

---

**Creating an added value services model for the  
Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa**

Case Study



Master's thesis

Business Management and Entrepreneurship

Visamäki, autumn 2016

Pekka Pulkkinen



VISAMÄKI

Master's degree in Business Management and Entrepreneurship

---

**Author** Pekka Pulkkinen **Year** 2016

**Title of Master's thesis** Creating an added value services model for the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa

---

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a case study of creating an added value service model for the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa. The Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa in Porvoo provides apprenticeship contracts to students and customer organizations mostly in Itä-Uusimaa area of Finland. The study is limited to the customer organizations' point of view, the student customers of the Apprenticeship Center are left out of the study. The goal of the thesis is to find out what kind of products or services would add value to the basic product apprenticeship. The study investigates what kind of products or services the Apprenticeship Center could improve the sales or usage of apprenticeships, how the Apprenticeship Center could add extra-value to its customers to gain customer satisfaction or persistence and to find out what kind of products or services could be sold direct to the customers.

The theory of this thesis consists of planning of the services model and enhanced service model and committing the employers of the organization to the new services. Creating a customer value, customer relationships, quality and measuring the customer value. These parts are analysed through many sources and background theories. Research of this thesis is conducted in qualitative research. The method used is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to the customers of the Apprenticeship Center in spring 2016. The other methods were interviews of the customers and participant observations made by the author are works in the organization as an account manager.

The main results in the research are that customers mostly value personal and flexible customer service that can be easily accessible when it is needed. Many customers are not able to see the value of the service before they have been experiencing the whole process and the expectations of the customer's effect on feeling the quality of the service. The customers think that there has to be sufficient amount of services available, but the customers could not name the services before there is an actual need. This thesis has led to the concrete development plan of services model in the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-uusimaa. The development plan will be implemented in 2016–2017.

**Keywords** Apprenticeship training, added value, customer centricity.  
**Pages** 63 p. + appendices 2 p.



VISAMÄKI

Master's degree in Business Management and Entrepreneurship

**Tekijä**

Pekka Pulkkinen

**Vuosi** 2016

**Työn nimi**

Lisäarvoa tuottavien palveluiden mallin luominen Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskukselle

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä opinnäytetyössä käsitellään lisäarvopalveluihin tähtäävän palvelumallin luomista Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskuksen käyttöön. Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskus sijaitsee Porvoossa, ja se toimii oppisopimuskoulutuksen järjestäjänä pääsääntöisesti Itä-Uudenmaan alueella. Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee teemaa asiakasorganisaatioiden näkökulmasta. Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskuksen opiskelija-asiakkaat on rajattu tämän opinnäytetyön ulkopuolelle.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on selvittää, millaiset tuotteet tai palvelut luovat asiakkaalle lisäarvoa perustuotteen oppisopimuksen rinnalla. Opinnäytetyössä käsitellään myös, millaisilla palveluilla voidaan lisätä oppisopimuksen käyttöä ja kuinka asiakkaille voidaan luoda lisäarvoa, jotta saavutettaisiin kestäviä, asiakastyytyväisyyteen perustuvia asiakassuhteita. Opinnäytetyössä pohditaan myös, onko tuotteita tai palveluita, joita pystyttäisiin myymään asiakkaille.

Teoreettinen viitekehys sisältää palveluiden suunnittelun, laajennetun palvelumallin ja organisaation henkilökunnan sitoutumisen uuteen ajattelumalliin. Työssä käsitellään myös asiakasarvon luontia, asiakassuhteita, asiakastyön laatua sekä arvon ja laadun mittaamista teorialähteiden avulla. Tutkimus on luonteeltaan kvalitatiivinen, ja tiedonkeruumenetelminä ovat asiakkaille lähetetty kyselylomake, haastattelut ja osallistuva havainnointi; opinnäytetyön laatija toimii organisaatiossa asiakasvastaavana.

Tärkeimpinä tuloksina voi mainita, että asiakkaat arvostivat eniten henkilökohtaista, joustavaa ja nopeasti tarjolla olevaa palvelua. Monet asiakkaat eivät pysty näkemään arvoa palveluissa ennen kuin he näkevät ja kokevat koko prosessin. Asiakkaan odotukset ja niiden täyttyminen määrittelevät asiakasarvon ja laadun tunteen. Asiakkaat eivät kuitenkaan pysty määrittelemään erillisiä palveluja. Palveluja pitää olla riittävästi tarjolla, mutta ne konkretisoituvat, kun asiakkaalle tulee tarve käyttää niitä. Tämä opinnäytetyö johtaa Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskuksen konkreettiseen toimintasuunnitelmaan, joka otetaan käytäntöön vuosina 2016–2017.

