Topi Syvänen

The strategic role of the sales manager in key account management

Master’s Thesis
International Business
August 2016
The purpose of this thesis is to describe different strategic roles of the sales manager in key account management. This thesis looks at the different strategic roles of the key account management (KAM) from the perspective of the sales manager.

Previous researches have mainly based on fact that sales manager responds to top-management, and key account manager responds to sales manager. Sales manager is typically seen as key account manager’s direct superior and at the same time, sales manager is responsible for key account manager’s performance to the top-management. According Flaherty and others (2012) sales literature follows a top-down approach and based on sales management specific behaviors to improve poor performance. Nevertheless, today’s research has had more nuances that sales manager’s and key account managers job is more collaboration. Reality of today’s sales manager role have changed from top-down, leader-centered paradigm to more like collaboration which comes a vast network of complex relationships (Flaherty and others 2012).

This thesis tries to show that sales manager’s role is not only to be key account managers superior. Key account manager’s and sales manager’s dynamic relationship is unnerved in previous researches. Actually, key account manager and sales manager has intense interaction and the information flows one to another and also they both effect on each other’s performance. Sales manager and key account manager, as a conclusion, can be seen as team more than monitored – supervisor partners. According Flaherty and others (2012) reality of today’s sales manager role have changed from top-down, leader-centered paradigm to more like collaboration which comes a vast network of complex relationships. The findings from the interview shows the same; all the interviewees said that nowadays sales managers should collaborate with KAMs. Still, there are seen the effect of regulations, rules and laws which change the style of leadership. Also sales manager take part on operative work. The previous academic literature stated that sales manager position is like invisible. That means sales manager won’t take part that much on operative work. In every interview the result was that operative work with customers is one part of every sales manager job in practice. Motivating KAMs to perform better is important. In a sales oriented organizations everybody knows how much the expected sales target are for KAM’s and at the same time sales manager need to provide all the needed rules that KAM’s could achieve those sales targets.

Also this thesis finds out that organizational culture could effect on sales manager’s performance. It could create boundaries between sales manager and KAM but also it could provide framework which help everyday operations in the organization.

Keywords
Strategy, sales manager, sales, key account management, management, motivation, value creation, role, network
# Table of Contents

1 **INTRODUCTION** .................................................................................................................. 6

   1.1 Research background ........................................................................................................... 7
   1.2 Research questions and objectives ....................................................................................... 7
   1.3 Structure of the study ........................................................................................................... 9

2 **SALES MANAGER** ............................................................................................................. 11

   2.1 Position ............................................................................................................................... 12
   2.2 Different strategic roles ....................................................................................................... 13
      2.2.1 Motivation ................................................................................................................... 14
      2.2.2 Motivation and leadership ........................................................................................... 15
   2.3 Sales managers as network engineers: managing the flows ............................................ 18
      2.3.1 Flow creators .............................................................................................................. 19
      2.3.2 Flow disruptors .......................................................................................................... 20
      2.3.3 Flow sustainers ........................................................................................................... 21

3 **KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT (KAM)** ......................................................................... 23

   3.1 Characteristics of KAM ...................................................................................................... 23
   3.2 KAM Differentiation .......................................................................................................... 25
   3.3 Elements of KAM .............................................................................................................. 27

4 **THE STRATEGIC ROLES OF SALES MANAGER IN KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT** ........................................................................................................................... 30

   4.1 Responsibilities .................................................................................................................. 32
   4.2 Operations .......................................................................................................................... 34
   4.3 Opportunities ..................................................................................................................... 38

5 **METHODOLOGY** ............................................................................................................... 41

   5.1 Collecting and analysis of the research material ............................................................... 43
   5.2 Reliability and validity ....................................................................................................... 45
6 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS
6.1 Sales management central roles
   6.1.1 Strategic roles
   6.1.2 Operative roles
   6.1.3 Challenges
   6.1.4 Responsibilities
6.2 Interaction
   6.2.1 Interaction relation with KAM
   6.2.2 Securing good interaction relation
   6.2.3 Interaction development
6.3 Value creation
   6.3.1 How sales manager could create value
   6.3.2 How you add value to the customers
6.4 Position
6.5 Sales manager’s position
6.6 The effect of corporate culture
   6.6.1 Do corporate culture effect your management style?
   6.6.2 How corporate culture could effect in management style
   6.6.3 Restriction appointed by the corporate culture
6.7 Management Style
   6.7.1 Personal management style
   6.7.2 Change in Management styles
   6.7.3 Management style and internationalization
6.8 Motivation
   6.8.1 How to motivate
   6.8.2 Successful motivation methods
   6.8.3 Addition of motivation
CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................................. 75

7.1 Main findings of the study ................................................................................. 75

7.2 Managerial implications .................................................................................... 76

7.3 Limitations ......................................................................................................... 77

7.4 Suggestions for future research ....................................................................... 77

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................. 79
FIGURES

Figure 1. Elements of key account management (Ojasalo 2001).......................... 28

TABLES

Table 1. Distinctions between transactional selling and key account management (Jobber 2012: 305)........................................................................................................ 26

Table 2. (Colletti & Tubridy 1987) introduce functional skills required of major account sales managers........................................................................................................ 31
1 INTRODUCTION

Sales managers have many different responsibilities, opportunities and operations in an organization. For a sales manager it might be hard to deal with them all simultaneously. This thesis examines what previous academic research has written on the issue and comprehensively, through interviews, this thesis tries to give an understanding on how sales managers see these issues in practice.

The purpose of this thesis is to describe different strategic roles of the sales manager in key account management. While reading this thesis, readers will be acknowledged more about the defining characteristics of key account management and sales manager. Idea for writing this thesis came from the common interest of sales, strategy and key account management.

This thesis looks at the different strategic roles of the key account management (KAM) from the perspective of the sales manager. In this thesis key account management is seen as the same (no matter what is it called) as key account management, major account management, strategic account management or account management. The research is conducted in the form of a literature review and after that continued with qualitative research which is based on the findings of the academic literature. The qualitative research was conducted by theme based interview.

There are previous researches about key account management and sales management, but the viewpoints are typically from marketing perspective. Also, this thesis takes shortly into consideration the effect of network and organizational culture. This thesis tries to look these scenes from management perspective. According Koskela (2011) management is important as a phenomenon and management science is an important scholarly field, which has a considerable influence on more specific managerial fields, like construction management and project management. Unfortunately, the self-complacent acceptance of irrelevance that currently radiates from management as a scholarly field is a dangerous disease.


1.1 Research background

Previous researches have mainly based on fact that sales manager responds to top-management, and key account manager responds to sales manager. Sales manager is typically seen as key account manager’s direct superior and at the same time, sales manager is responsible for key account manager’s performance to the top-management. According Flaherty and others (2012) sales literature follows a top-down approach and based on sales management specific behaviors to improve poor performance. Nevertheless, today’s research has had more nuances that sales manager’s and key account managers job is more collaboration. Reality of today’s sales manager role have changed from top-down, leader-centered paradigm to more like collaboration which comes a vast network of complex relationships (Flaherty and others 2012).

1.2 Research questions and objectives

The objective of the study is to gain an understanding of sales manager strategic roles to support and serve key account management. There is much of research about key account management, but typically it is considered in key account manager and sales force positions and performance. Successful and profitable key account management needs guidance and support from sales management. This research is examining those issues where sales management support is needed. All sales managers, key account managers and sales force play important role in a successful key account management, but sales manager’s role is seen more invisible. Nevertheless, sales managers need to provide framework, tools, guidance and support for both sales force and account manager ensuring successful and profitable operating field.

The main objective of this thesis is to explore the relationship of sales manager strategic roles and key account management. By looking at the relevant academic literature and research on both strategic roles of sales manager and key account management, the aim is to establish an understanding on how the strategic role of the sales manager can be used to support and serve account management. The research is conducted first by doing literature review on these fields of study and second by doing theme based interviews with three different sales managers in OP Oulu.
These concepts will be examined through one main research question and two sub questions. Two sub questions are created for understanding the basic characteristics of the both, sales manager and key account management. By answering the first sub question “what are the strategic roles of sales manager” it will be able to give reader the understanding what is required for sales manager in general, in which positions sales manager is operating in the organization and the different strategic roles that sales manager has.

Because key account management differs from traditional selling, it is needed to be opened to reader. By answering the second sub question “what is key account management” it will be capable to explain the differentiation of traditional selling and KAM, what KAM requires and what kind of elements KAM includes.

After gone through correspondence two sub questions, reader can reach a better understanding of the basics of sales manager and key account management. By answering the main research question can be explained “what are the strategic roles of the sales manager in key account management”. This study tries to gather the findings together. At this point, empirical part of the study is left out and the focus is built on the theoretical aspects.

Main research questions:

What are the strategic roles of the sales manager in key account management?

Two sub questions:

What are the strategic roles of sales manager?

What is key account management?

After academic literature review, there is a qualitative research conducted which is based on the findings of the academic literature. The qualitative research was conducted by theme based interview. Based on findings of the academic literature review, there was made the framework for interview which was used as a structure in
the interviews. The interviews were held in OP Oulu main office, located in center of Oulu in spring 2016. The interviews were carried out with sales managers who were selected on purpose from different offices of the bank. This way an attempt was made to form a cross-section of the views of the sales managers of different offices on the sales manager’s strategic roles in the organization.

This Master’s thesis is an extension to my bachelor's thesis “The strategic role of the sales manager in key account management” that has been accepted in the summer of 2015. Bachelor’s thesis is used extracts from the introductions and theory numbers for the treatise where applicable. Furthermore, the theory part has been extended.

1.3 Structure of the study

The following chapters will provide an answer for the research questions and how this thesis is conducted. The second chapter defines the concept of the sales manager. Sales manager is a broad concept and it can be viewed in many different angles. The first viewpoint in this thesis sales manager’s position in the organization. The second is strategic roles of the sales manager which include subtitle of motivation, and motivation and leadership. The third introduced concept which is introduced is a theory where sales manager is seen as a network engineer. This part emphasizes the theoretical knowledge based on the previous research conducted on the study in the given context.

The third chapter introduces defining characteristics of key account management. The main objective of this chapter is to introduce the concept of key account management. Key account management differs from transactional selling and requires different operational functions which are examined during chapter. This part also emphasizes the theoretical knowledge based on the previous research conducted on the study in the given context.

The fourth chapter is based on exploring the strategic roles of the sales manager in key account management, which is the main research question in my thesis. The chapter is getting through correspondence information about sales manager and key account management, so, this chapter links the previous three chapters together. Thesis is
looking at the phenomenon through responsibilities, operations and opportunities of sales manager in key account management.

The fifth chapter introduces this thesis methodology. The purpose is to give an understanding for the reader how the study has been carried out in practice and how the results have been analyzed.

The sixth chapter is getting through empiric findings that have been found in the study. The chapter has been divided into subsections which are in accordance with the themes. In the subsections the interviewees’ most important observations and experiences of the subject are examined. The findings also are compared with the theory part of the study.

The seventh chapter presents the final remarks, where conclusions are portrayed besides theoretical contributions, future research suggestions, limitations of the study and managerial implications. The chapter managerial implications are believed to be truly relevant and compelling information for sales managers.
This chapter examines the basis and defining characteristics of the sales manager. Under view are defining characteristics of sales manager, the sales manager position in the organization and strategy roles of the sales manager. Motivating sales force is an important issue for sales manager to take into consideration. Also motivation and leadership is taken into short consideration in this part. Sales manager could also be seen as network engineer; this viewpoint will be opened further in this chapter. That part included because it differs from previous top-down management researches. Theory of this chapter is based mostly on bachelor’s thesis “the strategic role of the sales manager in key account management.”

Sales is the most important function in every organization. Without sales, there is no income and without income organizations couldn’t operate. Sales manager is responsible of successful sales and successful sales requires competent sales management which is capable providing the best possible tools for sales operations. Dubinsky (1999) state that Sales management is the one party truly responsible for salesperson failure.

Flaherty and others (2012) proposes that the sales manager’s role in network paths rather than people could be termed a “network engineer” orchestrating the deserted pattern of relationships rather than simply managing individuals. Reality of today’s sales manager role have changed from top-down, leader-centered paradigm to more like collaboration which comes a vast network of complex relationships. These relationships related all over company from research & development (R&D) department to human resources management (HRM).

Chakrabarty and others (2013) examine that empirical studies on the role of sales managers in enhancing the effectiveness of salespeople have focused on a variety of issues such as sales managers as mentors, supervisory leadership styles, supervisory selling behaviors and supervisory orientations. As the leadership structure have become flatter and flexible, the importance of social networks is taken in consideration in the management literature. Flaherty and others (2012) highlights the importance of a social network approach for studying the sales manager’s social relationships.
Social networks are maintained in different places. This means those social places which are outside of the factories and offices. Uzzi (1999) introduce in his study that in the banking business these include “parties, dining, shows, sports competitions and other social events” (Uzzi 1999: 484). Toikka, Miettinen and Tuunainen (2016) argue that in the social network, the basic understanding came from embeddedness in trust-based unofficial social relationships.

