since they previously were not involved, it might be the reason for Company A expression of a lack of time for KAM. According to McDeavitt et al. (2012), all employees has to be prepared in time before the change are to be made in order to be enhance success from it. Since the changes previously took longer time to spread in the company, this might be a reason for Company A’s experienced of lack of time regarding key customer management and therefore, difficulties with moving forward with the implementation.
6.1.3.2 Communication

Since Company A exchange information and have discussions with other accounting companies, it can be seen as they use benchmarking to help them with their implementation process of KAM. Benchmarking towards other organizations is emphasized by both Cheverton (2012) and Davies and Ryals (2009). The company’s internal communication habits are mostly emails and face-to-face meetings but since customer visits are prioritized, there are no guarantee that all employees are present at each meeting which might lead to that information gets misinterpreted. However, Linke and Zerfass (2011) and McDeavitt (2012) both express the importance of having a clear internal communication, free from misinterprets.

Roosbloom and Larsen (2003) argue the importance of having a easy and consistent communication with customers. The communication with Company A’s customers is expressed as a desire to tailor each customer relationship according to the customer’s needs but seems to fail due to lack of time available. This might be due to the previously mentioned lack of systematically employ people and the company policy of treating all customers equally.

6.1.3.3 Culture

The company itself does not describe the company’s organizational culture. Instead, culture is described as brought by each employee from their previous jobs, which might indicate of a rather weak organizational culture in Company A. This might be due to the fact that the employees have their own responsibility for their own customers, which might create individual behaviour instead of an organizational behaviour.

According to Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman et al. (2003) KAM needs to be established in the organizational culture in order to be seen as successfully implemented, which here is not to be found. Connections can be made to the company’s statement of lack of time for individual customer relationships and by that indicating of a confirmation of the theory.

*Company A does not seem to have any clear strategies regarding their most important customer and therefore, it might be the reason for the lack of time to treat them differently in a strategic way. The fact that there are no strategically distribution among work tasks it can*
be seen as contributing to the lack of time that Company A is expressing as thus there is no particular responsible that stir the directions during the implementation process of the most important customer relationships.

6.2 Company B

6.2.1 Key Account Management

6.2.1.1 Organizational Area

Company B has due to their description of difficulties of categorizing their customers, not entirely implemented KAM into their organization. In spite of the 80/20 strategy in KAM, the company express an uncertainty on which terms they should categorize their customers. Cheverton (2012) emphasize the importance of clearly identified customers, which is supported by Gosselin and Bauwen (2006). It can be seen as if Company B’s most important customers are not totally managed by this categorization and might be an indication of weakness in their key account management implementation. Though, they yet seem to successfully manage their relationships since the categorization is made together with the customers and thereafter registered in an enterprise system and also communicated at all company meetings. This can be seen as Company B involve the whole company as well as the customers in their key account work, which according to Cheverton (2012) is enhancing KAM implementation success.

6.2.1.2 Key Account Area

Company B fulfils half of the points on the success factor list. What they do not have is a KA manager employed explicitly for the most important customers, which Davies and Ryals (2009) argue are of importance for a successful implementation of KAM. This might be the reason for the expression of not being completely sure of if the 80/20 rule is the right strategy and thereby, not able to finalize the implementation process of KAM. As Davies and Ryals (2009) mentions, it is preferable to have a responsible KA manager in order to move the process forward. It can also be seen as due to the top management responsibility of the most important customers, decisions in customer relationships might be taken on short-term forecasts rather than long-term. The theories stated by Gosselin and Bauwen (2006) about the importance of having policies, procedures or strategies, and by Brady (2004) according having top management involved and responsible are not emphasized by Company B. Due to that no one is specifically responsible for the managing of KAM in Company B and that there
is a lack of strategies regarding KAM in the near future, it might be a penalty of the fact that no updates regarding KAM has been made for the recent years.

6.2.1.3 KA Manager/Teams Area
Having fully skilled and educated employees are emphasized by Shetcliff (2003), Davies and Ryals (2009) and Ozegovic and Sarac (2012) as important in the implementation of KAM. Due to that employees are employed according to their knowledge of the company’s products and not on their skills or expertise in KAM, it can be seen as Company B does not have a trained KA responsible handling the work with KAM in the organization. In difference to Sehoon and McLean (2012), who argue the importance of motivation and rewards for employees, Company B have a lack of other known success factors is motivational rewards for the employees. Hence, the company still has made a categorization with customers.

6.2.2 Global Talent Management
6.2.2.1 Choice of KA Manager, right people, right knowledge
Training for the employees occurs on the requirement from the Swedish Financial Supervisory and thereby it can be seen as the company has a well trained workforce, which is said to be of necessity in order to retain talented employees according to Scullion and Collings (2010). Also, the requirement of an investment advisor certificate that resulted from the implementation of KAM can be seen as that Company B gets qualified employees and thereby, creates stronger possibilities for creating a talent management workforce. This is said to increase the gain and sustainability of competitive advantage in a KAM implementation. Further, it is a necessity according to Stahl et al. (2012). Therefore, it might be seen as Company B more or less hires and divides work task in a strategic way, which Sehoon and McLean (2012) points out is of importance. Considered the absence of a KA responsible, this might be the success factor that contributes to the tailored relationships they have with their customers.

6.2.3 Change Management
6.2.3.1 Change
Company B points out that things changes over time and it can therefore be seen as a company that advocates openness and thus is a business where changes can take place. There
are no specific strategies regarding how changes are managed, which to McDeavitt et al. (2012) states are of importance in order to manage a transformation in a successful way. The uncertainty of key account categorization might therefore be a result from the lack of planning for the change in their key accounts. According to Davies and Ryals (2009) planning for change, especially for the internal resources are of importance. Further, a clear vision has to be communicated to all involved parties in order to ensure the success of a change (McDeavitt et al., 2012). All employees were involved from the starting point of the implementation, it might therefore be seen as Company B confirms the theory by McDeavitt et al. (2012).

6.2.3.2 Communication
The internal communication takes place through emails, frequent meetings and by telephones that are connected between the departments, which might be seen as enhancing the flow of information. This is of importance according to Roosbloom and Larsen (2003) in order for effective communicate to take place. Therefore, Company B has eliminated place for errors in the communication process and are facilitating the communication in the process of change. Their communication with customers takes place face-to-face, which could also seen as eliminating misinterpretations in the relationship with the customers. Batts et al. (2012) argues that misunderstandings are eliminated if message are interpreted in the way it was intended.