**Avainsanat** Oppisopimuskoulutus, lisäarvo, asiakaskeskeisyys.

**Sivut** 63 s. + liitteet 2 s.

---

## CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION .....	1
2	FRAMEWORK .....	5
2.1	Planning of the services.....	7
2.2	Customer expectations and needs.....	9
2.2.1	Enhanced service model .....	11
2.3	How to offer better service .....	13
2.3.1	Committing the organization to new level of service .....	13
2.3.2	The new approach for thinking.....	15
2.3.3	Skills and perks needed to be a customer service specialist.....	17
2.3.4	Service guarantee for the customer.....	20
2.3.5	Plan of the customer relationships .....	22
2.4	Implementing and evaluating the services.....	25
2.4.1	The quality of the service.....	25
2.4.2	Measuring the quality of the service.....	29
2.4.3	The customer enquiries of service .....	31
3	THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE GOALS OF THE THESIS .....	33
3.1	Goals.....	33
3.2	Questions .....	34
4	METHODS .....	35
4.1	Surveys .....	35
4.2	Interviews .....	35
4.3	Participant observation .....	36
5	DATA, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	38
5.1	Surveys .....	38
5.2	Interviews .....	45
5.3	Observations.....	48
5.4	Results of the research.....	49
6	DISCUSSION .....	52
6.1	Reliability and validity of research.....	52
6.2	The thesis process and what was created.....	53
6.3	What could be done in the next research.....	54
7	CONTRIBUTION .....	55
7.1	What is the contribution of the study to the workplace? .....	55
7.2	New procedures? .....	58
	SOURCES .....	61
	THE SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	1



## 1 INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is how to create an added value services model for the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa (Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskus). The Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa is later known in this thesis as the Apprenticeship Center.

The Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa is located in Porvoo and it works mainly in Itä-Uusimaa area. The center has many services available. The core service is the vocational qualification by the apprenticeship. There are 370 qualifications available with apprenticeship and the yearly amount of students is around 1000. With the apprenticeships there are also supporting services like training of the mentors. (Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskus 2016.) The main motivation of the author is to find new ideas and approaches for use of our own team. The author is working as an account manager in the Apprenticeship Center. The Apprenticeship Center has director of apprenticeships, four account managers and three people for supporting operations.

The Apprenticeship Center is part of the intermunicipal federation for education in Itä-Uusimaa. The federation has different organizations Edupoli and Amisto, and the Apprenticeship Center is part of the Edupoli organization. Amisto offers training and vocational qualifications to young people mostly after they have finished their comprehensive school. Edupoli offers training and vocational qualifications mostly for adults and to business organizations. The Apprenticeship Center arranges the qualifications by apprenticeship for students in both training organizations. The Apprenticeship Center can also arrange the qualifications from other training organizations outside Intermunicipal federation for education in Itä-Uusimaa if the training is not available in our own organization. Intermunicipal federation for education in Itä-Uusimaa is owned by nine municipalities. The values of the organization are customer centricity and partnership, ability to reform and trustworthiness. Vision is to be successful and proactive developer of know-how and the mission is to be creator of competitive know-how to our customers. (Itä-Uudenmaan koulutuskuntayhtymä 2016.)

Area of Itä-Uusimaa consists of small municipalities and the biggest of them is Porvoo. Itä-Uusimaa area is connected with Helsinki and its surroundings. This effects on the local business and the employment sector. Many residents of Itä-Uusimaa area are commuting for work to Helsinki. The area has better financial development compared with many other areas of Finland during recent years. Local businesses mostly consist on producing industry. These industries are big or small businesses, there is smaller amount of middle-sized organizations. Culture and tourism are also in the big role Itä-Uusimaa. (Itä-Uudenmaan maakuntasuunnitelma 2040, 2009, 7–15.) In 2009, the employment rate has been highest in Finland. The biggest center of industry in the area is Kilpilahti refinery. In the area there are many companies employing over 3500 personnel. (Kilpilahti 2016.) The Kilpilahti

area is greatly effecting for the factor that Itä-Uusimaa is known to be the most industrialized region in Finland.

The Uusimaa area is the capital of Finland and it has the biggest density of employing organizations and the workforce. Because of that, in the Uusimaa area there are also many different organizations (more than 50) offering the same kind of products or services of vocational training and apprenticeships, and the customer is able to select the best service provider from selection that can be found nearby areas. The customers will most likely to choose a service provider who offers the best services that are easy to find. This is good situation for a customer, because he is able to compare different organizations and find the best solution for him. But for the educational organizations it will cause some mutual competition and the organizations' products are accessible and well marketed against other organizations.