Toikka and others (2016) introduce four concepts of networks which were part of social and economic activities: social, economic, objectual and socio-economic. Each of these networks has a different understanding of the fundamental character of networks. The different concepts of network are partly an outcome of the methodology used in the empirical studies on networks. Also the study provides alternative theoretical lenses when it comes to the basic understanding of the network: “the economic concept defines the network as an organizational form designed to economize on transaction costs, social as an extra-economic relation embedded in trust and reciprocity, socio-economic as a combination of complementary resources in innovation and activity-based objectual concept as historically evolving object-oriented collaboration”.

2.1 Position

Flaherty and others (2012) examine that because sales managers act as the linking pins between the senior management and sales representatives they are often central in formal sales network, but in informal sales networks they may be not. Dorsch and others (2001) introduces that sales managers are increasingly being called on to manage the complete buyer-seller interface and difficulties they face in managing customer relations may be attributable to balancing firm goals with those of customers. By understanding that customer relationships are characterized by customer resource investments, sales manager can effectively manage investments that firms desire together with those customers are providing.

According Wieseke and others (2009) neglected role of sales manager in actualizing the organization by exhibiting organizational identity–congruent behavior and communicating organizational values to followers, thus building their followers’
organizational identification. Sales managers are instrumental in strategy implementation because they synthesize information, frame interpretation of information, and align corporate strategies to specific implementation contexts.

2.2 Different strategic roles

Sales Manager has an ability to direct sales tactics in a way he or she finds most successful. For example, in sales manager’s perspective sales people could be seen as a Customer Relationship Managers like Weitz and Bradford (1999) showed in their study. An agenda for improving sales starts from building customer research management (CRM) that provides strategic business capability of the firm. CRM is customer-oriented relationship management feature with service response based on customer input one-to-one solutions for customer requirements. When building CRM, the strategic and tactical role of the selling function should be carefully defined so that it translates market orientation into organizational performance. To improve sales, an adaptive and learning-oriented sales organization should be built. Processes that allow the sales force to improvise to serve the customer should be established. At the same time, multiple sales channels should be built while customer confusion and internal conflict should be minimized (Ingram and others 2002.)

The impacts of the sales manager in directing sales representative’s efforts is critical because the fields of sales representative’s role are far more fluid to scope and responsibilities than is an employee in the accounting or finance. According the findings of Sullivan and others (2012) value creation is implemented by the managers. These findings could help managers to identify critical issues in order to turn value creation competence into increased sales performance. It requires that value is well developed to seller. The more the buyer sees the seller as a trusted partner which is based on created value delivered, the performance returns will be higher for seller.

When talking about different strategic roles of the sales managers there is a need to highlight that sales manager has different types of social network ties. These ties are with management, other sales managers, sales people and customers. Working with
several people around the organization means that sales manager could use its strategic position as an advantage. Also sales manager need to manage and control direct (e.g. contact with key accounts) and indirect ties (e.g. contact with key accounts via account managers) with external stakeholders (Flaherty and others 2012). Burt (2004) introduces the concept of structural holes which is a theory of social network research. Many of social structures tend to be characterized by tight clusters of strong connections. The idea of the theory is that behavior, new ideas and the homogeneity of information are generally higher within any group of people as compared to that in between two groups of people (Burt 2004.) That’s why an individual who acts as a middleman between two or more groups of people would gain different important comparative advantages. Actually, the position of a bridge between related groups allows him or her to transfer valuable information from one group to another (Burt 1995.)

2.2.1 Motivation

Sales manager should know how to motivate employees. Through motivation, sales manager is able to effect on the sales results and performance. Next, there are introduced different ways to motivate employees.

Ambrose ja Kulik (1999) describe motivation as a set of external and internal forces which affect a person’s professional behavior and also determines its duration, intensity, form and direction. Motives are needs and wills which drive behavior and lead to a decision. Motive is not same as incentive. A person could be inspired by an incentive but also by the desire to do something else to avoid punishment. Motivation includes all the reasons which are drive human behavior. All intentional motivational behavior can be linked with behavior which is driven by when a person wants to accomplish something. People are usually motivated when they want to do something. Leaders needs to understand what kind of things affect individual decisions and how he/she can influence these decisions. (Adair 1998, 2009.)

External motivation is a motive which comes from an outside factor such as salary or bonus. Lawler (1973) describes these kind of factors as social awards. External motivation factors are usually se by an external actor such as another person or
organization. These kind of motivations are usually short-term. When the sat goal is reached, motivation usually fades before a new motivation is found.

Internal motivation comes from a person’s internal motives, i.e. a willingness to do something. Most gifted employees are rarely motivated by external factors, such as salary. Internal motivation is normally driven by self-fulfillment, educating oneself or a feeling of competency (Buble, Juras, & Matić, 2014.)

2.2.2 Motivation and leadership

Flaherty and others (2012) define leadership as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in work groups in which the objective is to lead one another the achievement of the group goals”.

Leadership and motivation are tightly bound to each other. It is difficult to imagine a leader who would not know how to motivate others. A leader should make a realistic overview of the people with whom he works. It will be easier to lead people when the wise enough ones identify themselves as creative and inventive individuals who are driven by achievements and self-motivated. This makes them understand the difference between the financial and other rewards and making the world a better place. (Adair 1998.)

The groups that are totally focused on the task at hand are associated with creativity and effectiveness. Motivated employees must have self-confidence, an inner clarity and growth to use their skills to the maximum. Employee motivation results from an individual’s high expectancy of achieving a goal and when the results are of value (Flaherty and others 2012.)

In order to be able to communicate and to be able to create a common identity with the subordinates, a leader has to successfully influence the work motivation of the employees by empowering them and directing them towards positive workplace behavior and maintaining this behavior. When the subordinates notice that the leader shares a similar identity with them, the leader can use this effectively to his advantage in motivating people. The subordinates are more committed to and more cooperative
with a leader with whom they share the similar values. (Ellemers, De Gilder & Haslam 2004.)

According to research by Abd-El-Salam and others (2013) a company should design proper reward systems according to its' workers' behavior and likings. High satisfaction with salary and bonuses can increase the workers' internal motives to perform their assignments better. For some workers the personal pride is the most important factor that affects performance, whereas for some others the fear of losing one’s job when not accomplishing tasks given to them will serve as most powerful motive (Cipola & Fitcher 2010).

In addition to these, maintaining the motivation requires active leadership of the superior. The leader can be results oriented and a problem solver, but he should be easily approachable by the subordinates, too. (Crumpton 2013.)

A weak economic situation also can create tensions in the organization and can cause a poisonous atmosphere in the working environment. According to the study of Sidle (2009) the superior has to act as the disciplinarian who has the ability to perceive negative signs and to take the action in a situation where the working environment is about to get worse. The leader has to find means to encourage positive actions among the ones who are feeling negative emotions.

It is clear that the keeping the staff motivated is an extremely big challenge. Because of this it indeed is important to concentrate on individual needs and to meet each employee as an individual. It is also important to give the superiors an opportunity to act as a leader who is able to create a working environment in which a motivated atmosphere dominates (Crumpton 2013.)

In today’s leadership it is important to appreciate teamwork, to identify the importance of diversity, to know how to divide power, information as well as support the employees in both positive and negative situations. Studies have shown that people are different and traditional motivation methods do not operate equally well to all the individuals. Because of this it is indeed important to also pay attention to the
importance of group activity when analyzing the effect of management styles on motivation. (Tebeian 2012.)

According to the study of Kark and others (2008) and Tebeian (2012) there are two management styles which have a positive effect on people's motivation. They are transformational leadership and servant leadership. Transformational leadership is often compared with transactional leadership. Transactional leadership concentrates merely on the external motivation factors (rewards and punishments), whereas transformational leadership pays attention to internal motivation factors. In transformational leadership attention is paid also to people's feelings (Bass 1990.)

According to Bass (1990) transformational leadership is considered to consist of four different sectors. The first one of them is charisma which emphasizes the significance of the leader as a role model. Inspirational motivation, then, emphasizes the creation of a common vision. Individualized consideration refers to the observation of subordinates’ needs and to the creation of new learning experiences. Intellectual stimulation encourages an employee to creativity and adapting of new practices. Tebeian (2012) highlights that transformational leadership contains elements from several other management styles and brings out the advantages of them. At the same time, it pays attention also to new elements, such as internal motivation and anticipative thought.

In servant leadership, as its name points, the leader's role is to serve and help others. It emphasizes that the leader is only one member in the group. It is his/her task to divide the power, to pay attention to the needs of the others and to help others to reach their potential. A servant leader has to have several special skills, such as an ability to listen openly to get the people on their side and to express their idea distinctly. Between servant leadership and other leadership styles the difference is the fact that servant leadership emphasizes the leader's fundamental motivation. Servant leadership does not think of leadership as a position but as a possibility to take care of the welfare of the subordinates and to help others to reach their full potential. The personal development is not however restricted only to the subordinates but the leaders will also benefit from the development process (Smith, Montagno & Kuzmenko, 2004.)
2.3 **Sales managers as network engineers: managing the flows**

Flaherty and others (2012) introduce that nowadays sales people work out of remote offices, so the sales manager plays a critical role in a sales representative’s job performance. Because of that type of nature, the employees which work distant, the sales manager is the primary conduit to the firm and acts a coach rather than controller or commander, guiding the sales representative to perform superior. Flaherty and others (2012) propose that in this role sales manager’s act as network engineers who manage by regulating the flow of ties across the organization. Thus, by controlling sales force’s access to resources, information and support in the network sales managers can supervise their performance primarily.

Interpersonal ties are defined as information carrying connections between people. Friedkin (1982) examine “*strong and weak ties are compared in terms of their contributions to information flow about the work activity of persons in organizational social networks. Strong ties are more important than weak ties in promoting information flow about activities within an organizational subsystem. Weak ties are more important than strong ties in promoting information flow about activities outside an organizational subsystem. The strength of weak ties in promoting boundary-spanning information flows lies not in their individual efficiency but in their numbers. In general, production of the highest probabilities of information flow is associated with a combination of both weak and strong ties*.”

By developing connections within and outside of the organization and orchestrating ties to help salespeople meet their goals effective sales managers adopt the network engineer role. In this role sales managers are able to direct different resources in the network to achieve the right blend of cognitive and affective flows suitable for the situations (Flaherty and others 2012.)
2.3.1 Flow creators

Prior research on flow creation that is defined as the manager’s construction of a set of environmental relations where the resources of the organization are aligned and focused toward achieving organizational objectives, exist in the sales literature follows a top-down approach and based on sales management specific behaviors to improve poor performance. Research on supportive and consultative leadership style finds that managers readily use advice and information that flows up from salespeople who are close to customers and marketplace (Flaherty and others 2012.) Under these, manager’s salespeople not only use their autonomy to develop customer solutions but also advise and direct other salespeople and the manager about effective solutions that have helped to improve performance (Allen and others 2003). Engel (1970) examine that autonomy is regarded as an important dimension of professionalism. Different researches claim that bureaucratic organization limits professional autonomy. The data revealed that those professionals associated with the the highly bureaucratic setting are least likely to perceive themselves as autonomous.

Flaherty and others (2012) point out that sales manager should create a flow. Employees are able to accomplish their individual goals in harmony with organizational goals in this environment. Also employees fully absorbed with the tasks and are able to deploy their overall skills and knowledge.

Sales manager could use his or her centralized location within the network to develop social and functional relationships with peers, subordinates and superiors in the company for develop an environment that facilitates such creativity. Sales manager can use both formal and informal networks to facilitate actions and become known as real source of ideas. This might in turn enhances their status (Flaherty and others 2012.)

If sales manager wants to explore new easier ways to achieve objectives and introduce creative work methods, he or she need to have an ability to access weak ties (which means people without strong relations together) that link members of different groups as well as strong ties which Krackhardt (1992) examine “Strong ties constitute a base of trust that can reduce resistance and provide comfort in the face of uncertainty. This
it will be argued that change is not facilitated by weak ties, but rather by a particular type of strong tie”. Granovetter (1973) represents “the argument asserts that our acquaintances (weak ties) are less likely to be socially involved with one another than are our close friends (strong ties)”.