6.2.3.3 Culture
Openness is mentioned as a mean to enhanced possibilities and to solve problems and can be traced in several answers during the interview and therefore seems to be found it most of the company’s work. Therefore, this might be an indication of belonging to the company’s organizational culture. Since no clear statement regarding the organizational culture is made, KAM cannot be found as being a part of the company’s culture. However, organizational culture is argued by Homburg et al. (2002) as important if an implementation of KAM is to be successful. Another argument is the fact that KAM is not visual in all the company’s work, which is what KAM needs to do in order be regarded as being a part of the organizational culture (Workman et al., 2003). Therefore, the lack of KAM in the company culture might be the reason for not being able to complete and be satisfied with the implementation of KAM.
Due to that there are different meanings of what is said to be done and what is actually done in their work with the customers, it may be a sign of a weak organizational culture because they are not clear on what the company stands for. In order to communicate with others it is important to emphasize your own organizational culture, according to Jameson (2007). Though, the company’s strategy to embrace to customer’s environment when they visit them might be an indication of an awareness of their customer’s organizational culture, which is important according to Batts et al. (2012).

Company B seems to manage their customers due to their co-creating of the relationship with the customers, despite the absence of KA managers and a KA team. What the Company do have is special requirements among employees, strategies with customer focus and organizational culture awareness.

6.3 Company C
6.3.1 Key Account Management
6.3.1.1 Organisational Area/Key Account Area
Company C have managed the implementation of KAM through a specific KAM training and has thus been able to create a strategic fit between the company and each customer. According to Nätti and Palo (2012), an implementation of KAM has to be emphasized and paid further attention in order to manage the implementation in a successful way. The company also strategically matched the management of the customers with the most suitable employees, which according to Davies and Ryals (2009) are of importance. Company C also motivates and rewards the employees in form of dividends, which is supported by Ryal and Rodgers (2006) and Sehoon and McLean (2012). Further, Company C also expresses that the training has been positive on the organization’s work, which is emphasized by Shetcliff (2003).

The top management was involved during the whole implementation process, which according to Workman et al. (2003), can be seen as a vital factor in order for KAM to be successfully implemented. Since top management was involved but not the ones in charge for the implementation, they were not the ones making the decisions and thereby might have eliminated the possibility for short term decisions and instead enhance the possibility for long-term strategies. Since the implementation seems to have been established as a result
from the training, it can be seen as external KAM experts is a positive factor during KAM implementation.

6.3.1.2 KA Manager/Team Area
The KAM training Company C had for the implementation indicates that great knowledge was available, which is important for a successful implementation according to Ozegovic and Sarac (2012). There were no KA manager or a KA team involved during the training. Hence, there is no KA manager available at the company and thereby not supporting the theory by Davies and Ryals, (2009), which highlights the importance of a hired KA manager during the implementation.

6.3.2 Global Talent Management
6.3.2.1 Choice of KA Manager, right people, right knowledge
The recruitment of new employees is mostly based on personal characteristics than on the specific working qualities each person has for the individual job, supported by Stahl et al. (2012). This could lead to Company C not always hiring the right person with the right skills for the job, which is emphasized in the theory by Sehoon and McLean (2012). Though, it was mentioned that customers was divided among the employees according to suitability, which might indicate of a systematically strategic distribution of work tasks during the implementation process. The company offers training for employees and therefore, employees gets the right knowledge at the company. Further on, Company C motivates and rewards the employees in form of dividends, which according to McDeavitt et al. (2012), might increase the efficiency among them and as a result, increase the efficiency for the whole company performance. This might therefore have contributed to increased efficiency among the employees and thereby, facilitated the implementation process.

6.3.3 Change Management
6.3.3.1 Change
Company C have established procedures for the responsibilities by each employee and thus, one might say that company C enhances a change because there are no question marks, supported by McDeavitt et al. (2012) who emphasizes the importance of managing change as a success factor. This can be seen when company C describes the implementation of KAM; where all employees of the company had to take part from the beginning of the
implementation and are still involved today. Further, participation of employees during the implementation is argued by Cheverton (2012) as of importance for the success of the implementation. Due to the fact that the whole company was involved during KAM implementation, it might have enhanced the success of the implementation since it is favourable for each party to know their role during an implementation, according to McDeavitt et al. (2012). It can therefore be seen as Company C managed the change process in an efficient way, which is supported by the fact that the company does not express any lack of time or other implications with their customer relationships.

6.3.3.2 Communication
Communication with customers is established on a frequent, routine base and might be seen as a possibility for generous flow of information between the company and the customers, supported by Roosbloom and Larsen (2003). The internal communication is also routinely based, emphasized by Like and Zerfass (2011), which might not leave any room for loss of information or miss communication. The company does not mention any perceived problems with their communication and is instead describing how this routine based communication has enhanced the implementation in the company. This can be seen as Company C has minimized the risks for misunderstandings (Batts et al., 2012). The frequent communication with other companies in the business chain can be seen as they have the possibility to benchmark themselves to other organizations, which is of importance according to Cheverton (2012) and Davies and Ryals (2009), and by that, they might enhance the possibility to improve their KAM work. Though, other companies do not seem to have influenced Company C during the change and thereby not contributed to the success of the implementation process.

6.3.3.3 Culture
Orderliness and keeping promises towards both employees and customers are considered important business factors in company C, which can indicate that Company C has met the requirement of creating trust with customers. According to Batts et al. (2012), it is of great importance to understand others in order to manage the relationship in an efficient and successful way. In turn, it might lead to a more positive development of the relationships with customers for Company C in the long run. This also demonstrates their striving of routines and structure for efficient work, which belongs to Wengler et al. (2006) theory of focusing on
a mutual goal in each business relationship. The same factors are described in the context of
the organizational culture (Hofstede et al., 2010). Because of the recurring description of
these factors, it could be seen as that company C has KAM in its organizational culture,
emphasized by Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman et al. (2003). According to Hofstede et
al. (2010) organizational culture determines how employees work and this might be
confirmed due to the consistency of KAM in everything the company operates. Due to that
Company C begun the implementation strategically from the beginning and directly created a
strategic fit between them and the customers, it might thus be the reason that there are no
gaps to be filled afterwards.