Apprenticeship is a way to study for different vocational qualifications. It can be conducted to a person at any age, the youngest age possible is 15. A person starting the apprenticeship should have an employee or find an organization which is willing to employ a person with apprenticeship. Available qualifications with apprenticeship are different vocational upper secondary qualifications, further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications. It can be conducted as vocational upper secondary education and training or as preparatory training for competence-based qualification. The apprenticeship is based on a contract of employment or it can be conducted as an entrepreneur. Apprenticeship is verified by the education provider. (In this case the Apprenticeship Center.) The training is 70–80 % done in working organizations and 20 % is done at vocational colleges. The employer must provide a mentor for the student. Every student has the personal study plans, planned and verified with the Apprenticeship Center. The training takes approximately 1–3 years depending on the studied qualification and the personal skills and earlier education of the student. The Apprenticeship Centers are responsible for making and planning of the apprenticeship contract with a student and an employing organization. The Apprenticeship Center also arranges the preparatory training and the qualification. (Opetushallitus 2016.)

The thesis is conducted in form of a case study and the chosen topic is current because of the changing environment in vocational training organizations and arranging apprenticeships. Organisations, funding and criteria concerning the vocational training are changing and the future is quite unclear, every organization is preparing for the new guidelines from the government. Government has been decreasing the funding of vocational training organizations during last year and the trend is likely continuing. Also there is discussion of merging different types of qualifications to achieve more effective and cost-efficient vocational training. The future trend of vocational training is to have retailed training for the organizations and students. The students and organizations should have personalized paths to training.

In the future, the most vital organisations with healthy finance and efficient operations will successfully remain. The organizations have to be well maintained, they have to have a wide customer base and a good selection of services.

To accomplish this challenge, the Apprenticeship Center is going to plan and innovate the new service model and the products to co-exist side to side with the basic product apprenticeship. Some of these improvements have already started and the plan is to develop further in this process. These products and services should add value to a core product itself, or serve as a product themselves. The idea behind value adding services is to get more customers using apprenticeship as their employer development product or increase persistence of existing customers by offering them better services and value by co-operation with the Apprenticeship Center. Basically, the question is what kind of services and how they should be served to keep the customers satisfied and to gain customer persistence. (Hirvonen 2009, 11.)

The main idea of this thesis is to find out what kind of products or services would add value to our basic product, i.e. apprenticeship, what kind of products or services we could improve our sales or usage of apprenticeships, how we could add extra-value to our customers to gain customer satisfaction or persistence and what kind of products or services could be sold direct to our customers. Value can be used in three different ways: How much worth the customer has for service offering organization, the values of the organization and generating value to the customer and for the customer's processes. (Storbacka & Lehtinen 2005, 14.)

The collaborators of this thesis would be our own organisation, vocational colleges Edupoli and Amisto that are part of Intermunicipal federation for education in Itä-Uusimaa, our customer organizations of Eastern Uusimaa region of Finland, the other organisations arranging vocational training and funding and our partnership organizations.

The customers in this thesis are considered as the employers of the apprenticeship students. The students are also second equally the important group of the customers of the Apprenticeship Center, but this thesis focuses on the organizations employing students. Without these employing organizations there cannot be apprenticeship students and finding value for these organizations opens up possibilities for students to find an employing organization for apprenticeship.

The survey research is limited to the existing customers of the Apprenticeship Center, some random selected e-mail list of the possible future customers of the Apprenticeship Center in Itä-Uusimaa area. Also some interviews are conducted to the customers and partnership organizations. The interviewed customers are randomly selected. The author is also conducting research by participant observation on daily customer interaction.

Segmenting or selecting customers are ruled out of this thesis, because the customers of a business organization are different than the customers on a



municipal service providing organization. A business organization can segment and select the customers, but municipal organization has to be prepared to serve all the customers. (Drucker 2008, 110.) This thesis is written from the point of view where customers cannot be selected or segmented in profitable and unprofitable ones. Every customer has to be served and the apprenticeship has to be available for every user if the criteria of arranging apprenticeship are filled.

The thesis consists of the following structure: In this chapter the working environment of the Apprenticeship Center has been described and the research questions are introduced. The theoretical background is presented in Chapter 2 which focuses on the concepts like adding value and customer centricity. The theory consists of analysing different written sources. In Chapter 3, the research questions and goals of this thesis are described thoroughly. The methods of this thesis are surveying, interviews and participant observation. The methods of research are explained in Chapter 4. The data gathered by research methods are analysed and the results are found in Chapter 5. Gathering data is done by surveying, interviewing and by participating in the daily operations of the Apprenticeship Center. Discussion about validity of research done in this thesis is found in Chapter 6. Contribution and usability of results found in this thesis are analysed and explained in Chapter 7 and the list of references can be found at the end of this thesis.