Flaherty and others (2012) argue that it is very important that sales manager has links to different parts of the organization. Sales managers tap into the knowledge network to develop a transformational climate that brings challenge, intellectual stimulation and self-growth in employees. Regulating the flow of information can be a tool for sales manager to create the right perceptions about the abilities of sales people within the group and the impression of the manager’s sales team throughout the organization. Employees who have clear in mind that they are being innovative group engages that in behavior that supports the image. Lewler (2009) introduce “executive leadership is very important to the effectiveness of all organizations. The quality of an organization's CEO and the quality of those who hold senior executive positions clearly affect the performance of the organization as well as the motivation and satisfaction of employees.”

2.3.2 Flow disruptors

Flaherthy and others (2012) define flow disruption as behavior that results in the redirection of information or the block of resources to preempt a coalition or activity. The manager’s motivation for flow disruption could possible disadvantage to the manager’s self-interest or the company. Managers are able to use flow disruption to obtain compliance in the short run and in the long run for management impression. Flow disruptors remind a directive or contingent reward style of managing. Inside the organization field salespeople are dependent on their managers to promote their efforts and achievements to others. Sales representative’s being “out of sight, out of mind” this dependency arises out. Increased use of telecommuting and home-based sales representatives, the definition of sales representative’s personal network is no longer by only physical proximity to important others.

As centrally operating within the organizational network, a manager can regulate a sales representative’s visibility and reputation by selectively managing and shaping
others perceptions of the employee in his or her group across the organization’s social groups. Thus, managers are at a critical connection in an informal network with access to diverse contacts, sources and positions. In this position, a manager can manipulate the information that can affect the sales representative’s performance and career prospects, or disrupt the flow of both the positive and negative impressions of the sales representative. Managers need to understand that positive perceptions of an individual by others are important, those perceptions could help in successfully selling ideas and in obtaining resources. It is generally accepted that a key challenge of sales management revolves around the nature of the sales force’s organization. That is, that salespeople tend to work away from a central office for the most part (Flaherty and others 2012).

Social exchange theory explains stability and social change as a process of negotiated exchanges between people. Social exchange theory posits that human relationships are formed by the comparison of alternatives and the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis. The most critical difference between economic and social exchange is the nature of the exchange between parties (Cook and Emerson 1987.) In the sales context, social exchange theory illuminates the role of behavioral ties between salespeople and sales manager as a driver of more than perceptions (Flaherty et al. 2012). DelVecchio (1998) conceptualizes the sales manager – sales representative link as consisting of a number of behavioral resources. Salespeople contribute their ability or competence to do their job, which is clearly a behavioral tie. Conversely, sales managers are said to contribute latitude in exchange for competence. The freedom given to the sales representative to operate without supervision or control is the latitude.

2.3.3 Flow sustainers

Flaherty and others (2012) examine supportive leaders use social or reciprocity exchange to motivate employees toward better performance. These leader managers often use their social exchanges with peers, subordinates and supervisors to access resources. By gathering novel information that positions manager as an influential person within the network manager’s develop connections with customers and other stakeholders. Venkataraman and others (2010) argue when the manager is recognized positively for his or her abilities, the manager’s reputation and image is enhanced,
which provides status in the eyes of his or her followers. This perceived status enables the manager specific performance. By motivating others to perform well, while discouraging them against behaviors that go against the interests of the group. Thus, the manager’s status also provides a link between high-ranking members of the organization who possess decision-making authority and salespeople. Connection to the top echelon of the firm is important for resource opportunities, as well as long- and short-term information direction of the company and the policy issues (Flaherty and others 2012.)

Lawler (2009) point out the key “determinant of most employee behavior is not the leadership of the CEO or the senior executives, but the behavior of an employee's immediate supervisor or supervisors. These are the individuals who can provide the most important day-to-day motivation and sense of direction to the members of an organization. These are the managers who should possess – and pass along – technical and organizational knowledge when it comes to strategy implementation, change management, and work processes. They are also the ones whose behaviors shape the culture in a much more tangible way than the behavior of the senior executives.”

In this chapter the sales manager defining characteristics, different strategy roles and position in the organization where dealt with. This chapter took closer look leadership and motivation which are seen important functions for sales manager. Also, this chapter introduced the concept of network engineer. Now this thesis has given the basic understanding of sales manager and the next chapter will introduce the concept of key account management.
3 KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT (KAM)

This chapter examines the basis and defining characteristics of key account management. This chapter explains how key account management differs from transactional selling, how KAM is implemented and key elements of key account management. Theory of this chapter is based as whole on bachelor’s thesis the strategic role of the sales manager in key account management.

3.1 Characteristics of KAM

History of strategic account management started in the 1960’s and since gone by many names like national account selling, large account management and major account selling. Whatever it’s called, the core idea has been the same; company focusing their selling efforts on the target customers which has largest proportion of sales (Weilbaker & Weeks 1997.)

Key account management is seen quite same way in previous academic researches. Bacon (1999) introduces that strategic account management is the systematic development and nurturing of customers that are strategically important to an organization's survival and prosperity. Jobber (2012) introduces that key account management is a strategy used by suppliers to target and serve high-potential customers with complex needs by providing them with special treatment in the areas of administration, service and marketing (Jobber 2012: 304). (Judson and others 2009) explains that key account management organizations are created under the premise that customer companies with more current and potential sales over time are of significant importance and, as a result, merit special attention.

Ojasalo (2001) examines that importance of building long-term relationship is nowadays recognized in many different areas in the marketing management. Key account management is marketing approach based on relationship management. This study point that key account management has been used in several contexts.

Jobber (2012) examines account management is a strategy used by suppliers to target and serve high-potential customers which has complex needs by providing them with
special treatment in the areas of marketing, administration and service. In order to receive key account status, customer must have a high sales potential. Also for the customer, the key account status is given for willing of long-term commitment, alliance or partnership. Such relationships offer many benefits including risk reduction and better communication between companies (Jobber 2012: 303.)

Brehmer and Rehme (2009) study show that KAM programmes are established for a number of reasons, and that different dimensions direct the workings of the programme towards addressing different terms of complexity. One is that KAM is supposed to handle sales complexity in terms of structural aspects and uncertainty. KAM should also be a response to external aspects, deriving from customer expectations, as well as a way to handle internal aspects in the sales process. In this study three different programmes have been identified:

- The proactive programme – which is driven by sales opportunity.
- The reactive programme – which is driven by customer demands.
- The organization-based programme – which is driven by the belief in customer-centric organizational units

The organization-based programme requires also the strongest commitment from the corporate leadership where KAM becomes one of their top priorities.

On the other hand, Davis and Ryals (2013) study illustrates that too many companies still treat KAM as a sales initiative, whereas in reality it is more of a business-wide change management program. As a change management program the requirement for new global power structure, cross-functional control, new reward system, project teams and new rewards systems can be substantial. Their research demonstrates that even companies five or more years into their KAM programs are still struggling with structural and process barriers such as compensation systems and short-termism.

Davis and Ryals (2013) study prefer to bid for all projects in a customer, regardless of the strategic fit or profit potential, as demonstrated through the ‘priorities: bidding for new business’ measure. This could prove very costly to the supplier if uncontrolled. They are also prone to ignore the implementation plans they develop through their planning process.
3.2 KAM Differentiation

There are distinctions between transactional selling and key account management. Taking into consideration transactional selling, sales is the overall objective but in the key account management it is preferred supplier status. As mentioned earlier the key account status is given for willing of long-term commitment, alliance or partnership (Jobber 2012:303). Hence, sales skills differ also; transactional selling is based on asking questions, handing objections and closing the deal, in key account management is based on building trust, providing excellent service and negotiation. According Toikka and others (2016) the social network finds trust to be a foundational phenomenon and suggests that trust develops through extra-economic social relations. Also in the social networks sources of trust between partners emerges from personal interaction in social activities outside the economy.

Jobber (2012) examines also nature of the relationship in key account management is long and more intense interaction between customer than in transactional selling which prefers short and intermittent relationships with customer. Salesperson’s goal in transactional selling is only close the deal but in the key account management the salespersons are heading to relationship management, which is comprehensive model to build long term relationship with customer. Nature of salesforce differs also between transactional selling and key account management; in transactional selling there are one or two salespeople per customer but in the key account management there are many salespeople included and often it involves multifunctional teams, which could include people from research and development (R&D) to human resource management (HRM). Customer’s needs are listened more carefully and solutions are implemented with more care in key account management.

Table 1. Distinctions between transactional selling and key account management (Jobber 2012: 305)
Some important distinctions between transactional selling and key account management is shown in Table 1.

When comparing differences between senior sales people and key account managers, Davis and Ryals (2013) introduce that there are many issues such as goal orientation and strategic priorities for which senior sales people are also presenting attitudes very similar to KAMs. This finding may support the growing literature on the changing role of sales and that indeed traditional sales are also undertaking many of the facets of relationship management as they look to a longer, medium-term timeframe and accept the importance of embedding themselves with the customer.

There are also find research against KAM activities such as Davies and Ryals (2013) establish that just as interesting is the areas in which the KAMs are not different to sales. It is particularly worrying that KAMs prefer not to take longer term responsibility for the project management and delivery of after-sales service and their goal orientation is no longer-term than that of field sales operatives.
3.3 Elements of KAM

The starting point for KAM is to analyze the key account and competitors, customer needs and existing solutions, competencies and resources as well as the processes and ways of working. The possibilities of success measurement should also be analyzed including all elements in the "analyze" dimension. Based on analysis, key account managers and teams should then "realize" the operational KAM. At this stage, they decide on a strategy with the individual customer. This defines the range of products and services that are offered as a solution according to what the customer needs. It is necessary to use a team approach (Sudanic 2008.)

When implementing KAM, team members should be identified and coordinated. The last stage of the management process is controlling of the success. At the same time on an operational level the concept of KAM should be changed into a management process that guides key account managers through their work. The trick is that there is no "one fits all solution" in KAM. Hence every company has to analyze and find their own approach. (Zupancic 2008.)

Ojasalo (2001) study introduces that key account management consist four basic elements offering definition of successful key account management. These elements are:

- identifying the key accounts
- analyzing the key accounts
- selecting suitable strategies for key accounts
- developing operational level capabilities to build, grow, and maintain profitable and long-lasting relationships with them

The last element also includes the implementation and control functions (Figure 1)
Figure 1. Elements of key account management (Ojasalo 2001)

*Identifying the selling company’s key accounts* means that company should know which existing or potential accounts are of strategic importance to us now and in the future. Before that, company should know which are the criteria that determines which customers are strategically important (Ojasalo 2001.)

Campbell and Cunningham (1983) study use the following criteria to determine strategically important customers. They determined those by sales volume, use of strategic resources, age of the relationship, the supplier’s share of the customer’s purchases and profitability of the customer to supplier. They also refer to growth rate of the customer’s market and the buyer’s relative share of the customer’s purchases.

*Analyzing key accounts* includes activities that analyze the basic characteristics of key accounts by assessing the relevant economic and activity aspects of company’s internal and external environment. These activities to analyze includes such as the basic characteristics of a key account, relationship history, the level and development of
commitment to the relationship, goal congruence of the parties and switching cost (Ojasalo 2001.)

*Selecting suitable strategies for key accounts* depends greatly on the power positions of the seller and the key account (Ojasalo 2001). Krapfel and others (1991) suggest six strategic relationship alternatives in terms of the power position and interest commonality which are collaboration, negotiation, administration, domination, accommodation and submission. The constraints and opportunities related to account-specific alternatives may change, thus allowing or forcing some other strategy.

*Developing operational level capabilities* refers that customization and development of capabilities related to products and services, organizational structure, information exchange and individuals. In improving the quality of products/services, the focus is on product/service performance, economic competitiveness and measures improvement, reduction of the costs of poor quality (Ojasalo 2001.)

According Hise and Reid (1994) there is six critical conditions needed to ensure the success of key account management as follows:

- integration of the key account program into the company’s overall sales effort
- senior management’s understanding of and support for the key account unit’s role
- clear and practical lines of communication between outlying sales and service units
- establishment of objectives and missions
- compatible working relationships between sales management and field salespeople
- clear definition and identification of customers to be designated for key account status

In this chapter the basis and defining characteristics of key account management were dealt with. This chapter explained how key account management differs from transactional selling, how KAM is implemented and key elements of key account management. Now this thesis has given the basic understanding of both sales manager and key account management. The next chapter links these previous chapters together.
4 THE STRATEGIC ROLES OF SALES MANAGER IN KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

This chapter examines the sales manager strategic roles in key account management. First, few principles of the sales manager roles in key account management are introduced and after that, the sales manager’s duties are looked by the viewpoints of responsibilities, operations and opportunity. Organizational culture has shortly taken into consideration in this chapter too to give understanding the effect of it. Theory of this chapter is based mostly on bachelor’s thesis the strategic role of the sales manager in key account management.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis the sales manager is seen more as key account manager’s collaborative partner than direct supervisor. Still, hierarchy in the organization flows as the key account manager deals with operational responsibilities and report to a sales manager and they both operate to establish better performance of key accounts. According Bacon (1999) the sales manager responsibilities are more often different than operational functions. Sales manager responsibilities can be seen more like a provider to success.