Company C responds concretely to the questions. They seem to have a clear picture of what
they are doing and what is expected to be done. The implementation is both stated by the
company and can due to the investigation be seen as successful.

6.4 Company D

6.4.1 Key Account Management

6.4.1.1 Organisational Area/Key Account Area

A situation similar to KAM has been implemented in Company D on a customer’s demand
and seems to have developed a structure of how customer management will be done by
interaction together with the customers. Gosselin and Bauwen (2006) and Davies and Ryals
(2009) emphasize the importance of having policies, procedures and strategies within the
organization. Company D can be seen as having strategic thinking since it is in their quest for
on customer event where they put out potential customers and suppliers next to each other,
which shows signs of strategic thinking in other parts of Company D. Therefore, it can be
considered as KAM is a part of the organizational culture, further supported by Homburg et
al. (2002) and Workman et al. (2003). Other offices in the corporate chain is used as a
sounding board, which could increase the potential for additional policies, supported by
Gosselin and Bauwen (2006) and Davies and Ryals (2009), as well as changes can reach the
company due to the theory of benchmarking. Benchmarking towards others is an important
factor for a successful implementation of KAM according to Cheverton (2012) and Davies
and Ryals (2009). Customers have access to the company’s information sharing systems on
current information and statistics on each customer, which can be seen as creating trust with
customers. Due to their help from company advisors, where successful people can confer
their opinion on their work, they can thus be seen as Company D enhances the possibility of new strategies and processes that promotes the work with KAM, according Cheverton (2012).

6.4.2 Global Talent Management

6.4.2.1 KA Manager/Team Area & Choice of KA Manager, Right people, Right knowledge

The fact that KAM was implemented on the demand from a customer as with the strategy Lean production, it might be seen as Company D does not have the knowledge in-house to enhance the development of the work. Yet, having the knowledge in-house have been seen as a benefit for the implementation process according to Ozegovic and Sarac (2012) and Workman et al. (2003). This might be due to that recruitment of new employees are based on personal characteristics such as the ability to speak to top management, exudes a sense of security and trustworthiness towards customers and their ability to talk in cash terms. Further, this is supported in the theory about personal characteristics and employing the right people by Nätti and Palo (2012) and Stahl et al. (2012). It can though be seen as that new recruitment in the company is based on terms in favour regarding the company’s customers, which might be a sign of what McDeavitt et al. (2012) states that it is important to hire and divide work strategically. External experts is evaluating the company’s performance, which could contribute to what is also mentioned by Company D and emphasized by Sehoon and McLean (2012) as important; educate the employees.

6.4.3 Change Management

6.4.3.1 Change

There seems to be no established routine based process regarding change at the company, contradictory to McDeadvitt et al. (2012) who argues the importance of communicating a clear vision to ensure that each party understand. Though, due to the available intranet it might be seen as it enhances efficient information flow during a change. Therefore, Company D shows tendencies for having somewhat a strategy during change, emphasized by Cheverton (2012) as an important factor for the implementation of KAM.
6.4.3.2 Communication

The frequent meetings held within the chain and across all departments can be seen as promoting the dissemination of information in the company, which is supported by Roosbloom and Larsen (2003). The external communication towards customers takes place via phone, Skype, emails and quarterly meetings as well as semi-annual meetings, which could be seen as frequent communication habits that could foster cooperation between customer and supplier. Due to this consistent communication it can be seen as the risk for misunderstandings are decreased, which is of importance for communication to be efficient according to Batts et al. (2012). Company D also expresses a desire of having more frequent face-to-face meetings with the customer, which could be seen as the frequent routine based meetings have had a positive impact on their customer relations.

6.4.3.3 Culture

Company D mentions that the stereotype ‘Smålänning’ is used as a bait for customers in Småland, which could indicate of some awareness of national culture’s affect on business relationships. Theory about national culture emphasize that an individuals values and opinions reflect an individual’s behaviours (Eden, 2009), which might be the reason to this belief of Company D. At the same time, Company D seems to be unaware and ignore their customer’s organizational culture since they describe it as less important. This unawareness of customer’s culture might be harmful since it is argued to be of great importance to understand other cultures if to manage the relationship in a successful way (Batts et al., 2012). Although, Company D seems to be well-conscious about its own culture due to the straight answer of it as open and promoting changes and according to Linke and Zerfass (2011) and Jameson (2007), it is a benefit to have awareness of their own culture since it can enhance the communicate with others. For Company D, these factors are visible in the description of how the company has developed new strategies and how they allowed both customers and employees affect operation, since KAM and lean production was implemented on their request. There are also signs of openness in the company in form of their frequent discussions and cooperation with other companies in the chain and the accessibility for customers of the information that Company D has collected about them. The focus of the company could therefore be said to be on the customer relationships, which might be a sign of KAM in the organizational culture. Having openness towards KAM within the
organizational culture can be seen as the organizational culture supporting KAM, which is emphasized by Homburg et al. (2002).

*Company D have throughout openness about new strategies methods, processes and people. They express efficiency and time saving as a result from their work. Despite the absence of the known success factors regarding a KA manager, Company D manage to see positive results from the KAM implementation. Due to the help from experts in the field, who frequently evaluates the work of Company D, it might improve the development with KAM. Company D are successful regarding customer management and has KAM in the organizational culture.*

6.5 Company E

6.5.1 Key Account Management

6.5.1.1 Organizational Area/Key Account Area

Due to the lack of financial liabilities and time, KAM is said to not have been concretely implemented. Company E still has a way of working with their customers that demonstrates KAM; By adapting the offer to the customer's needs, have dedicated employees who calls once a week to all customers to determine their satisfaction, and benchmarking with other companies. This goes hand in hand with the theories of factors having importance for the implementation of KAM, such as benchmarking towards others (Cheverton, 2012) and have employees dedicated tasks concerning the customers (Davies and Ryals, 2009). Company E also expresses a desire to work with more long-term strategies and goals, which could be seen as a cause followed by the positive impact that the KAM processes has generated on the company’s performance. Working with long-term strategies and goals are emphasized by Gosselin and Bauwen (2006) as important factors in the KAM implementation. However, the company believes that all customers are equally important, which is different to what Gosselin and Bauwen, (2006), McDonald et al. (2000) and Cheverton, (2012) argues for of the importance to have clearly identified customers and separations. Perceiving all customers equal can result in all being treated equally in terms of efforts made and thus does not promote the ability to customize each customer relationship based on individual customer needs. There might be a risk of losing or misunderstand customers if all are perceived on equal terms. However, they do internally categorize the customers according to how profitable they are, which compared to the external way of categorize them as equals, could
create a gap between the customer and the supplier when there is no mutual understanding of the relationship.