This thesis focuses on the following concepts:

- apprenticeship training
- added value
- customer centricity

## 2 FRAMEWORK

The purposes of the added value services are mutual benefits for the client. These services are not in the key role in either organization, but for the customer the added value services bring something more for the basic service. For the provider, the gain is the better customer relationships, more and profitable sales, and the customer persistence.

”Value added services offer benefits, which cannot be attained from the core service alone. They may even enhance the demand for the core service or product when realised well and when they offer the customer additional value. Usually value added services do not work alone; they require a core or basic service or product to be applicable.” (Heikkilä, Haasis, Meyer & Saurama 2006, 3.)

As Heikkilä et al. (2006, 3) described also in the Apprenticeship Center the added value services are dependant of the basic product: vocational qualification by apprenticeship. There can be some extra-products sold which are the products by themselves to our customers, but they are not in focus. The core agenda is to provide the qualifications by apprenticeship and our added value services should support them or increase the sales of the basic product or service. Organization cannot focus on single products or service. These small parts should be seen as one big process. (Storbacka & Lehtinen 2005, 19.)

It is typical for non-profit organizations not to offer basic products. Instead, the products are more in form of services and ways to give new ideas to customers. Like in the case of the Apprenticeship Center, there can be some sellable products that give added income or enabling behavioural patterns. (Lovelock & Weinberg 1998 via Vuokko 2009, 153.) The municipal organizations focus on the services and production of the services and the working model should be customer centric and based on the customer needs. (Mansukoski 2008, 10.)

Many of the typical service providers always compete with the services. Many of these kind of organizations are also in a position where the core product does not provide the competitive advantage. Still, the core product forms a base for the development process. From this point the focus on services provide the direction for the organizations’ strategy work. An organization can modify its core products in a form of a selection of services. One part of this selection is the core product apprenticeship. In this selection, there can be basic services, paid services and free of charge services supporting the core service. (Grönroos 2009, 33–34.) For an organization, the selection of the services available gives a possibility to be different than a competition and stand out (Leppänen 2007, 132.)

In his thesis, Tatu Hirvonen (2009, 8) states that organizations’ competitive advantage depends on of the organizations’ willingness and possibilities to give services to a customer. Offering more and different services compared with competition will create value to a customer and giving organization a competitive advantage.

It is seen that the organizations that will offer their customers retailed service packets instead of offering them single products or services. This increases the profit per customer and customer persistence (Kaplan & Norton 2004, 348–349).

Vuokko (2009, 153) notes that the nature of the service given, finds its form when the organisation and the target group meet. The meetings are different on the basis of the collaboration. The needs define the final product. The services are like processes and the customer itself participates in product development. The participation can be in form of questions or comments. It is also typical not to keep these kind of immaterial products in storage, but you can try to keep the customer in, as like waiting for service given. The customer has to accept this situation, if there is not a similar product available. In the case of the Apprenticeship Center, this does not apply for now, because the same kinds of services are available by many providers in area. One of the key points of this research is to find out what kind of services could give competitive advantage against competition.

It has to be kept in mind that the value for the customer still does not come from single parts of the process. Instead, the whole process should be made as one service, which includes the core product and added and retailed services. This process should help the customer to gain his goals and produce value for himself. Also the value for the customer does not come when the customer buys the product or service, but when the customer is using and experiencing the service. (Storbacka, Blomqvist, Dahl & Hager 1999, 15–16, 37.)

There is also a question of the strategy. The services should collaborate with the strategy of the organisation. If there is no connection with given or planned services with the company's strategy, the service should be abandoned. This means that every need cannot be satisfied. This is especially important when the needed service takes a huge amount of resources available. (Vuokko 2009, 155–156.) By the author's own opinion, with this problem there is an extra-question: is it possible to sell the needed service or is it an extra-service given to customers. When the service is available for sales, the resources are almost unlimited, because the resources can be bought when the income is imminent. If the income of service given is indirect and the income comes from better customer relationships in the future, it is much harder to decide whether it is possible or not. There could be a choice to make if the organisation gives services to every client, but when talking about municipal organisation every client should be serviced, then the decision has to be based on other criteria like the resource needed etc.