Colletti and Tubridy (1987) describe five principles of effective major account sales management. Those principles are:

- Define and articulate the objectives of the major account sales program and the activities necessary to do a successful selling job
- Describe the features and benefits provided to the customer by the major account sales program
- Appoint capable people to major account positions and recognize their accomplishments with premium compensation
- Provide major account sales personnel with the tools and programs essential to sales job success.
- Provide on-going high-level management support to a major account sales program which achieves its objectives.
According to Colletti and Tubridy (1987) findings there are several functional skills that are required of major account managers. These functions are finance, sales, human relations and marketing. First, taking into consideration function finance, illustrative skill requirement of sales manager can be seen in analytical and bargaining skills related to pricing, revenue improvement, or cost savings for customer and contract negotiation. Sales function includes problem solving and presentation skills related to account performance, company and product capabilities and technical assistance. Human relations function include interpersonal relationship skills related to contacts throughout the customer pyramid. Marketing functions includes research and account profiling skills related to developing ongoing information about the account and communicating customer need to product directors.

In Table 2 Colletti and Tubridy (1987) introduce functional skills required of major account sales managers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>ILLUSTRATIVE SKILL REQUIREMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FINANCE</td>
<td>Analytic and bargaining skills related to pricing, cost savings, or revenue improvement for customer, contract negotiation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALES</td>
<td>Problem solving and presentation skills related to account performance, company and product capabilities and technical assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMAN RELATIONS</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationship skills related to contacts throughout the customer pyramid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARKETING</td>
<td>Research and account profiling skills related to developing ongoing information about the account, communicating customer need to product directors, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1 Responsibilities

According to Bacon (1999) sales managers are normally responsible for following typical issues in key account management. All of these responsibilities can be seen as different strategic roles. First of all, sales manager need to provide direct management to account managers (Bacon 1999: 11.), meaning that sales manager is responsible for performance of account managers to top-management.

Secondly, sales managers need to ensure that right people are selected to the right strategic accounts (Bacon 1999: 11), meaning that assigned people can serve target accounts in the best way. That could mean for example that people with know-how of certain specific affairs are assigned to those strategic accounts where their knowledge is exploit and respected. Thus, Davies and Ryals (2013) findings raise the difficult issue of whether or not sales people are the best people to fill KAM roles. Previous research has pointed out that the traditional sales culture, with its expectation of volume bonuses and short-termism, might not be an ideal recruiting ground for KAMs. Still there are the possibility that sales people and sales managers might make good KAMs if their attitudes and behaviors could be appropriately adjusted. Dubinsky (1999) introduce that several sales management activities—and the adeptness with which they are executed—clearly can make or break a salesperson. The decision behind selecting an inappropriate sales recruit resides with the sales management team.

Thirdly, sales managers need to balance between account management responsibilities with other sales team responsibilities to ensure that account managers have enough time, latitude and recourses to operate in their own field (Bacon 1999: 11). Sales manager has to ensure and provide account management and salespeople conditions for successful and performance. Shipp and others (1992) examine that an important reason why these excellent salespeople perform better is that sales management has created the conditions necessary for high performance results.

Fourthly, sales manager is a reviewer and manager of the current budgets and expenses (Bacon 1999: 12). Top-management is responsible for overall budget allocation and how budget is shared to different strategic operations like sales or research & development (R&D). Sales manager takes gave budget and operates as effective as
possible with that. Earlier showed Colletti and Tubridy (1987) table 2 functional skills required of major account sales managers includes function finance. An illustrative skill requirement of sales manager can be seen in analytical and bargaining skills related to pricing, revenue improvement, or cost savings for customer and contract negotiation.

Fifthly, sales managers manage the human resource function with account managers and other sales people. These several functions include recruiting, hiring, appraising, compensating and firing people (Bacon 1999: 12). That’s why sales manager plays an effective role with human resources management. Georges (2006) point that managerial level implication of key account sales force adoption and reinforcement could conduct in several ways. Managers are responsible for selecting right types of candidates for key account positions. Manager should investigate candidate’s inclinations (e.g. consideration of future sales consequences) and skills (e.g. communication skills). This type of screening can be done when manager knows the relevant history of the candidate and through that information uses it in interpersonal role-playing situations within the interview environment.

Sixthly, sales manager is responsible for training of account managers. Account managers need to be skilled to perform properly in their tasks and that’s why sales manager need to ensure that account managers are properly trained. Interaction and communication between key account manager and sales manager play important role in this situation (Bacon 1999: 12.) del Valle and Ignacio (2009) examine training is the main way of creating human capital (which enables a company to obtain competitive advantages that are sustainable in the long-term that result in greater profitability): a valuable, scarce resource that is hard to and hard to replace. Georges (2006) point that sales manager is responsible for companies are developing designed training programs aimed for account managers where they are able to develop their behaviors. Because key account managers might be taught to exhibit transparency and offer adjustment could managers by means of formal lectures or role-playing exercises taught these behaviors. Regarding internal communication, management could develop this type of behavior by providing different support channels such as information technologies or newsletters. Managers could also encourage account
managers by arranging job rotation between different functions which are involved in relationships with a key account.

Seventhly, Bacon (1999) examine sales managers is responsible to evaluation of accounts and account managers by established metrics. By monitoring those metrics and reviewing goals and outcomes sales manager is able to evaluate the sales teams and its managers. Georges (2006) estate trough evaluation sales managers develop the design of reward and compensation schemes for key account managers. Sales managers need to take into account key account managers behavioral performance as well as indicators of relational performance such as customer satisfaction or perceived value.

Eighty, sales manager need to ensure that all the sales support functions (including estimating, proposal development, etc.) are effective (Bacon 1999: 12.)

4.2 Operations

Sales manager as direct superior of account manager need to take into consideration what Abratt &Kelly (2002) investigate that key account managers play the most important role in the supplier–customer partnership. Account manager is the vital link between the supply company and the key account customer. They identify that there can be found six different critical issues that could assist sales management in the creation of enhanced and sustainable relationships which are:

- Suitability of the key account manager
- In-depth knowledge and understanding of the key account customer’s business
- Commitment to the partnership
- Delivering value
- Trust
- Proper implementation and understanding of the key account management concept
Georges (2006) states that “As an increasing number of supplying firms introduce key account management systems to service their major accounts, it becomes crucial to understand the impact of key account managers’ communication on collaborative relationships”.

Sullivan and others (2012) examine that “A well-managed relationship shapes perceptions, progressively moving from a vendor who delivers a commodity to that of a trusted advisor who is consulted on strategic business issues. That is, a sound value creation competence enhances effectiveness in strategic account management, in turn, shaping relationship perceptions.”

Organizational culture effect on how sales manager should operate. Barbars (2015) examine that organizational culture values oriented towards respect for social responsibility as well as individual’s rights, correlate positively with many dimensions of work engagement. Such values as high expectations and competitiveness for performance correlate negatively with work engagement.

Management is needed to put into strategic account management, and that means performing many of the classic functions of management which (Bacon 1999) introduces:

*Understanding.* Managements’ knowing the customer inside out. Knowing customer's markets and their customers. Management need to know their industry works and how your products or services contribute to their business. Management need to know their own competitors and understanding what they offer, how they differentiate themselves, and how they strive to gain competitive advantage. Company need to know itself, know own strengths and weaknesses and how these are perceived by the customer (Bacon 1999.) Weitz and Bradford (1999) state that the primary goal of key account managers is to optimize fit between the suppliers’ value offer and customers’ needs.

*Analyzing.* Examining account management performance in the account, drawing the right conclusions about his/her successes and failures, and learning from both. Sales manager could use other analytical tools to develop a broader and deeper
understanding of the customer's needs and how it can be leveraged strengths and mitigate weaknesses (Bacon 1999.)

*Prioritizing.* Knowing where and how much time and resources to devote in the account given its size, potential, and relative importance to sales manager and company. Manage investment in the customer and allocating resources most efficiently (Bacon 1999.)

*Setting direction.* Sales manager need to have a purpose. Knowing where want to take the account and have a vision that can be expressed in specific goals and objectives (Bacon 1999.)

*Taking initiative.* Sales manager is seeking and seeing opportunities that others don't see. He / She is creating energy around those initiatives and motivating others to join them. Being proactive in looking ahead and establishing action toward shared goals (Bacon 1999.)

*Planning.* Sales manager is deciding how and when is time to approach the customer, where to focus efforts, which of their needs to address, and what products and services to offer or develop. By developing a strategy sales manager is realizing the account's potential and identifying action steps necessary to implement strategy (Bacon 1999.)

*Team building.* Sales manager is building a cooperative group of supporters and stakeholders for company that shares the vision, is committed to aspirations for the account, and acts in a concerted manner to achieve them (Bacon 1999.)

*Coordinating.* Sales manager is synchronizing the activities of multiple people involved in the account to ensure that people's actions are complementary and that actions are taken by the right people at the right time (Bacon 1999.)

*Communicating.* Sales manager is managing the flow of information to and from the customer's organization. He / She is ensuring that company have enough of the right information to assess the situation and act in a timely manner and that the customer has enough information about company to make informed decisions (Bacon 1999.)
**Mobilizing.** Managing momentum in the account is in sales manager respond. By mobilizing more of company's resources when necessary to respond to opportunities or problems and being efficient in use of resources but always applying enough resources to meet the need (Bacon 1999.)

**Problem solving.** Sales manager is addressing delivery, installation, or performance problems with products or services and help customers solve problems on other issues within the scope of expertise (Bacon 1999.)

**Attending.** Sales manager should be constantly aware of the state of relationship with the customer and actively attend to support customer satisfaction. By knowing what the customer needs and is concerned about on an ongoing basis, understanding their key issues, and increasing the value they place on interactions with them (Bacon 1999.)

**Measuring.** Valuing company's return on its investment in certain customer. Sales manager should satisfy internal needs for a high return on those investments (Bacon 1999.)

These ideas are not able to implement for all the customers because it is too expensive, so sales management and top-management need to find customers who has the best potential to benefit business available compared investment. Managing a strategic account management means being systematic and proactive in developing and working the customer relationship so that sustain the relationship at its best value for the longest period possible (Bacon 1999.)
4.3 Opportunities

As mentioned earlier on the page 35, organizational culture effect also sales manager’s opportunities. There are many different definitions of organizational culture. Edgar Schein has written commonly used definition about the organizational culture. Schein (2010, 18) defines the organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems". This definition is based on the analysis of several other definitions. Alvesson (2012) underlines that in the academic research of organizational theory, one of the main issue is organizational culture as well as in management practice. Even in organizations, where cultural issues receive just a small amount of explicit attention, ways which people in the organization feel, are guided by ideas, think, value and act, beliefs and meanings of the socially shared culture.

Baker (1980) introduced that good cultures are characterized by norms and values supportive of profitability, excellence, customer service orientation, honesty, commitment to the organization, teamwork, pride in one's work, and adaptability - the capacity to thrive over the long run despite new technological developments, new regulations, the strains of growth and new competition.

Sales manager need to know that if the key account manager wants to create value for a key account, he/she need to constantly adapt his/her strategy and offering. Therefore, modifying proposals or plans to deal with the customers’ suggestions is all part of key account managers job.

Georges (2006) underlines the importance of communication for the maintenance and development of collaborative relationships within key account management setting. Lewler (2009) introduce there is no interest for having managers who can set effective goals, communicate why those set goals are important, and how they relate to the overall direction of the business. Managers need to be clear about how goal accomplishment and goal achievement are related to rewards.
Greenberg and Greenberg (1980) introduce that job matching is a key for better sales performance. Sales managers need to consider that in hiring processes. It is not important how the assessment is done but what is important is whether the technique employed does indeed measure the person’s key job attributes. If the candidate possesses the appropriate personality qualities motivating her or him to perform well, the employer can provide the needed functional skills and product knowledge. Furthermore, Kryscynski (2012) state if a manager invests in designing a customized job to match a unique individual, then although the employee may not be movable. The employee knows that he or she may be very costly to replace and, thus, can hold up the firm.

The role of sales people is very important for every company. Ingram and others (2002) examined that there are three most crucial areas in the future of sales force and company success. These include the development of sales force strategies, providing sales force leadership and the productive use of technology. Sales strategy usually composes of customer segmentation and prioritizing, selling models and relationship objectives as well as multiplex sales channel approaches. In technology, there is a move from using SFA (sales force automation) towards a more comprehend CRM (customer relationship management). The sales management team has to work within the internal environment’s constraints (e.g., company reputation) to assist sales personnel in dealing with a difficult situation.