An identification can be made of strategic thinking as Company E's prospected most profitable customers are invited to events where existing satisfied customers are used as ambassadors. This could be a sign of that Company E is working result oriented but at the same time, seems to be hindered by their organizational culture, which is described as being honesty. Therefore, it seems as Company E does not know how to manage their customers in a fair and honest way.

6.5.1.2 KA Manager/Team Area
Company E do not have a responsible KA manager or a KA team, which however are argued to be important for a KAM implementation (Davies and Ryals, 2009; Cheverton, 2012; Guenzi and Pardo, 2007). Though, new employees are partly employed according to knowledge about how they handle customers, which might be of value since all employees have customer responsibility. For an implementation of KAM to be successful, trained and skilled employees are of importance (Shetcliff, 2003; Davies and Ryals, 2009; Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012), which Company E seems to have taken into consideration. Though, there seems to be a favour of Company E to prioritize people who are creative and independent. This might not be seen as directly increasing the efficiency during an implementation of KAM with the customers but it might be seen as enhancing the process due to openness among employees.

6.5.2 Global Talent Management
6.5.2.1 Choice of KA Manager, right people, right knowledge
There is no sign of strategic thinking in the selection of employees for increased sales results. Recruitment of new employees is made according to their ability to think logical and to appear honestly as well as people with their own will and personal skills. This might be an indication of that there is no use of systematic employment, which according to Stahl et al. (2012) creates a competitive advantage for a company. Further, Company E seems to emphasize the theory of attracting the right people while taking the concerns of the workforce into consideration (Schuler et al., 2011). It can also be seen as Company E attract, what in theory by Scullion and Collings (2010) are called key talented employees, suitable for the
organization. Further, the company employed an employee according to his technical competence but he did not socially fit into the company. Even though the right technical knowledge was present, the social knowledge was of greater importance. Therefore, it can be seen as the right employee is more important than the right knowledge of the employee, which is supported by Nätti and Palo (2012). Since the owner is described as being involved in the sales processes and during the KAM implementation, Company E could enhance their possibility of generating ideas and development processes as their involvement is seen as a key factor in the change process according to Workman (2003).

6.5.3 Change Management

6.5.3.1 Change
In Company E the owners control changes and the rest of the employees only gradually get to take part of it. Hence, Company E does not seem to involve the entire organization at the beginning of the implementation. That might have lead to that the distribution of the changes takes longer time than necessary, since all employees may not know their role or responsibility (McDeavitt et al., 2012). Not having all employees involved or informed can be seen in the company’s statement of lack of time for long-term customer strategies today.

6.5.3.2 Communication
As the internal communication takes place through weekly meetings and due to that they have their own business forum for discussions, it could be seen as an opportunity for right interpreted information inside the organisation. Having opportunity for right interpreted information are of great importance according to Roosbloom and Larsen (2003). As the meetings seems to run smoothly each monday, it can also be seen as the employees can rely on these meetings for securing any necessary information. Further, these meetings can enhance the distribution of changes in their customer relationships, as well as with their key accountants. By securing necessary information the company can be seen to decrease the risk for misunderstandings both internally and externally (Batts et al., 2012).

External communication is described as “a silent customer is a satisfied customer”, which might indicate of a weak strategic communication with the customers according to Roosbloom and Larsen (2003). Though, the company recently started to call each customer
once a week to discover any problems or room for improvements. This effort can be seen as the former strategy of “silent customers” might not have been useful.

6.5.3.3 Culture
Since customer management does not occur uniformly throughout the organization in its operations, there might not be any established customer management strategy in the organizational culture. For that reason, it do not seem as Company E know which their most important customers are and that might create an obstacle for long-term planning of customer relationships. Since Gosselin and Bauwen (2006), McDonald et al. (2000) and Cheverton (2012) emphasize the importance of having clearly identified customers in a situation of KAM, it can be seen as Company E’s organizational culture is not supporting a KAM implementation to its fullest. A frequently used word from company E is honesty. They seem to consider honesty as an important part to be held by the employees and followed in all modes of customer management. The organizational culture will determine how employees work and how they relate to others (Hofstede et al., 2010), which might indicate that Company E highly value and see honesty as a part of their work and tasks. It can further be seen as honesty is a large part of the company E’s organizational culture. Company E is indicating an awareness of organizational culture and knowledge of how important it is that it appears in everything the company does. This is emphasized by Linke and Zerfass (2011) and Jameson (2007) since an awareness of one’s own culture can enhance the communication with others. However, the company does not believe that the customer’s organizational culture needs to be considered and thereby, it might be seen as Company E holds tightly on their own culture. Though according to Batts et al. (2012), it can be seen as Company E are not managing their customer relationships in the most successful and efficient ways, since they do not consider customer’s cultures. The choices of work or assignments that Company E takes on therefore seems to have to support the existing organizational culture. With that said, Company E seems to only adapt strategies and process changes that is considered as being honest. As a result, this might be a reason for not fully implementing KAM as a strategy. Due to their statement of seeing KAM as a way of “cuddle with the customers” it might indicate as seeing KAM as a dishonest way of working with customers. Finally it might indicate, in contrary to theories of Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman et al. (2003), that Company E’s organizational culture is not supporting an implementation of KAM or operations of KAM.
Company E is showing signs of strategies adapted from KAM and is also expressing the need of KAM processes at the company. Further, they seem to have noticed the benefits of frequent customer contact, derived from their weekly calls, and have thus begun a KAM implementation. In order to continue and fulfil the desire to keep up with the customers, the company seems to need more of KAM structure in their work and thus a supporting organizational culture that enhances the KAM strategies throughout the organization. Based on the empirical data there is no KAM in their organizational culture.