The future income can come from the better customer relationships and the satisfaction to the quality of the service. The customers satisfied with the quality of the service are more likely to continue to be a customer and buying the services. (Grönroos 2009, 177.) The steady income is one of the benefits of these long-term persistent customers but also, satisfied long-term

customers are co-operative in possible reclamation situations. When the relationship is in a good basis and it has been built during a long time, the customer is less keen to break this relationship. (Rubanovitsch & Aalto 2007, 59.) However, there are studies which have found out that 60–80 % of the service changing customers have been satisfied with their earlier service provider and changed only because there are a better price, a new product or the whole value. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 61.) The price is not an issue in the government controlled apprenticeship system, but the whole process should be able to provide customer superior value against its customers.

The following chapter 2.1 offers discussion on how to plan the new kind of service model, customer expectations and enhanced service. Chapter 2.2 focuses on the mobilizing of the new services in the organization. Chapter 2.3 deals with nature of the services and how the quality of the services could be measured.

## 2.1 Planning of the services

When the service model is launched, it is important to think that what we should offer. The plan should be focused. The services should have the best launch possible and it should be tempting as possible from the start. (Vuokko 2009, 157.) That is why the first products should be meaningful to our customers. The customers and their needs should be known already in the planning face. In this thesis, the needs of the customers are surveyed by the questionnaire and interviews.

The key point in creating the new services is that the service product has to be tempting to the customer and it should be able to solve some problems of the customer (Hynynen 2013, 52). In the apprenticeship business segment, all the services given by the Apprenticeship Centers should be focused on the customer problem solving. Most likely the problems of the Apprenticeship Center's customers are based on personnel development or hiring new skilful employees. This cannot be as assumption, the core of customer based thinking is that the service providing organization should try to find out how their customers are creating value for themselves. This enables the organization to plan how they could help their customers. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 21.)

Though the municipal organizations provide services to benefit the society, it does not have much difference for selling products as for business. A non-profit organization many times offers immaterial services and the value of these services goes to a customer. (Drucker 2008, 64.) The organization receives value back from the customer, when the customer stays and wants more services, this usage will guarantee the funding of organization from the government and creates the value for the service offering organization. The benefits are mutual. It is not enough that organization serves some needs of the customers. A really good organization is able to create the need. (Mansukoski 2008, 10.)

When the plan is created, the process consists of three stages. At the first stage, the customer and market knowledge focuses on value. The organization should know the factors that are influencing on the certain added value. At the second stage, the added value services are created and made to productized. They can consist of the physical product or services. At the third stage, the product or services are put in use. (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 46.)

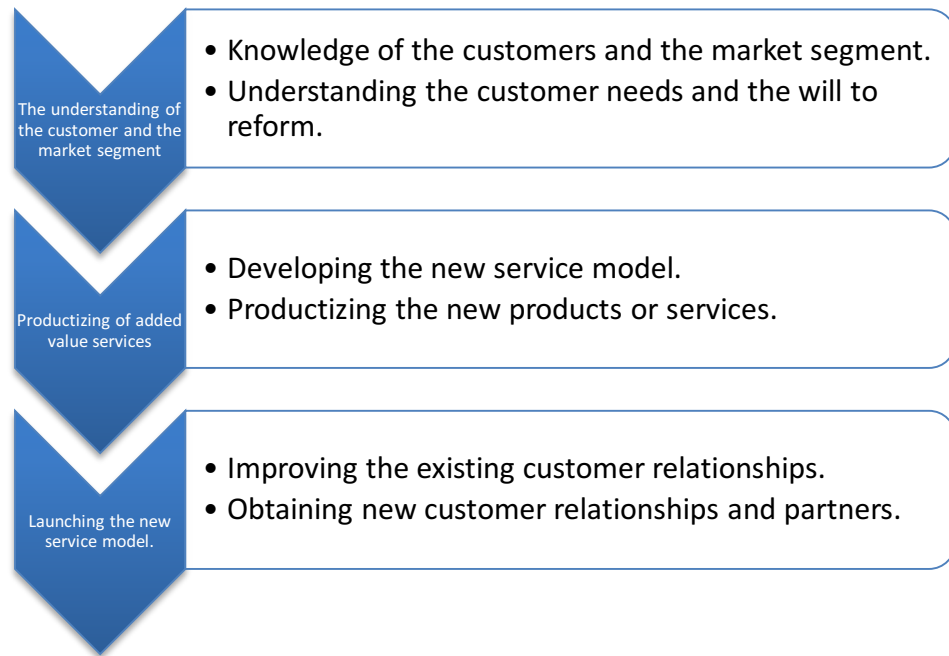


Figure 1. The creation process of the added value services (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 47)

Kuusela and Neilimo (2010, 47) claim that the creating the added value services is unnecessary if the customers are not willing to pay for them. The author disagrees with Kuusela and Neilimo. Many times, the value does not come in form of direct income from the services. Nevertheless, the better customer relationships and customer persistence will give the same result but in longer run.