According Dubinsky (1999) what sales management does to a salesperson after s/he has been hired is critical to sales success. An appropriately designed territory, adequate training, stimulating compensation and reward programs, skilled supervision and leadership, and sound sales force evaluation can enhance salespeople’s skills and thus their effectiveness. Conversely, designing poorly conceived territories, providing no or insufficient sales training, creating motivational schemes that are not attuned to a salesperson’s needs and concerns, supervising or leading in a manner that does a disservice to the skill and ability level of the salesperson (e.g., a too close or too loose supervisory style), or insufficiently assaying salesperson performance and then offering inappropriate or destructive feedback only assists in contributing to salesperson failure.
The sales management team has the wherewithal to facilitate high levels of performance from the sales force. But it also has the capacity to foster salesperson failure through the action (or inaction) it takes. Clearly, salespeople have a role to play in how well they execute their job assignments. Whether they succeed or fail in the long run, however, is inevitably directly traceable to what their sales managers have done (Dubinsky 1999.)

Company sales department organizational structure changes as well as their sales force control system. Managers may decide to create two separate sales forces with different compensation plans. These two sales forces represent opposite sides; one for traditional sales force and another for key account. With this system, management in order get better control the actual implementation of communication behaviors on the part of key account management (Georges 2006.)

Even if the formal leadership hierarchy exist top-down (sales manager lead the group and sales representative reports to sales manager). Sales organizations as interaction with strategic customers reshapes the power structure and information flow by active leadership role move up and down the hierarchy. In fact, it is possible let the sales representatives engages in leadership behaviors and even lead top management due to the strategic nature of a key account (Flaherty et al. 2012.)

In this chapter the sales manager strategic roles in key account management where examined. There were introduced few principles of the sales manager roles in key account management and the sales manager’s tasks were looked by the viewpoints of responsibilities, operations and opportunity. Organizational culture was shortly taken into consideration in this chapter too to give understanding the effect of it.

This thesis has now presented in the form of a literature review some of the important issues related to the thesis topic. Now the reader should have an understanding on the previous academic research on the subject of matter. In the next chapter the methodology of this thesis is examined.
5 METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the empirical research methods that are used in this study. The aim is to give understanding of how the research is implemented and how the results are analyzed.

A method has a diverse nature in scientific literature. However, usually it refers to the procedure with the help of which an attempt is made to look for information and to solve a known problem. In addition to being a wide concept aiming at finding new ways of carrying out scientific research and how to acquire and refine knowledge, a methodology can aim at making the underlying starting points and presuppositions visible. (Hirsjärvi, Remes, Sajavaara 2009.)

When choosing a research method suitable to the study, attention has to be paid to certain matters. First, one has to make sure that the method which is used and the research problem are in contact with each other. Because of this it indeed is important to choose the research method on the basis of the research problem. In this way one can make sure that the research results are versatile and reliable. The choice of the method also is affected by nature of the information one is looking for. In addition to this it is important to think where and from whom one wants to search information from. Some other factors in the choice of the research method are for example the available resources and the researcher's own skills and experiences (Hirsjärvi and others 2009.)

In this study a qualitative method is adapted. In a qualitative study an attempt is made to understand as comprehensively as possible and in detail the phenomena to be examined. The empiric material of this study has been collected with the help of a theme interview. In the theme interview an attempt is made to lead the researcher near the examined target. In the collecting of the material the researcher's role is emphasized because he observes and discusses with the ones to be examined. (Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara 2005.)

The method for collecting data was chosen to be interview, as interviewing is one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin 1994: 84). Furthermore, the
ontological position of this study suggests that people’s experiences, knowledge, interpretations and understandings are meaning or insights of the social reality which the research questions are designed to explore (Mason 1996: 38-40.)

The interview was implemented as a semi-structured theme interview. Theme interview can be also referred as “a focused interview” (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010:25). Yin (1994) describes that in a case study the interviews should be more like guided conversations rather than structured queries. Also, Mason (1996) argues that interview is a relatively informal style of conversation or discussion rather than a formal question and answer format. Theme interview begins with the assumption that all the experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of an individual can be researched in an interview structured by relevant themes instead of very specific questions. The theme interview takes into account that human beings interpret things in their personal way which is considered to be relevant, and that meanings are born in interaction. Theme interview lacks the precise form of questions of a structured interview, but it is not entirely a free flow of conversation as in an unstructured interview, therefore it is referred as semi-structured interview. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010.)

The theme interview consists of themes which are important from the point of view of the research. In the interviews the interviewer leads the discussion with the help of theme questions that have been defined in advance. The objective is to get comparable answers from all the interviewees. In the interviews the interviewees say their own views on the themes, so they can differ significantly from their scope and their points of view. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008.)

Its flexibility can be considered as the advantage of the theme interview. Because of this it is suitable for many different study purposes. Interviews can be used to study subject matters which have received less attention and produce complex and versatile answers. In addition to this, the received answers can be immediately clarified in the interviews and can be deepened. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008.)

Theme interviews have also their own problems and challenges. The flexibility of the collecting of the material requires skill and experience from the interviewer’s role of the interviewer. Also the interviewee should get ready carefully. For example, the lack
of talent from the interviewees to give socially acceptable answers also may weaken the reliability of the interviews. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008.)

5.1 Collecting and analysis of the research material

At first, this thesis tries to identify academic literature of the main topic “The strategic role of the sales manager in key account management”. The collecting and analysis of the research material were directed by the subject of this study. An attempt was made to collect a large body of empiric material from the interviews and in them the focus was on the high-quality of carrying out the interviews. There were made a framework which included the main points of the literature review findings.

The use of other methods than the theme interview employed in the study could have taken attention out of the main data collection method and this way could have weakened the final results of the study. Because of this the using of only the theme interview was adopted as a research method of the study.

The interviews were carried out with sales managers who were selected on purpose from different offices of the bank. This way an attempt was made to form a cross-section of the views of the sales managers of different offices on the sales manager’s strategic roles in the organization. All the interviewees had experience from different offices during their careers.

The interviews were held in OP Oulu main office, located in center of Oulu in spring 2016. OP Oulu provide different banking, wealth management and non-life insurance services. OP Oulu operates in the economic zone of Oulu. It belongs to the OP Financial Group and it is one of the biggest co-operative banks. OP Oulu serves its banking and insurance customers in 14 offices in the area of six municipalities. Also web service (internet bank service op.fi) is provided for the customers. OP Oulu is the biggest bank in Oulu.

OP Financial Group is the largest financial group in Finland. OP has three business lines: Banking, Wealth Management and Non-Life Insurance. There are over 180 cooperative member banks in the group (OP Ryhmä.) Finland’s banking system is
famed for its comparatively prudent operating model. High-risk trading is often kept to a minimum and asset quality is high. This is reflected in OP Financial Group’s ranking in Bloomberg’s list of the world's strongest banks. In 2015, it was named as the eighth strongest, the highest ranking achieved by any European bank. (Banks Industry Profile 2015).

Organization structure in banking sector is normally seen bureaucratic. The bureaucratic organization is very organized with a high degree of formality in the way it operates. Dobbin (2012) argues that Max Weber believed that an ideal bureaucracy consists in six specific characteristics: efficiency, written rules of conduct, specialized division of labor, hierarchy of command, advancement based on achievement and impersonality. Hamilton (1991) argues Weber claimed that bureaucracies are goal-oriented organizations, which use their efficiency and rational principles to reach their goals.

The people who were interviewed represent fields of business or offices in OP Oulu. They all work as sales manager in the organization. The first “P1” represents corporate office. P1 has 27 years of experience from the banking industry and he has been sales manager for 7 years. The second “P2” represents insurance office. P2 has 10 years’ experience from banking and insurance industry and he started to in sales manager position in January 2015, so when interviews were conducted he already has operated as sales manager for year and couple of months. The third “P3” represents private bank office. P3 has 10 years of experience from banking industry and he has been sales manager for 6 years. These persons were chosen as they have the best insights on the sales manager position, which improves the validity of this research.

All the interviewees have a long career behind from the managerial positions and particularly in sales management. The interviewees were asked for their interest to participate in the study and for preliminary permission to interview them during the time of the spring of 2016. The interviews were conducted as soon as the study had advanced to a stage where they could be executed. After this the interview schedules and locations were agreed on with the interviewees. To the interviewees an outline of the interview was sent beforehand so that they had time to become acquainted with the study subject and to think about their own answers.
The interview framework which directs the discussion was the basis of the interview. The themes to be dealt with were: sales manager's different roles, interaction in the organization, possibilities of influencing, effect of the organizational culture, management styles and motivation actors. However, the themes were not totally loose from each other but they were discussed as a joined theme the objective of which was to study the sales manager's strategic roles in key account management. In addition to the principal themes the specified questions/comments the purpose of which was to clarify the interviewees' thoughts and answers so that the material remained comparable were presented to the interviewees. The purpose of the auxiliary questions was also to connect the answers to the matters that have been dealt with in the theory part of the study.

After conducting interviews, all of them were transcribed and after that translated from Finnish to English. It was clear that interviews are carried out in Finnish because interviewees English skills weren't that good so the answers couldn't have been colorful. After that, there were need for editing the transcribed interviews as theme, so for the reader it would be easier to find out the findings of the interviews. Also the previous academic literature findings were kept in mind. The results of the interviews reflect the interviewees' subjective views and experiences. The emphasized points are the ones which had repeated in the empiric share of the study are collected together and are raised to be dealt with. The research results cannot be considered either correct or wrong because they are based on the interviewees' individual experiences that they have collected during their careers. In the study an attempt is made to react critically to these experiences.

5.2 Reliability and validity

A research’s creditability can be evaluated in terms of reliability and validity. With reliability one refers to the possibility of repeating the research. The objective is to make sure that if the steps of the research were followed by another person, equivalent results would be reached. The aim of reliability for the study is to minimize errors and biases. (Yin 1994: 36-37.) The reliability of this study can be seen to be solid.
Subsequently the data was coded according the themes emerged from the theory. These themes which were the basis of the analysis are presented in the paper, and there are various quotations of the interview material to support the credibility of the analysis.

Validity means the study’s competence of measuring the issue that it is supposed to measure (Hirsjärvi and others 2004). The interviewees were all key personnel regarding the partnership; from OP Oulu the interviewees were sales managers and responsible of their own field. The interviews were performed in an undisturbed state (usually in the interviewee’s workroom) in which the researcher and the interviewee were only there. The interviews lasted about 40-60 minutes and they were recorded with the recording application of the mobile phone. In the interview the researcher’s task was to direct the discussion but to try to retain as neutral an atmosphere as possible in order to avoid from affecting the interviewee’s answers and opinions. As the method chosen is correct for this type of study, it increases the validity.
6  EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In this chapter the empiric results of the study are dealt with. The chapter has been divided into subsections which are in accordance with the themes. In the subsections the interviewees’ most important observations and experiences of the subject to be examined are gone through through the subjects of questions. The aim is to find similarities and differences between the previous academic literature and the answers of the three sales managers who were interviewed for this thesis. This empirical chapter shows that there are differences how to operate in sales managers position.

6.1  Sales management central roles

6.1.1  Strategic roles

As previous literature review showed, sales manager has several different strategic roles. According to Bacon (1999) sales managers are normally responsible of following typical issues in key account management. All of these responsibilities can be seen as different strategic roles. Now this thesis investigates how selected interviewees sees these strategic roles. Discussed topics were evaluation of KAM, selecting employees into their positions, budget decisions, compensations and bonuses, guidance and education, hiring, firing, creating support material for sales, making sure that all support materials are available for KAM and job matching.

Evaluation of KAM

KAM evaluation is seen as traditional work for sales manager’s which is conducted weekly. Nevertheless, there are different ways to evaluate KAM. P3 says that superior’s basic task is to measure how and whether the employees have succeeded or not.

“We have results indicators and qualitative indicators which I control and evaluate. Those indicators include for example credit decisions and agreements. Indicators show whether all quality and all the other required elements are OK. The outline of the requirements is made a
couple of times per year where the work of every employee is gone through and evaluated if he/she has aimed at good results. I do spot checks sometimes which I use as evaluation. Those evaluations are gone through with KAM. I have made an excel table which I use as help. This excel table calculates certain elements and shows performance on scale of satisfactory, good or excellent.” (P1)

Still, there are some difficulties when considering the evaluation against others.