6.6 Summary of data analysis
A summary of the analysis made per company are presented below, connecting the strongest indications between the companies.

6.6.1 Key Account Management
6.6.1.1 Organizational Area/Key Account Area

Companies B, C and D stated that they have announced who their key customers are, but only company C has notified their most important customers. This might indicate that Company C is the only company who has successfully completed the theory of a strategic fit in the relationships between company and customer. As Company C is the company who seems to have the most positive results from KAM, due to the description of easiness in work tasks and no statement of any problems, this might be seen as it is an advantage to identify and notify who the most important customers are in an implementation of KAM in order to have successful results.

All companies more or less base their KAM categorization according the revenues they generate. However, Company C and D also consider the customer's network and development potential as equally important. As these two companies are the strongest in KAM success, it can be seen as more aspects than money needs to be considered.

The implementation of how to handle customers was described as progressively made on company A, B, D and E, and all except Company D described trouble with finding time for all their customers. This might be an indication of to not involve the employees from the beginnings have a negative impact on the process, which confirms the theory by Nätti and
Palo (2012). Company C, where all employees attended a special training for the implementation, demonstrated the strongest and clearest answers to how the company is working and thinking regarding KAM and also mentioned that there are no question marks or gaps in their customer relationships. It might therefore be seen as outside expertise can be an advantage in the implementation process. Top management might therefore not be vital for the implementation, which is different from what Workman et al. (2003) who argues for top management involvement through the whole process. The theory by Nätti and Palo (2012) of employees participating at an early stage seems to have a more direct impact on the success of the implementation. Top management involvement was found at each company and they all described that they are the ones responsible for the most important customers. However, since top management was responsible for all the decision making and no company stated to manage long term planning throughout the organization, top management can again be seen as not being the most successful choice of most important customers’ decision maker.

KAM strategies are noted at each company, strongest in Company C and D due to their throughout startegical thinking in each investigated theoretical area. The weakest strategies seems to be in Company A, which might be connected to the companies lack of time and resources to handle their customers more efficient since there are few clear strategies to follow. Compared to company C’s indication of time saving and succesfull implementation, this might indicate that strategies and procedures are helping the organization in their daily work with KAM due to the guidelines and instructions that comes with a strategy. There might be a positive relationship between the amount of strategies and the company’s efficiency. Strategies seems to have a direct impact on the success of an implementation.

6.6.1.2 KA Manager/Team Area

No company seems to have someone solely in charge of the work with KAM implementation except for Company C, who hired an outside training firm to assist during implementation. Since Company C was found to have the clearest result of KAM, this might be an indication of a positive effect from having a responsible stiring the implementation process. Due to the fact that Company C is the only company were the top mangement was not in charge of the implementation, it might also indicate of having enhanced long term decisions instead of decisions generating short term gains. The rest of the companies supports this indication.
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since they are describing difficulties with their long-term planning. An additional argument regarding Company C is their statement of their long-term decisions as being beneficial.

6.6.2 Global Talent Management

6.6.2.1 Choice of KA Manager, right people, right knowledge

The company who had indications of strategically employed and/or divided the work according to employees skills was the same companies who stated that they experienced a positive gain from their KAM implementation. Only Company C has requirements of customer oriented knowledge among the employees. This can be seen as if company C is putting the KAM work on top of the priority list, indicating of KAM having a strong place in company C’s organizational culture since it is mirrored in every aspect of the business. The employees customer oriented knowledge might therefore have been of value during the implementation due to that the customer’s needs has been a priority at each decision for each employee. Most companies employed new employees based on soft parts and seems to be aiming to find people who fit in to the company due to their explanation of how personal chemistry and soft parts are more important than educational knowledge. One company employed an employee according to his competence but found trouble with him socially since he did not fit in. Another company did the opposite; employed employees based on personal chemistry and did not express any difficulties. This might be an indication if even if the right knowledge exist, it might not be utilized if the person does not fit into the company.

No company have employed a specific responsible as a KA managers or have been putting together a specific KA team. This is probably since they all more or less manage to handle their customers and might not be a vital importance for a succesfull KAM implementions. Due to that Company C had external help and all employees got involved from the beginning, it seems as it is enough to involve and educate the whole company for a successful implementation. Not only the employees handling the most important customers are selected for excellence but everyone in the company may need to be strategically selected in order to create an efficient entity in the company. This might improve company performance and thereby facilitating the possibility to accomplish competitive advantage.
6.6.3 Change Management

6.6.3.1 Change

Four companies involved their employees gradually at a change and they all had in common that they had problems with time constraints related to their most important customer management. This could be an indication of that the employees’ late involvement has taken additional time due to the need of educating them gradually instead of all at once. This might have slowed down the work with KAM implementation in the companies. It might also be the case that it has created a distinct obstacle for the success of an implementation. Since four companies indicated that they had paused or ended their implementation process due to lack of time and resources.

All companies stated that they are open to change but only company C had a strategy for managing change. Since Company C can be seen as the company were KAM implementation have had most success, a clear strategy for managing change might therefore be seen as beneficial. Company C also stated that each employee knows their place and task assignment, which leaves no room for mistakes or errors during the change process.

6.6.3.2 Communication

The companies that had the most routine based communication was the same companies who had the strongest result of KAM. These companies both had a strong organizational culture including KAM and might thus mean that KAM exist in everything the company operates. Therefore, the organizational culture seems to be the reason for their frequent communication and not the other way around.

Company E personally called their customers each week to ensure customer satisfaction and would for that reason be able to detect any problems before they have a negative effect on the relationship with the customer. This could be seen as an attempt to establish a stronger and more consistent communication towards the customers. Moreover, it might increase willingness and goodwill from customers.

The right person with the right knowledge at the right place could be seen as promoting efficient communication at a company. In Company C there was a clear distribution of work tasks and, compared to the other four companies who did not state strategies connected to the
distribution of work task, Company C seems to have the most stable customer management. Further, it might be due to the amount of strategies and established procedures in Company C. Thus, communication can still be seen as indirect affecting KAM implementation if the right people with the right knowledge have direct influence. This can be seen in Company C that explicitly divided all work tasks during a change in order to ensure that everyone knew their position and part of it. Since Company C had the most successful implementation results, this might indicate that communication runs by itself if the employees follow procedures and structures. It could be seen as if it eliminates obstacles for efficient information flow since this was not described at all by Company C, who had clear distribution of work task. They would therefore be able to rely more on that the right person gets the right information without any major routine efforts around extraordinary gatherings or follow-ups.