With every contact with the client it is likely to be a social interaction and it has a personal relationship included. When the interaction is successful, it can set a foundation for a long lasting relationship with a customer. When the customer thinks that there is something special or valuable, the relationship and trust can fortify. Only this cannot lead to customer persistence by itself, but it is part of the process. This could be where the focus should be put in the strategy of the Apprenticeship Center, because the persistent customers are the most likely to be valuable customers. (Grönroos 2009, 30.)

In this creation process, it is important to understand that the new way of thinking the customer centricity is not only a task for sales personnel. It is the task for the whole organization. The whole organization should understand how the customer centricity or topping the customer expectations are created. Many organizations are high valuing these phrases without understanding the real meaning of them.

## 2.2 Customer expectations and needs

Understanding the customer expectations and need is the basis for the creating a value for the customer. It has to be understood that customer need depend on the time and place. Customers are valuing different things in different times. (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 47.)

According to Kuusela and Neilimo (2010, 48–52), there are five basic needs what customers are expecting of the company: **competitive price-quality ratio, superior skill to function, superior knowledge and professional skills, superior skills in the social interaction, and superior level of emotion and feeling.**

There are two different things concerning pricing and quality ratio. The pricing of the basic product the apprenticeship is the one thing that cannot be in competition, because the services offered concerning the apprenticeship are regulated by the government. Only the price which has an effect on the customer is the monthly compensation for the apprenticeship training, paid to the company which trains the student. It can vary, but the range is so narrow that it will not be competitive advantage to any organisation. The author thinks that quality of the service given is the advantage which can be influenced.

The pricing can influence the customer in paid extra-services with apprenticeship. The price-quality ratio is not regulated in any way. If the company wants to order coaching or development days planned for their employees, the price can be set freely and in these additional services the price-quality ratio has to be competitive against other service providers. The price of the services of this kind is mostly set by the customer. The customer is willing to pay for service based on the co-operation with the organization and assumption how much value they will gain from the service. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 21.)

Also other perks from Kuusela and Neilimo (2010, 48–52) can work as influencers in the apprenticeship process. In the author's opinion, mostly valued are the perks concerning the knowledge and skills. When the organisation is training knowledge and company's personnel development by the employee's training, the key competitive advantage is to be more skilful and possess more knowledge of the subject than the competitors.

The organisation's skill to function is equivalent to speed (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 52). The processes have to be streamlined to short respond times. When there are competitors offering the same service with the same price, it is important to get the customers to hear first the ideas of your organisation. Also for this digital century, the customers expect quick respond times and are not ready to wait for the answers. It can be stated that the quick response times are the most powerful advantage in customer service. Answering calls, chats or e-mails, the customer does not want to be put on hold. (Hyken 2012a.) Rubanovitsch and Aalto (2007, 55–56) state that a half of the customers is expecting to be contacted within four hours after

they have sent an e-mail or filled a contact form out. When the competitors are easily accessed, the organization has to be available for contact when the customer needs the service. If organization could not be available, the customer can easily change the service provider to other organization. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 25.)

The speed of the service is one question, but overall the information available through internet and other informative sources enable the competition. When a customer is not satisfied, it is really easy to compare the services. The customers also think that many service providers through feelings and only ways to influence the feelings are good interaction and excellent customer service. (Juuti 2015, 13–15.)

Kuusela and Neilimo (2010, 48–52) also claim that there are not only the skills with the substance that influence. In addition, the skills and professionalism of the customer service and the knowledge of the customer needs are important. When the organization is offering services and solutions, it is important to identify the unique necessities of a customer and find the correct solutions for individual situations. If the company is able to fill these expectations, the customer is the most likely ready to choose this organization instead of the others. The gained customer relationships will be a long term partnership, because it is hard for the competition to replicate these qualities.

The challenge with these qualities is to get every employee in the organisation to understand and commit to develop it-self to these standards of the customer service. This part does not only include the developing of substance knowledge, but it is the development of social skills and knowledge. (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 50.)