“I bring up the fact that also the use of different indicators would be surely a functional solution but because of the protection of the privacy this must not be publicly done. However, the indicators would make a wholesome competition possible in relation to others and at the same time it would increase openness and eventually it could be used in the salary discussions, too, which are in principle based on that performance. The manager must not use it even as a reason because it cannot be told. So this should change towards a more open way which it has been before.” (P3)

Selecting employees into their positions

Georges (2006) point that managers are responsible for selecting right types of candidates for key account positions. Manager should investigate candidate’s inclinations and skills. Every interviewee told that selecting employees into their positions is one of the basic operations they need to take care of. Still, switching positions regularly is not necessary. Of course, it is important that everybody is given the same kind of opportunities to perform and to affect their changes to be promoted.

Budget decisions

Everybody said in the interview that budgets are given from the higher level. The most critical budgets are normally in human resources. Everybody highlighted that there is always need for extra workforce, but when the budget is given there is not much that you can do. Only thing they could do is to try to influence HR manager decisions.
Compensations and Bonuses

P1 said that he is not involved in the meetings where compensation regulations are made because they are defined higher level. Nevertheless, he is involved in the project where the annual goals of the year are decided which is used as an indicator of performance.

P2 said that he is involved in all meetings where compensation and bonus decisions are made and he has influence on those.

P3 said that he too belongs in those decision meetings.

"Evaluation of the performance is one indicator in the scorecard which in practice determines whether one has gained a bonus. We also have a quick reward system and I decide all its elements."

Guidance and education

"Inside the organization there is an own organization which takes care of the basic education but that practical work which is connected to risk control and to credit granting, it is my task to make sure that that work starts to go right. But quite many times educating in work is used because every case is different, so then it is easier to have colleagues who guide them through in harder cases." (P1)

P2 said participates in the orientation and he will make sure that there are so-called godparents for every new employee and that they are introduced internally in the organization. In the shortcomings the manager makes sure that everyone can get help from the group.

P3 said that he is not involved in the guidance that much but renewing employee’s orientation program is a big part of his responsibilities.
**Hiring**

Hiring people is seen as a very important job for sales managers even though it is not done quite often.

“If that new employee comes under my control and supervision I handle the interview and make decision who is going to have that position. HR manager makes the first decisions which means she decides who I’m going to interview. I have hired almost 50 persons during my career and done quite a good job. Many times I have found right kind of employees inside the house (from different office). That’s easier because I already know that previously the employee has done a good job so there are no thoughts about how would he or she performs under my supervision. Also, he or she already knows the IT and the working habits so results won’t take long.” (P1)

P2 and P3 had both hired about 10 people each and both are very pleased how their employees have performed under their supervision.

**Firing**

None of the interviewed managers had fired a person. Because of the outsourcing there has been some changes in the organization during the past few years but it has not affected on the amount of employees. Still, there has been forced positions changes which have had to be made.

“If it seems that someone’s sales results are bad monthly my responsibility is to take care of that. We call it early interfering which means that in those meetings we try to find the reasons that affect poor sales performance and try to find a way how the results could be enhanced. It requires discussions and planning and decisions to have an employee on the right track with a better career” (P1)
Creating support material for sales

“I produce excel tables for sales support. Still, those tables are only for my own personal use. Those help me to make calculations how business has been going under my supervision. Otherwise all the support materials come from the higher level. For example, the product palette which shows what we are offering to our customers comes from higher level.” (P1)

Making sure that all the support materials are available for KAM

There are different kind of approaches among the interviewed managers as to how to make sure that all the support materials are available for KAM.

“They will complain about it to me if everything is not in order. Then it will be taken care of if possible.” (P1)

“The responsibility belongs to me. I produce material to support sales.” (P2)

“It is taken care individually by the employee him- or herself.” (P3)

Job matching

Nowadays business develops quickly so job matching and actually job changing is normal. Greenberg and Greenberg (1980) introduce that job matching is a key for better sales performance.

“I search for so-called universally applicable persons, in other words persons with the so-called hybrid readiness because, a finance business develops such a speed that many assignments will disappear. The person needs to be that kind of who is able to adopt new matters and not capable
to made only a right foot shoe. Nowadays the fine word is developable.” (P1)

Kryscynski (2012) state if a manager invests in designing a customized job to match a unique individual, then although the employee may not be movable. The employee knows that he or she may be very costly to replace and, thus, can hold up the firm. P2 recognizes that same thing.

“One thing is sure that I will not surely very fire many employees during my career. That means that I need to find my employees strengths and likes. Sometimes only option is to change someone’s position into another because of automatization and digitalization. To which it will change depends on the characteristics of an employee.” (P2)

Also, P2 highlighted that the changes will come in many reasons from the fact that what the colleagues have done successfully on other cities. In other words, if somebody has tried something successfully, it will be tried also here then.

“Sometimes I need to do job matching because I know my own group very well. I can recommend a certain treasurer for a certain type of customer in the hope of the best possible service.” (P3)

6.1.2 Operative roles

According Bacon (1999) the sales manager responsibilities are more often different than operational functions. Sales manager responsibilities can be seen more like a provider to success. This interview shows that sales managers also take part on operative roles.

All the interviewees said that they daily take a part on operative roles on their work. P1 mention that as a leader of the sales he needs to participate in the operative operation all the time. He also has own customers so he operates in the customer
interface. One side of operative role of the sales manager is what P2 mention when he said that all the complaining’s goes through him. By doing that that he is able to help sales people to operate more effectively and also be aware what kind of problems might be raised on the customer interface. P3 argues that he’s role is more like a helper.

“I have to be just a little along but then to operate more in the helper's role. I also have to take care of some customers' matters personally because I have earlier experience of the same work. However, it takes about 20% of my time. I may be along in the meetings, also the customers may be connected straight line to me and I have a few own customers too.” (P3)

6.1.3 Challenges

Sales managers face challenges in their work. Literature review showed that these challenges could be like what Lewler (2009) introduce, that there is no interest for having managers who can set effective goals, communicate why those set goals are important, and how they relate to the overall direction of the business. Managers need to be clear about how goal accomplishment and goal achievement are related to rewards. Also, organizational culture effect on how sales manager should operate and bureaucracy (especially in the banking industry) is one challenge itself. Flaherty and others (2012) point out that sales manager should create a flow. Employees are able to accomplish their individual goals in harmony with organizational goals in this environment.

P1 highlighted that target-oriented sales management needs to be put on the center so all get very satisfactory sales results and at the same time it secures the fact that employees are satisfied customers and their own work. P3 said that fitting of and this workday of our strategic objectives.

“For example, how you could combine with the strategic objectives which are decided for us (like digitalization) and every day work. When
it experiences the fact that here there is a conflict, in other words what is
the will state and what are possibilities to carry out them. Then also the
resources questions will come often against, in other words with the
human resources have been allowed always to wrestle regularly. They
are usually the most difficult matters. I am able for my part to have effect
but not to be the one which makes decisions but half of them answer
HR.” (P3)

All the interviewees said that bureaucracy in the working place is a challenge.

“It is quite huge, the regulation increases all the time and we are hugely
controlled from the quarter of different instances and it seems that end
will not come to it. Etc. begins to be to this risk control to the joining
matter from euro level to quite national level and quite hugely from it to
the group level and it takes very much time since my own time.” (P1)

6.1.4 Responsibilities

Sales manager has many different responsibilities. Abratt & Kelly (2002) examine that
key account managers play the most important role in the supplier–customer
partnership. Account manager is the vital link between the supply company and the
key account customer. The interviews show that sales manager need to take that into
consideration.

P1 said that he has two kind of sales employees whom work under his control.

“If I talk about own sales people, actually they have a kind of two-sided
task: one part has account customers, in other words own kind of role is
in the customer responsible role which is and there also are no-account
customers of whom are taken care according to common care models.”
(P1)
P2 and P3 said that normally sales people work is quietly free form, but there are some practices where he needs to be involved.

“For example, if there are big discounts made those must be approved by me. Otherwise then informing of mistakes is under my responsibility. However, the manuals are very clear to the fact that for example the friends' insurances must not be made.” (P2)

There are also some other cases where sales manager needs to be involved.

“95% of my employees are able to decide the matters itself and the largest part of all matters they are able to solve by themselves, so they will not ask me pieces of information. If there is really big pricings or case in which there is a really significant pricing difference, then I need to be involved and we figure out solution together. Still those kind of cases are very rare and individual. The most important task for my employees is to take care of as well as possible their accounts, in other words, to take care of the customer satisfaction and at the same time to make sales. Then they are able to achieve those sales objectives which have been set for them. We have clear templates according to which we operate so misunderstandings will not come in the everyday operation which have been defined.” (P3)

6.2 Interaction

6.2.1 Interaction relation with KAM

Interaction between sales manager and key account manager is important to topic to highlight in this thesis. As mentioned earlier in the text the sales manager is seen more as key account manager’s collaborative partner than direct supervisor. Still, hierarchy in the organization flows as the key account manager deals with operational responsibilities and report to a sales manager and they both operate to establish better
performance of key accounts. According Flaherty and others (2012) reality of today’s sales manager role have changed from top-down, leader-centered paradigm to more like collaboration which comes a vast network of complex relationships.

All the interviewees said that being along with others is a must. You won’t achieve good kind of interaction if you just operate from ivory tower.

“My way to interact with others is like I be along with my employees, in other words, walk around people and and I interview them day along. Of course, this is connected to the credit process because credit decisions are made together and a customer cases are gone through. I like the fact that the interaction relation is discussing and we have objectives from which that discussion is had generally, in other words, how the reaching of those objectives has proceeded and how could develop the matter all year long. If someone won’t reach its monthly or yearly objectives, I try to invent the tools with which it would be caught.” (P1)

P1 introduces its own philosophy about today’s leadership.

“I have a kind of philosophy I began to think about and it include two categories in the management at the coarse level which has become common in the biggest organizations. There is “excellent leadership” and other so-called “excel leadership”. In this kind of organization there is quite much this kind of “excel leadership” which is forced in an immediate sales management. Still, at the same time sales manager tries to do that “excellent leadership”, it will be quite difficult and two divided task to handle. But certainly I attempt to avoid as much as possible bureaucracy, and at the same time as much operation as possible and it of course then requires of the sales manager a fact that objectives are essentially clear.” (P1)

P2 said that the concrete presence helps sales manager to understand the employees better.
“I try so much to be present when but it brings its own challenges, because we have so many employees. The concrete presence is a lot participation such as for example for supply of customer feedback is important. Then my wish will go a straight line to operation. One time in a month there is development discussions. Of course it is possible to discuss more with people. It doesn’t mean that I just stay at my own workroom. I don’t believe that if I were there in my own workroom for another month and then would be discussion once a month with employees, so, it would not work. Also every other Friday is a morning meeting. If I don’t see personally my employees enough, I might call them and ask if everything is fine and how successful have you been lately.” (P2)

P3 highlighted that working in expert organization with different personalities is things to be keep in mind. Even though the people are led as individuals and they have their own needs, a team has to be led with common rules.

“I have an expert organization so if I try to lead it authoritarian, it would go to the trees. Everyone has their own kind of style and habit of managing his/her work. There is no only one right way to operate even though we have service models which are offered to customers. Still, there are many freedom degrees of how to work and certain ways to operate in relation to the customers. My work cannot be that I’ll be hitting the fist to the table. It is more like assists in cases like how I could help my employees to work more brightly or better, in other words, perhaps I could wake thoughts and questions for example if schedule problems are raised. We could solve those problems together and re-arrange calendar. It depends also on the person in which way it will be interacted in because some of them need distinctly more attention than others. Some of them want to have more support or advice and others do not want to be advised. So, it has to vary personal interaction in regard to it. On the other hand, a team must be with the same rules, which touches everybody. However, our whole service model will be connected
with the team when comprehensive service is offered and nobody alone can produce such service.” (P3)

6.2.2 Securing good interaction relation

Securing good interaction relation between sales manager and KAM is important. There are several different ways to secure this relation. All interviewees said that it has to be taken into consideration how to change suitable interaction with the separate person. P1 highlighted the importance of how experts should be led.

“If you have an expert organization which is sales oriented, in the other words, this is a sales organization on which there are experts, so experts are not led by ordering but they are led by leading.” (P1)

P3 argues that sales manager should build confidence, in other words must be trusted on both sides.