6.6.3.3 Culture

National culture
There are no signs of Swedish, national, culture awareness in any of the companies or Swedish culture's impact on a company and its customer management. However, all companies are located and operating in Sweden, which means no comparison with foreign countries could be done. Thereby, it could have been the reason for no particular information about Swedish culture.

Organizational culture
All companies, except Company C, have been managing the implementation on their own by using existing employees and existing organizational culture. Together with expression of lack of time stated by all companies, except from company C, it might be an indication of that organizational culture affects the company’s performance internally as well as externally. Company C stated clearly what their organizational culture is and strengthens it by describing the same terms in other questions, which could be seen as company C has a strong KAM organizational culture. Further, Company C is describing each success related factor as working according to KAM while they are experiencing good results in customer relationships. This could be seen as KAM has a strong establishment in Company C and therefore indicating how KAM in the organizational culture could contribute to a more successful implementation of KAM.
No companies show any awareness of their customer’s organizational culture, thus the theory of understanding the customer’s culture can neither be confirmed or rejected. On the other hand, the companies who were aware and clear about their own organizational culture was also the companies that expressed the strongest and most positive results of KAM implementation. It could therefore be an indication of that a strong organizational culture promotes KAM implementation. Transparency and changeability was common of many organizational cultures. Therefore, these factors could have a positive impact on the implementation of KAM.

KAM was demonstrated in the organizational culture in Company C and the customer relationship management worked well despite the absence of certain KA managers or KA teams. Similar situation can be seen on company B and D, which could mean that by having established KAM in the organizational culture could facilitate the work with KAM strategies. It seems as if KAM is to be visible in everything the company does, it has to be established in the organizational culture at the company.

Additional education or training was not offered to any of the companies’ employees. None of the companies had a strong motivation or reward strategy that the employees could get by improving their work. Only company C stated that there might be a potential dividend for extra efficient performance, but no improvement on the success of the implementation of KAM seems to be identified and connected to potential rewards.

6.7 Chapter summary
This chapter have presented analysis for each participating organization, starting with individually analysis and ending with a summarized analysis for all the organizations. The data gathered and analyzed have been compared and matched towards the theories presented in the Literature Review, see Chapter 2. The following chapter present the final findings drawn from this analysis and will further answer the research questions of this study.
Chapter 7

Conclusion & Implications
7. Conclusions and implications

This chapter provides the main findings and conclusions from the analysis in the previous chapter, Chapter 6. The three research questions stated in Chapter 3 are answered in sections by following the previous structure of this paper. At the end of the chapter, theoretical contributions as well as managerial contributions are provided, together with a discussion of limitations regarding this research presented. This research contains a limited sample in a qualitative nature, which indicate that the study’s findings and conclusions cannot be considered to be generalizing.

7.1 Conclusions

The focus of this study is to explore what factors that might contribute to a more successful implementation of KAM in Swedish companies, by investigating factors having either direct or indirect effect on the success of an implementation, presented in a Proposed research model, see Figure 1. The purpose is to investigate how Key Account Management can be more successfully implemented in Swedish companies, by examine which factors of KAM, GTM and Change management have a direct and indirect effect on the implementation process.

The three research questions are broken down from the purpose after reviewing existing researches:

- **RQ1**: Which factors are of importance for organizations if implementing KAM?
- **RQ2**: How do factors of Global Talent Management and Change Management impact the success of an implementation of KAM?
- **RQ3**: Which factors of Global Talent Management and Change Management should be regarded having direct effect on the success of the implementation of KAM?

Conclusions are given under headlines 7.1.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 and are presented with the focus to answer the research questions of the study. RQ1 will be answered under headline 7.1.1, and RQ2 and RQ3 will be answered under headlines 7.1.2 as well as 7.1.3. In order to answer the purpose of the study, a summary of the final findings are presented under 7.1.4.
7.1.1 Research Question 1

RQ1: *Which factors are of importance for organizations if implementing KAM?*

Since KAM is a strategic long-term process, policies and procedures are of importance in order to establish clear and explicit routines that support the work with KAM. Top Management need to be involved during the implementation of KAM, however it is of importance that top management is not solely responsible for the implementation or for the key customers. Decisions might be based on short-term gains rather than long-term profitability, if the decisions and responsibility is solely in the hands of the top management. Organisational culture has to support an implementation of KAM, as the theory previously has stated. It is of importance to have characteristics as being open-minded as well as customizable in order to support and benefit an implementation of KAM. In order to know where the organization shall prioritize and use their resources in the most efficient way, a company must categorize their customers to be able to identify who their customers as well as key customers are. A company’s KA has to be identified in the implementation of KAM. KAM is all about long-term planning for long-term benefits and thereby, it is a shown to be valuable to have a KA plan that guides the implementation process. Every employee that has any contact with a customer shall have knowledge and skills suitable for the individual company, and not solely the KA managers or KA team which existing literature argues.

7.1.2 Research Question 2

RQ2: *How do factors of Global Talent Management and Change Management impact the success of an implementation of KAM?*

All employees need to be involved in order for the organization to act as a unit, which an organization has to do in order to manage the transformational change in each part of the organization that KAM implementation is requiring. Without a strategy to follow for change, the implementation takes longer time and can as a result lead to a less successful KAM implementation.

Right knowledge among employees needs to be present when they enter the company, or needs to be provided to employees after they are employed. The empirical investigation gave indications that organizations should have a clear and specific allocation of work when it
Chapter 7

comes to manage change and has to focus on the right amount of time to the right activities. An efficient and successful implementation could therefore be achieved due to the elimination of wasting resources on wrong activities.

7.1.3 Research Question 3

RQ3: Which factors of Global Talent Management and Change Management should be regarded having direct effect on the success of the implementation of KAM?

7.1.3.1 Global Talent Management

For a long-term, strategic work and for a successful implementation of KAM, the right people with the right characteristics need to be engaged and part of the organization. This has been seen from the research to have a direct effect on whether a KAM implementation will be successful or not, see Figure 3.