The customer work on basics consists of skills in social interaction. These cannot be standardised. Every situation and customer interaction are individual. The benefits will be visible when the customer thinks that he has got a special treatment and personal service. This can come easily just remembering and saluting the customer. Nowadays, the customer organizations have less time to interact, and when they want the service, everything should go so easy as possible. That quick reaction is gained through the personal and persistent customer relationship. When the competitive advantage cannot be the price of service, for saving time the customers are the most likely to stay with the service provider which has the best quality of service for them. (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 51.)

The quality of the service is very important part and it is lead through the relationship with the customer. If the relationship does not work and does not fill the expectations of the customer, the customer will most likely change the service provider and the exchange of services and income finishes. (Grönroos 2009, 48-49.) This will apply to earlier described situation where the Apprenticeship Center has many other organizations providing the same products and basic services.

The most essential parts of the values what the customer is gaining through the service relationship is the services and service processes, because they are filling the customer needs. However, the interaction at personal level, the proficient usage of web-based services, the communications, the servicecape, and the accessibility of the service influence the feeling of the value for the customer. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 27.)

### 2.2.1 Enhanced service model

The services include processes where there are no physical elements which can be marketed or consumed. The organization have to keep the customer in mind when creating the services of this kind, because the customer is participating in the process at the same time the process is created and consumed. The services are consisted of parts of different features which are related to the whole process and the final result of the process. These features will create the enhanced service model when they are put together. The model can be called a packet. The whole packet includes parts of immaterial or concrete services. There are two major parts, the core services and the added services. In the Apprenticeship Center, the core services would be the apprenticeship itself and added services are everything else offered to a customer. (Grönroos 2009, 222.)

The key in this kind of thinking is to know the customer really well. The personnel of the organizations should know key customers and their processes and need. When this knowledge is gained, it is possible to evaluate the value what customer is gaining from the process. After this, the organization is able to create and control the packet. There are four stages when the packet created and lead: 1. create the idea of the services, 2. create a packet of basic services 3. create an enhanced service model, and 4. lead the imago and communication. (Grönroos 2009, 223.)

To keep in mind, even the perfect model depends on the personnel and its skills. The interaction with the customers can make the model work or not. The customer's view of the interaction with the personnel of the organization is essential for the service product. That is why the basic service has to be developed into the enhanced service model which include the basic process, the interaction with the customer. In the enhanced service model, the whole quality of service for the customer is included. The imago of the organization has a positive effect on the feeling of the quality for the customer. For this, it is important that organization is maintaining good imago and they are focusing on the comprehensive and positive communications. (Grönroos 2009, 224.)

As mentioned earlier, the core service are the organized apprenticeships. For the better usage of the core service, the additional services make the use of the core services possible. That could be in the case of the Apprenticeship Center the recruiting services etc. given to the customer. There can also be third part of the services, the supporting services, training of the mentors to apprenticeship students etc. For the customer's point of view, the core services are not correlating with the whole service product which the customer gains, and it does not match the whole process and quality. The process



itself cannot be excluded from the core service. That is why there has to be only one all-inclusive enhanced service model which includes the whole packet. (Grönroos 2009, 224–225.)

Philip Kotler (via Eliasson 2012, 25) defines the creation of product which will generate value to a customer. In Kotler's definition, the product value consists of 1) the core product, 2) the actual product and 3) the enhanced product.

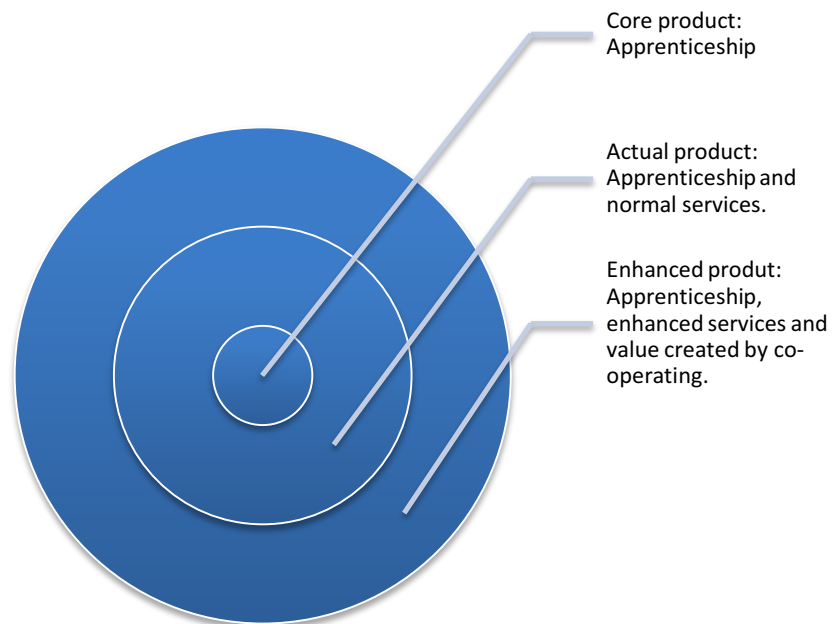


Figure 2. The product creation by Philip Kotler (via Eliasson 2012, 25)

In the Apprenticeship Center, this means that there is already the core product, apprenticeship. The actual product also exists as an apprenticeship and giving mandatory services training of the mentors and helping the customers to get the best results with apprenticeship. The enhanced product still is not ready, and that would be the product with the service through customer processes and creating the quality and value to the customer by mutual co-operation.