“Open discussing culture must be maintained and honestly told what expectations are and to know how to tackle the impossible wishes. No magic words or tricks, normal honest interaction is the best way. So is not like from above down relation. Each other are known and others thinking is understood.” (P3)

6.2.3 Interaction development

Interaction between sales manager and KAM could and should be developed during time. As previous literature review shows, key account manager and sales manager has intense interaction and the information flows one to another. They both affect each other’s performance. Sales manager and key account manager, as a conclusion, can be seen as team more than monitored – supervisor partners. P2 said mention that there we come to that difficult situation where you need to retain the briskness and forward taking spirit in the month meetings. (P2)
“There have been issues where employee defines the level of its own doing and at the same time get really bad customer feedback. Only alternative is the fact that I could transfer him/her to some other place but the fact is that it makes no sense because he/she would be as bad there as he/she is already here. You can’t change him/her to do cleaner’s work. It is just a simple fact that there is not that kind of work where people can underperform regularly. So what I mean is that leader should find the tools how even the worst employees in the working place are get to blow on the same coal.” (P2)

As a leader, sales manager should be the person in the working place who enables possibilities to its KAMs.

“I see that the leaders task to be the guy who enables things to happen, for example one can work in cooperation with other units so the case will be taken to a goal. Leader also has to think about the fact that where those objectives are scratched from to a pile. I think for example about the target groups and the brightest working methods. Looking for the possibilities to people, so that they have opportunities to achieve their objectives.” (P3)

6.3 Value creation

6.3.1 How sales manager could create value

Previous literature review showed findings of Sullivan and others (2012) that value creation is implemented by the managers. These findings could help managers to identify critical issues in order to turn value creation competence into increased sales performance. It requires that value is well developed to seller. P1 said that customer must be in the core.

“The main principle is that the customer is always in the core. Our task is to produce the value, actually any given surplus value to our customer. With the company half it is started from our point of view is the
assumption that the more valuable customer ship, more this customer in question is on our palm.” (P1)

P1 return to the fact that he has an expert organization, so it is the superior's task to take care of value creation. Competent and competence needs to be sufficient. P1 said that he's expert organization task is to offer unique service and solutions for the customers.

“We are trying to get rid of the fact that we do not offer only one product but we offer solutions. Actually comprehensive solutions and that comprehensive solution is the glue. The sellers' task is to remind a customer, that here is more than only one thing that we are trying to work with. Our duty is to notice and remind customer of this. Those solutions which can be used to create a value to the customer have to be found together with Key Account Managers. We gather together with KAMs and representatives couple of times a month to seek the best solutions for our customer cases. In those meetings we need to find the best possible solutions and how we could add something in that.” (P1)

P3 says that value adding to the customer crystallizes everything.

“If you think about my most important task, it surely be it. It crystallizes everything. I have many possibilities to be along and help in the value creation to the customer. For example, we have qualitative objectives on customer work. It means that there is objects which measures what things must be taken place every year with which customer and also how many times needs to be connected with the customer. With that kind of way, in particular those matters also are obtained to the event. I have experienced that this is the most important matter because it is that customer who brings the bread to us. So I am able to effect on how my employees work and have the customer's needs paid attention comprehensively. We have annual year charting which shows us all the customer's services. We could check is our operations comprehensively done and is our service supply in right tracks for certain customer. Also
our office offers benefits for our customers which helps us in value creating process.” (P3)

6.3.2 How you add value to the customers

P2 highlight that sales manager needs to ensure that the customer gets all the important information which are included on process. Ensuring this, sales manager could effect on value creation process.

“Personally the best way is to ensure the process when customer comes here. This process includes several things; first customer will be surveyed and the the best possible solutions should be found with seller. After that deals or sales are made with customer. Actually, my part starts then. I need to make sure that my employee has guided the customer how he or she is able to get all the services. In the other words, if something happens to the customer and he or she needs to contact insurance company (us) and make the damage report about what happened. Then comes clear that employee has sold well (has sold the wide parcels) but he or she has not informed that customer needs to have an internet bank in use, because the damage report needs to be made there. Without internet bank service a big part of our services stays in the dark for customer. So, if customer haven’t got that kind of information when he or she made those insurance contracts the damage has been made and then we got reputation of bad company. It is my task to make sure that the process is comprehensively gone through. The wide parcels of different insurances are not taken because they are fun and wide but when the damages come then those parcels are needed and the whole baggage of services too. Customer needs to know where and how they get our services when the damage happens.” (P2)
6.4 Position

6.5 Sales manager’s position

Dealing with different resources is seen a bit of a problem of sales manager position. That means operating with different offices. Flaherthy and others (2012) define that managers are at a critical connection in an informal network with access to diverse contacts, sources and positions. In this position, a manager can manipulate the information that can affect the sales representative’s performance and career prospects, or disrupt the flow of both the positive and negative impressions of the sales representative.

“It is my job to make sure that sales roll well when certain sales objectives have been set. If I see that there is a bottleneck in the resources, I need to take care of it. It could be human resources or corresponding so when I find those I need to have discussions if there is something that we can do about it. Normally I try to have more resources but it is very hard. I’ve seen that many times.” (P1)

Flaherty and others (2012) examine that because sales managers act as the linking pins between the senior management and sales representatives, so they are often central in formal sales network, but in informal sales networks they may be not. P2 sees that pressure from the top is normal in sales manager position.

“I would add human resource department which is still bigger here along. If time elapses and I do not hear from the managing director, for example, what are the sales expectations so I go and ask them. For some reason, I want to have a certain kind of pressure from an own superior to myself. I want that I know the fact that this has significance and also know what are the expectations about me. When I know these I try to arrange everything as well as possible because I don’t want to have that kind of feeling that everything is just fine and I don’t have to do anything special. What I’m trying to say is that I need that pressure to becoming better.” (P2)
6.6 The effect of corporate culture

6.6.1 Do corporate culture effect your management style?

Alvesson (2012) underlines that in the academic research of organizational theory, one of the main issue is organizational culture as well as in management practice. Even in organizations, where cultural issues receive just a small amount of explicit attention. P1 underlines that organizational culture gives the framework for everyday practice so it would be easier to operate with it.

“In my opinion, it has a huge effect. In other words, if the operation is transparent and the values are declared it will be easy to operate. However, on the other hand, if they aren’t then the case is difficult to operate with.” (P1)

P2 says that previous executives leave their heritage to their future generation. If some kind of management style has work previously it will be used in the future by another manager.

“I do not believe that effect that much. Still, it affects in situations where I have the ability to behave differently with different people. Nevertheless, I think that the most critical thing that effect on corporate culture management style is my previous executives. I have learned a lot from them. I am grateful for my executives for given me direction, told me what I need to do and what are the expectations. Still, there were missing that certain type of sales management. On the other hand, I have tried to copy those executives who have done good results previously and had good feedback from their employees. I have used those methods when I am operating with the most difficult employees which are normally those ones who has been in the house for tens of years.” (P2)

P3 says that different goals mean different style of management. Sales manager should change its management style in different situations if necessary.
“Our corporate culture has been quite result oriented. Things are done through scorecard and with that, the performance is estimated. So yes, corporate culture has effect a lot. What is been put into the scorecard has given the direction of doing. Now we have moved to more customer experience way of actions which means that we are trying to do more satisfied customers. Before this the focus was normally on sales but now it has been changed to put effort on customer experience. So that means that when we have different kind of goals the management style needs to be different because we are trying to head different kind of operations and final results.” (P3)

6.6.2 How corporate culture could effect in management style

P1 underlines that different times require different kind of management style. Also he sees that working in same industry for a long time it shapes personal management style wanted or not.

“Let’s just say 28 years in bank and financial sector could shape anyone’s management style. Also time changes organization and its behavior. That means, for example, there has been years of danger which shape organization and also the times when everything rolls really well. Organization and the managers in it needs to know how to change their management styles to meet today’s challenges, good or bad.” (P1)

Still, it could depend on just manager’s personal styles and ability to work more like a leader than a manager.

“External forces could affect how managers should manage but still in our organization there are people who are not changed at all their authoritarian management style. Years has gone by and the same style of management has remained. But as I said that at the group level the values are specified; we all have certain rules how we operate with customers
and how we operate inside of our office. Even though we have those group level rules I’m not saying that everybody follows it precisely. In the other words, the style doesn’t change underneath at all even operating well or poorly. There we come to that dilemma where manager says “now we do it this way” but at the same time do it in another way there comes into conflict and employees being two sided when they are wondering what type of manager is that and what is the best way to operate.” (P1)

P2 and P3 believe more on person him or herself is the main reason for certain type of management.

“I don’t see that only corporate culture effect on manager’s way to manage. It depends manager as an individual how he or she operates. I do not believe that bank or financial sector be in anyhow different position from other companies. Yes, good managers are needed here and also elsewhere, actually, everywhere in the quite same way. That construction worker won’t do good job if he or she is not managed well. Now we are talking about wholeness’s more than before and we need to pay attention who we are going to recruit because all the protection is so strong for the employee. So what I mean is that you need to succeed at the first time.” (P2)

“This depends on the persons themselves so because even I have had so different managers. Eventually it depends so much the individual’s ways to operate. In certain organization one manager could manage his or her employees to work under certain type of corporate culture and after the manager has changed the new manager will change the culture to meet his or her personal likes. So we could ask the question; is dependence just because of individual’s management style or is it the corporate culture at the end? This is my interpretation when we have had these changes. I’d like to say that here should be more engaging corporate culture because unfortunately here is seen too much from the top – down style of management. Particularly it will fall in to the neck of middle-
management where I personally operate. It feels like top management just turn over something new and “interesting” and then middle-management need to survive and lead the group under him or her. Only thing you can do is try to survive and operate as well as possible.” (P3)

6.6.3 Restriction appointed by the corporate culture

P1 said that he would operate differently if he had been able to create the foundation of corporate culture and its set of values and a so-called proclamation which then all would follow without haggling. P2 thinks that entrepreneurial way of operating would make life easier.

“If I were an entrepreneur, I would go straight to say to those employees that if you don’t want to sell we need to find something else that might be in your interest. In our office it is not possible because we have this and that things that forbid me to do something like that. Here we just talk and talk and it won’t lead to anywhere. It would be so much more straightforward business if I were entrepreneur.” (P2)

P1 highlights that corporate culture should not chain manager in his/her possibilities to help his/her employees. Previous literature review showed where Baker (1980) introduced that good cultures are characterized by norms and values supportive of profitability, excellence, customer service orientation, honesty, commitment to the organization, teamwork, pride in one’s work, and adaptability - the capacity to thrive over the long run despite new technological developments, new regulations, the strains of growth and new competition.

“Different rules and corporate culture should not chain manager in his or her possibilities to help his or her employees. Rules and corporate culture is made for giving framework of doing. What I meant was that because our work is highly regulated and we are now talking about bank so those certain things are done correctly in just one and only way. I
mean things where money and agreements are involved. But still I can effect on how sales performance is made and handled. Actually, all starts from the assumption where I am able to affect who is recruited here. That is an essential matter.” (P1)

P2 said that there is no restriction appointed by corporate culture. He sees that those are not corporate culture things which are harming his work because they are rules and laws which harms effective business operations.

“Some applications made just a little bit but it doesn’t matter me at all. Still, I would like to show sales rankings to my employee but that is forbidden. Also if I’d like to arrange some kind of sales competitions it is quite hard because all the prices are interpreted as earned income. So, you can’t have competitions, you can’t show how employees are ranked in sales performance and you can’t give awards. So I need to think how to operate without those elements. Because of that, personal interaction stands out. I also want to make clear that for those who are following their own sales it is meaningful because they are more competitive. Then the others who doesn’t follow they sales results (and who are normally at the bottom of those tables) are actually winners. They have defined their own state which they think is enough (which is not even close).” (P2)

P3 have different kind of opinion about restriction. He clearly highlight that different rules and regulations effect badly on customer satisfaction and effectiveness. Then customer is forced to be a scapegoat.

“There are so many rules and obligations which must be done, even you are dealing with smaller cases. For example, supply of the credit decision requires so many intermediate stages even though you would like to give it as soon as possible to the customer. There are also many employee political rules that which comes from higher level that could be challenged for that reason that do we really need those. For example, dress code in the work place.” (P3)
Actually, there is a paradox seen in this case.

“If you are working in finance sector you are not able to work without regulations. So that makes it a kind of paradox. Surely there are things that could be done differently because regulations and rules brings certain type of norms that you just have to do every time. So, if there were not those kind of things to take care I would focus on different things. Nowadays we need to deal with so many different regulations like for example documentation which sometimes makes me cry. If they were not that much of regulations the focus could be better in the customer needs.” (P3)

6.7 Management Style

6.7.1 Personal management style

Chakrabarty and others (2013) examine that empirical studies on the role of sales managers in enhancing the effectiveness of salespeople have focused on a variety of issues such as sales managers as mentors, supervisory leadership styles, supervisory selling behaviors and supervisory orientations. P1 thinks that management style could be combine of two different styles.