Having the right knowledge is not seen as having a direct effect on the success of a KAM implementation since the knowledge can not be utilized if an employee does not fit into the company. Right knowledge is therefore seen as having an indirect effect on KAM implementation.
7.1.3.2 Change Management

In order for KAM to be present in everything an organization operates, it has to be a part of the organizational culture. Organizational culture is seen as having a direct effect on the success of an implementation of KAM, see Figure 4.

Communication held on a routine based frequency will increase the efficiency of information flow. However, in order to improve the implementation of KAM and gain a successful implementation, communication through email and phone calls need to be reduced in order to save time. If there are clear and specific strategies and processes on how to manage change...
within an organization, the communication will more or less take care of itself. Communication therefore does not have a direct effect on the success level of the implementation of KAM.

Figure 4. Result of the study for Change Management and the Proposed Research Model from theoretical framework

7.1.4 Final findings

The final findings presented under headline 7.1.1, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 from this study can be illustrated in Figure 5. It is important for organizations to have policies and procedures in order for them to manage change, top management need to be involved in the implementation and an organization’s organizational culture has to support KAM. Further, it is important that
organizations identify who their most important customers are and make an individually plan for each customer on how to manage them. Moving on, it is of importance that each employee in contact with customers is given education and training. Moreover, Figure 5 presents the new findings concerning Global Talent Management and Change Management. Having the right people, with the right characteristics, is seen to have a direct effect on a successful implementation of KAM. Likewise, managing change in a successful way, and emphasizing culture are seen to both have a direct effect on a successful implementation. If these findings are taken into consideration, a successful implementation of KAM can be organized.
Figure 5. Final findings of the study
7.2 Theoretical contributions

The aim of this study is to explore what factors that might contribute to a more successful implementation of KAM in Swedish companies, by investigating factors having either direct or indirect effect on the success of an implementation. There are numerous previous studies and researches conducted in the field of KAM, however few studies have focused on the phase of implementation and what factors that might be of importance to take into consideration. This study have been conducted with the help of previous studies, hence it can be seen as this study make a contribution to existing literature by testing them in a new setting.

Based on previous studies in the field of KAM and the phase of implementation together with empirical data gathered from interviews with five Swedish organizations, the final findings presented in the conclusions concerning KAM implementation indicates that some factors stated by previous literature are of more or less importance. Theoretical contributions that can be made from this study concerns establishing clear and explicit routines to support the work of KAM (Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; Davies and Ryals, 2009), and organizational culture has to support an implementation of KAM (Homburg et al. 2002; Workman et al., 2003). Further it is important to identify key customers already in the phase of implementation (Gosselin and Bauwen, 2006; McDonald et al., 2000; Cheverton, 2012) together with a guiding plan for these customers (McDonald et al., 2000; Ryal and Rodgers, 2007). These factors are though in need of further studies and search in order to develop and bring more knowledge into this certain setting. The other factors of KAM implementation stated by previous studies, which this study could not find having the same importance in this particular setting, need more studies.

The theoretical contributions concerning the indirect effects of Global Talent Management and Change Management on implementation of KAM are based in previous research in each area. Both Global Talent Management and Change Management consist of numerous previous studies, however their impact in the context of KAM and the implementation is not significantly studied or further explored. This study make a contribution to existing literature by investigating the impact of factors that from previous studies can be seen having an indirect effect on the success of a KAM implementation. Having the right people (Nätti and Palo, 2012; Stahl et al., 2012), managing change (McDeavitt et al., 2012) and the importance of organizational culture (Eden, 2009; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997; Hofstede et
al., 2010) are found to have direct effect on the implementation. These factors need more studies and searches in the setting of the study in order to prove their effect. Further, the factors not found to have a direct effect are also in need of more studies in order to state their effect in these settings.

7.3 Managerial implications
Beside from the theoretical contributions made from this study and its final findings, there are some managerial implications on Swedish organizations. This study hopes to bring valuable information to the decision making process within organisations and provide organizations with useful knowledge and a good foundation when to develop KAM.

This study bases its empirical investigation and final findings on five Swedish organizations, based in Växjö, each with different perspectives and way of managing their most important customers. The authors of this study suggest the managers of the participating organizations to take these findings into consideration and evaluate how the findings can be either implemented or better used according to their businesses and operations. The participating organizations manage their customers according to their resources and situation. However, the findings in this study can help the organizations to create stronger relationships and more assured co-operations. Further the organizations can be in a stronger and more valuable position towards competitors by attracting and retaining customers. Furthermore, the findings in this study are not limited to the participating organizations. Since organizations in similar industries, as well as other industries, might manage their customers with focus on their most important customers in a comparable and likely way. The findings can thus be applicable for other organizations as well. However, there is a need for more studies and searches in order to assure and make appropriate findings for other organizations, both in similar and dissimilar industries.

The factors investigated in this study and presented as final findings are all recognized as important and relevant for the organizations. Factors are regarded as having a direct effect on the success of an implementation of KAM, and can be regarded as providing organizations with useful and helpful information to improve their success of an implementation. By comparing the theoretical framework with the findings of this study, a new model were created, see Figure 5. This model clearly shows that some factors not included in previous
studies have direct effect on the success of an implementation of KAM. This insight can give organizations benefits and a more successful implementation process. However, this could be further studied and investigated.

7.4 Limitations

7.4.1 Different backgrounds
Each participating organization have their own way of managing their customers and have different situations to adjust to. Not all the participating organizations have KAM and have gone through an implementation phase, however the authors of this study valued their different experiences and way in doing business. Further their differences provided this study with nuanced discussion and valuable input in the investigation.

7.4.2 Number of interviews
A number of eight (8) requests were sent out to organizations of interest for this study. The organizations all operate in the industries of IT and Management. After the first request, seven (7) organizations replied positively. The eighth (8) organization were sent a reminding email, yet no replies were received. The seven (7) responding organizations were contact a second time in order to decide date and time for the interview. From this stage, five (5) organizations replied and participated in the interviews. The two (2) organizations not replying on the second email were sent a reminding email. However, due to these businesses no date for an interview could be found.

Because of the low amount of interviews, there is a possibility that the findings in this study can be seen as rather poor and vague. The empirical investigation gave few connections between the answers and more participating organizations could increase the findings. Further, more participating organizations could have broaden the insight and given stronger connections.

7.4.3 Qualitative Method
This study was solved with a qualitative method, since the authors wanted to gain a deep and valuable understanding in order to reach the purpose of the study. However, this study could have used a quantitative method as well because a quantitative method could have provided the study with the ability to generalize. Further, it would bring insight how a larger sample of
organizations would have chosen, valued or acted. This would make it possible to draw statements and see additional conclusions. Although, the authors of this paper strongly agreed on the choice of qualitative method due to the limited time and resources, together with the ability to bring out more deeply going information.

7.4.4 Previous studies
Few studies have investigated the phase of implementing KAM, which give this study few guidelines and indications. Though, existing studies in the field of KAM together with the other factors of Global Talent Management and Change Management gave helpful and relevant knowledge, which became the foundation of this study.

7.5 Suggestion for future research
This study only investigates five Swedish organizations based in Växjö, in the IT and Management industry, therefore further research and studies in these industries are needed in order to make generalizations and statements. More studies are needed to examine other industries as well. The authors of this study consider it to be of interest to investigate the factors important when implementing KAM and factors having a direct effect on the success of an implementation in other cities and settings.

In this study some factors have been considered being of importance and having direct effect on the success of a KAM implementation. However, the factors not mentioned in final findings have after the empirical investigation not supported any further effect on the success of a KAM implementation. These factors having an indirect effect are in need of more research and investigation in order to include or exclude them as factors of importance, see Table 13.

A gap in this study is the managerial perspective, meaning that this study was conducted from the organizations point of view on how they perceive and experience their management of customers. Another perspective can be taken looking from customer’s point of view on how they are being managed by organizations implementing KAM, in order to develop a deeper knowledge on how customers perceive and experience it.
### Conclusion & Implications

#### Factors having an indirect effect - in need of further research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Description of factors</th>
<th>Authors estimation's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2, 1.2.1</td>
<td>Have knowledge about KAM (Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012; Workman et al., 2003) and continuously strive for further knowledge (Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
<td>Factors yielded no findings for this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4, 1.4.1</td>
<td>Have to benchmark themselves against other organizations (Cheverton, 2012; Davies and Ryals, 2009).</td>
<td>Factors yielded no findings for this study.</td>
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### ORGANIZATIONAL AREA

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Description of factors</th>
<th>Authors estimation's</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.10, 1.10.1</td>
<td>Have fully trained and skilled KA managers (Shetcliff, 2003; Davies and Ryals, 2009; Ozegovic and Sarac, 2012).</td>
<td>Factors yielded no findings for this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11, 1.11.1</td>
<td>Have established way of motivating and rewarding KA managers (Ryal and Rodgers, 2006; Sehoon and McLean, 2012).</td>
<td>Factors yielded no findings for this study.</td>
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### KEY ACCOUNT MANAGER/TEAM AREA

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<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Description of factors</th>
<th>Authors estimation's</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Attract and maintain employee (Schuler et al., 2011; Scullion and Collings, 2010)</td>
<td>Factors yielded no findings for this study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3</td>
<td>Decode message in intended way (Roosbloom and Larsen, 2003; Batts et al., 2012) Communication with customer (Roosbloom and Larsen, 2003; McDeavitt et al., 2012) Communication internally (Linke and Zerfass, 2011; McDeavitt et al., 2012)</td>
<td>Factors yielded no findings for this study.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 13. Factors in need of further research.

#### 7.6 Chapter summary

This chapter have answered the research questions stated in the third chapter of this study. Theoretical contributions and managerial implications have been discussed together with limitations of the study and suggestions for future studies are given. This study examines the previous theories in new settings and gives new perspectives to the field. Further, the study provides organizations with useful information regarding the success of an implementation of KAM.


List of References


List of References

231-255.


Francis: New York.


List of References

# Appendix I. Interview Guide

## Concept 1

### Key Account Management

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<th>ORGANIZATIONAL AREA</th>
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**Appendix 1**

**Interview Guide**

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## Concept 2 | Global Talent Management

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<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>How is new staff attracted to your organization <em>today</em>? And how do you maintain these employees <em>today</em>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1</td>
<td>When in the process to start handle your most important customers were the staff, such as responsible seller, involved? And what responsibilities where they given?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>What characteristics do you value among your staff, e.g. seller responsible for an important customer/KA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>What knowledge and previous experience are of importance among your staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>Please tell us in what way your employees <em>today</em> get provided with new and useable knowledge for their daily work.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Concept 3: Change Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1</th>
<th>Tell us how changes are handled within your organization. What steps can you identify as involved when you manage some sort of change?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Tell us about the communication between you and your customers. And about the internal communication. Have the way of communicating changed since you started to manage the most important customers, the KA, in a certain way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>What problems have come into existence according to the communication with customers, and also concerning communication internally? And how have these been handled?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Who else have been of importance to communicate with during the process to start managing your most important customers, the KA, in a certain way?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>How have you been striving for to make the communication as understandable and easy as possible to interpret?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>How does the Swedish culture affect the organization, such as the way your staff work, act and regard their work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1</td>
<td>What impact might the Swedish culture have had on the process of managing your most important customers, KA? And impact on the most important customers/KA, the responsible seller/KA managers and the way staff work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>How does the culture within your organization, e.g. the specific way of doing, managing and perceiving thing in your organization, affect how your staff work, act and regard their work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1</td>
<td>What impact might the organizational culture have had on the process of managing your most important customers, KA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Do you think culture has to be taken into account when an organization will manage different changes, such as implementing a process of managing the most important customers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.1</td>
<td>Do you believe culture is a determining factor for managing a change successfully?</td>
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</table>
Linnaeus University – a firm focus on quality and competence

On 1 January 2010 Växjö University and the University of Kalmar merged to form Linnaeus University. This new university is the product of a will to improve the quality, enhance the appeal and boost the development potential of teaching and research, at the same time as it plays a prominent role in working closely together with local society. Linnaeus University offers an attractive knowledge environment characterised by high quality and a competitive portfolio of skills.

Linnaeus University is a modern, international university with the emphasis on the desire for knowledge, creative thinking and practical innovations. For us, the focus is on proximity to our students, but also on the world around us and the future ahead.