“Even though I keep my own management style as low hierarchical there are some cases that only way to manage is to command. You can’t do anything if it is connected to legislation, rules or regulations. So there is no alternative, it just must be done. Everything that is connected to the risk it is not discussed at all, we make it this way and that’s it. Same like in the army. We are here like ice-hockey team; the team has its own rules, the game has its own rules and everyone could carry out themselves in the ice within the limits allowed by the rules.” (P1)

P2 said that the being the flexible manager is not always the best idea.
“I have got kind of experience that if you are flexible manager you might get abused in certain way. There is a risk that you need to correct those by being tough. You need to find a balance between flexibility and toughness. It depends with whom are you dealing with; others appreciate flexibility and others not.” (P2)

P3 highlight low hierarchical co-operation in the expert organization.

“We have here an expert organization so that means my management style can’t be like I was shouting orders from the ivory tower. I flag for low-hierarchical co-operation which is based on the reciprocal interaction which makes possible and get along people. Having this kind of management style your employees are more bound and more motivated.” (P3)

6.7.2 Change in Management styles

Flaherty and others (2012) examine that reality of today’s sales manager role have changed from top-down, leader-centered paradigm to more like collaboration which comes a vast network of complex relationships. P2 remembered the old times when his own managers manage people by shouting “shut up, listen, this is the way is done.”

“I see that management has changed in a positive way and now it is more like dialogue between two individuals. Sales manager needs to be attend with his or her employees everyday work so he or she could understand better the routine work. Sales manager needs to be attend also for that reason so he or she could find misunderstandings and failures so those things could be then corrected. Sales manager can’t lead successfully operations through his or her room.” (P2)

P2 said that employees should imagine themselves into sales manager’s position. It is not that easy what they might think.
“Personally I always have wanted to move on to executive position and wanted to be a sales manager. Now I can say that it is not that executive position which should people head to. It is much easier just manage your own work and operations. Let’s have a sales example. If you work independently you can put all your energy to your personal success but if you are executive, much of your time and energy goes to that when you are dealing with your employees trying to affect positively their results. The results could be positive or negative and it depends how you have deal with your employees. I am interested very much on searching the most efficient way how I personally could help my employees to have better results. Also I’m trying to find the ways to introduce new ideas which were not shot down immediately. I want to be that kind of manager who is known by that he is not shooting down the craziest ideas which are introduced by employees. I also want to courage people to think how things could be done differently. Employees should think about more the whole picture, not just their own desk and performance. More collaboration with other employees in the group because every day there is more work and less employees doing those.” (P2)

6.7.3 Management style and internationalization

This thesis also takes into consideration internationalization. P1 said that different cultures create difference between people which needs to be taking into consideration.

“In our office we have quite homogenous group so these culture things are not paid that much attention. If I think in an international scale the situation would be surely much more challenging. Here in Finland we like to speak straight forward to each other and I know, that won’t work in other countries.” (P1)

P3 said that in the international scale the way to meet people will change. Still he wonders that are they only personality questions.
6.8 Motivation

6.8.1 How to motivate

As previous literature review showed what Kark and others (2008) and Tebeian (2012) introduce that there are two management styles which have a positive effect on people's motivation. They are transformational leadership and servant leadership. P1 says that motivation could be separated on soft and hard side.

“Motivation in the work place based on personal, team and office objectives. Also one motivation factor is how happy employee is in the work place. I call that as a soft side of motivation. In this soft side I try to help employees who are not performed as well as I thought and together we try to find solutions how all could reach their objectives. Hard side are those objectives and how you get it done. Reaching hard side allows you have the bonuses. There is also good team spirit which increases motivation. There are no lonely wolves.” (P1)

Employee motivation results from an individual’s high expectancy of achieving a goal and when the results are of value (Flaherty and others 2012.) P2 said that motivation could be increased by requiring achievements for employee.

“There are some kind of competitions which could increase employee motivation. Personally I think that I could increase my employees’ motivation by requiring certain levels of performance and employees’ could think themselves what would be the best way to achieve those required levels of performance. Employees needs to understand what needs to be done to achieve those levels.” (P2)

According to research by Abd-El-Salam and others (2013) a company should design proper reward systems according to its’ workers' behavior and likings. High satisfaction with salary and bonuses can increase the workers' internal motives to perform their assignments better. P3 underlines that scorecard is the easy way to motivate employees.
“The traditional way in our office is through the scorecard. It is very simple; when employee has achieved all the requirements on the card he or she gets certain incentives. It directs the doing of the people. Also direct feedback is important. Many of my employees want to proceed in their professional life so my job is to find those paths and tasks to him or her so it would be possible. At the same time, I need to require certain things too. Also I want to highlight the importance of feedback and observation.” (P3)

6.8.2 Successful motivation methods

P1 underlines that successful motivation methods need to be considered as individual motivation methods tailored for specific personal needs. It is important to concentrate on individual needs and to meet each employee as an individual (Crumpton 2013.)

“Everyone is an individual so that means another employee can be motivated in this way and another employee in another way. Manager needs to know all the employees who work under him or her control. There is a danger that you as a manager go too deeply into employee’s personal life and that starts to be strenuous. It is enough when you are their friend on Twitter and Facebook, not more. Manager should see the situations when something bothers employee. Manager should find the ways to help employee maybe as professional but if not then maybe as personal. I see that employee satisfaction is a good indicator. We measure it yearly. Also I need to notice that our HR department has done really good job too. They offer sports tickets, you could get money if you want to arrange for example sauna evening for your colleagues etc. Also one thing called flexible community which I serve as good as I could. That means if somebody or someone’s baby is sick, people in the work place take care your work, that include work adjustments etc. in those days you need to be out of office.” (P1)
Also, P1 said that being professional makes things running smoothly. Engel (1970) research data revealed that professionals associated with the the highly bureaucratic setting are least likely to perceive themselves as autonomous.

"I consider myself as a professional. I hope that also my employees are professionals and they take care of assignment professionally. So there must be this kind of work-self. Every employee under my supervision needs to think how I operate professionally in this type of professional organization which task is to sell. Here is no room for semi-pro people who try to solo things and cause confusion. Then everything is easy. Like I said earlier; recruit right people who have the ability to become someday a professional. With amateurs it's just fighting and quarreling. I see that humor is one thing that works especially when I try to lighten the workload of my employees." (P1)

P2 raised the presence during the workdays as a motivation method.

"So any of my employees won't let alone with his or her problems. Because of that it won't frustrate employees." (P2)

External motivation is a motive which comes from an outside factor such as salary or bonus. Lawler (1973) describes these kind of factors as social awards. External motivation factors are usually se by an external actor such as another person or organization. These kind of motivations are usually short-term. When the sat goal is reached, motivation usually fades before a new motivation is found. Both P2 and P3 said that money motivates employees who are sales oriented.

"It truly motivates them whose monthly salary is not that high without the bonuses that could increase the percentage very much” (P2)

“Money motivates people, but not all” (P3)

P3 include ability to influence employee’s own work. Also freedom and responsibility of own work are motivation methods.
“Also observation of employee is important. Still, manager should know that somebody wants more observation than others.” (P3)

6.8.3 Addition of motivation

P2 examine that allowing public sales result charts could be one addition.

“If I could I would make all the sales result lists public. It would be so easy to increase motivation especially for those people who are at the bottom of the list. Also I could create the same kind of pressure in the group meetings that I could in face-to-face meetings. Unfortunately, it brakes individual privacy protection rights so I can do anything.” (P2)

P3 hopes that he could get clear model to use in salary and bonus discussions. Also P3 said that allowing employees to work in different roles so they could get experiment.

P2 introduce the influence of bad motivation and high monthly salary.

“If your basic monthly salary is good enough, any kind of commissions doesn’t interest you. If employee monthly salary is during years increased to the maximum the motivation for hard sales work is decreased because the money you get monthly is enough. It is impossible to drop or cut the salary and at the same time normally those with the highest salaries do the worst sales results monthly. During years those employees become estranged with sales work. I’m just wondering how you ended up being a sales person if you don’t think that you are a sales person.”

In this chapter the qualitative research was conducted. Now the thesis has presented some of important issues related to the research question and the reader has given an understanding on the previous research on the subject of matter. The next chapter introduces conclusions which are found in this study.
7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Main findings of the study

This thesis tries to show that sales manager’s role is not only to be key account managers superior. Key account manager’s and sales manager’s dynamic relationship is unnerved in previous researches. Actually, key account manager and sales manager has intense interaction and the information flows one to another and also they both effect on each other’s performance. Sales manager and key account manager, as a conclusion, can be seen as team more than monitored – supervisor partners. According Flaherty and others (2012) reality of today’s sales manager role have changed from top-down, leader-centered paradigm to more like collaboration which comes a vast network of complex relationships. The findings from the interview shows the same; all the interviewees said that nowadays sales managers should collaborate with KAMs. Still, there are seen the effect of regulations, rules and laws which change the style of leadership. Also sales manager take part on operative work. The previous academic literature stated that sales manager position is like invisible. That means sales manager won’t take part that much on operative work. In every interview the result was that operative work with customers is one part of every sales manager job in practice. Motivating KAMs to perform better is important. In a sales oriented organizations everybody knows how much the expected sales target are for KAM’s and at the same time sales manager need to provide all the needed rules that KAM’s could achieve those sales targets.

This thesis tries to answer comprehensively what are the strategic roles of sales manager. It can be seen that the sales manager role in the organization is important and include different aspects. Flaherty and others (2012) introduce because sales managers act as the linking pins between the senior management and sales representatives they are often central in formal sales network. Interviews showed that is partly true, but normally the collaboration is conducted more with sales manager and KAM, not that much with sales manager and top management. As P3 said, normally top management just order or require something and it is sales manager’s job to try operate as good as
possible with the new requirements. According the findings of Sullivan and others (2012) value creation is implemented by the managers. All the interviewed sales managers agree with that value creation is implemented by the managers. Also, it was seen as one of the main operations in the sales manager position. Sales manager is able to influence value creation in many ways.

This thesis wants to point out the management perspective in the key account management and tries to answer comprehensively what are the strategic roles of sales manager in key account management. According Bacon (1999) the sales manager responsibilities are more often different than operational functions. Also in KAM, sales manager is responsible for balancing between account management responsibilities, reviewing and managing of the current budgets and expenses, selecting, hiring, appraising, compensating and firing people, training of account managers, evaluating of accounts and account managers by established metrics, and ensuring that all the sales support functions are effective. Interviews showed that those responsibilities are quite right even though there are differences between organizations. In Finland for example, the employee rights are so powerful that it is almost impossible fire people because of poor sales performance. That’s why sales managers should think other possibilities to ensure good sales results. Sales manager should pay attention for hiring process, because finding a right type of employee is very important. The best possible situation is when employee has ability to transform itself to work on different environment.

This thesis finds out that organizational culture could effect on sales manager’s performance. It could create boundaries between sales manager and KAM but also it could provide framework which help everyday operations in the organization.

### 7.2 Managerial implications

As the main findings show in sales manager’s position there are plenty of expectations and requirements that needs to be handled in practice. This thesis gives an overview
of different findings for sales manager, so anyone in this same kind of position could improve its performance.

As the main findings of the study also shows, this thesis could be beneficial for top-management because it introduces the operations of sales manager. When top-management understands better sales managers important role in overall sales, there is a possibility to improve the communication and collaboration between top-management and sales manager.

7.3 Limitations

The literature review part was conducted by using secondary data. To get more precise picture, there is a need to get empirical evidence for the findings of the study for example collaboration of sales manager and key account manager. Also the sales framework (with or without KAM context) differs between the companies, so sales manager’s position and operations could not be described accurately.

It is important to remember that the interviews were conducted in one organization, so that means the answers were type how this certain field of business (in this case banking and non-life insurance industry) is seeing these things. To get more comprehensive results, there would have been need to held interviews in several organizations which present different business fields.

Due to the limited amount of existing literature, this thesis only gathers limited amount of different views for example how the management is putted into KAM and sales manager as network engineer.

7.4 Suggestions for future research

Based on the findings of the study, there are raised some suggestions for future research. Actually, one interesting suggestion for future research is how these same issues of strategic roles of the sales manager are seen in global account management.
Also in this same case, how different cultures could effect on interaction between sales manager and KAM. One interesting topic to research could be how organizational culture effect on sales manager performance. This thesis showed that bureaucracy in the organization effect on sales managers operations, so this could be one interesting topic for research in the future.

Also one field which need more future research is how management is putted into KAM because it has limited amount of research. The improvement of interaction and collaboration between top-management and key account manager could also be one interesting field of future research.
REFERENCES


OP Ryhmä, Available at: <https://sales_manager.pohjola.fi/pohjola/group/op-financial-group?id=350000>

OP Ryhmä, Available at: <https://sales_manager.pohjola.fi/pohjola/group/op-financial-group?id=358000&srcpl=8&kielikoodi=en>