The organization has to have relevant and value adding services to offer for the customer. Still, the mutual understanding about relevance of these services should come from interaction with the customer and the organization should be able to do proof for the customer the value of this service. Still, the value itself is set by a customer. (Rubanovitsch & Valorinta 2009, 54.)

## 2.3 How to offer better service

### 2.3.1 Committing the organization to new level of service

The personnel of the Apprenticeship Center has a good approach for customer service. The small organization has perks of being flexible when needed and the personnel has a helpful attitude against customers. Still, there is always a possibility to perform even better and that is why it is important to set up new goals for service level.

When the organization is in situation where the products and services can be matched by other organizations, the only way to compete is the superior customer service. This is the only thing that competition cannot copy. (Aarnikoivu 2005, 19.)

Kuusela and Neilimo (2010, 49–51) state that one of the problems with this kind of customer centricity in the service organisation is to commit employees for the new way of thinking. The employees of the organization should be willing to make the best possible results and work with ambition. The author agrees with this statement; it is visible that many municipal organisations have not needed to be customer centric. The lack of competition in the business sector where the government has given a steady funding to every organization has led to this situation where the customer is not needed for the existence of the organization. When the funding is constantly decreasing, the organizations are facing new challenges.

The employees are the most important resource for the service sector organization. The employees should be skilful, motivated, and committed to a good customer service. (Grönroos 2009, 32–33.) The employees of the organizations are the mental capital and that capital should be in good use.

It has to be noted that everything is affected by everything. The services are created by co-operation with the customer. Every employee can positively affect his co-workers. With this positive spiral will affect the working community and customer interaction. (Aarnikoivu 2005, 14–15.)

Every change in the organizations' way of thinking and acting includes employees. The employees must be focused on helping their team to achieve new tasks. (Kaplan & Norton 2009, 168.)

A service sector organization must have a culture of improving the good service and customer centricity. Because the production of the services cannot be seen as a physical production process, the business depends on the interaction between a service provider and a customer. Variable situations are demanding the knowledge how different situations can be addressed. This knowledge can be gained only from the culture of the service. The strong culture is the most important for the service sector organization, because the employee's motivation is visible for the customers. If the employees think that the working environment is service focused and customer centric, it is the most likely that the customers are feeling the same. (Grönroos 2009, 481.)

Sharing the common values is the basis for this kind of service culture. An organization which have strong common values typically have the same following features:

- The common values guide the overall performing of the tasks.
- The leaders develop and confirm the common values constantly.
- The employees share the common values in deeper level.

These common values can be a boost to the overall performance of the organization, because the whole organization is committed to the shared way of work. The performance is better through the commitment and the motivation level is high. (Deal & Kennedy 1982 via Grönroos 2009, 484–485.) To keep in mind when thinking about the common values, is that the values have to be visible in everyday work and the work-community has to share them. They cannot be only phrases in the marketing material. (Rubanovitsch & Aalto 2007, 55–56.)

There is also a downside with the strong culture, which can be found in many municipal organizations. The values can be focused on the enhancing bureaucratic issues or short term selling instead of developing the long term customer relationships. This culture focuses on different “shadow” strategy and overlooks the strategy that is set by the organizations leaders or the government can develop strong resistance to the change. The needs of the market, the customers or the society can be overlooked and the organization is not able to commit to the change. This commitment to the change is the key in these times where the government is leading the educational organizations to the change. (Grönroos 2009, 484–485.)

This kind of model for the culture and the values guide the whole operations of the organization. However, it does not mean that every individual employee has to be put in the same behaviour model. It would lead to lack of innovation and thinking. The focus should be on the same values, but it can be executed by individual ways, as long as the values are guiding the working process of the individuals. (Rubanovitsch & Aalto 2007, 106.)

The key change in thinking and doing is to get the whole the organization to shift from the production unit to the real service giving organization. In a municipal organization, the basic thinking is that the personnel waits for the incoming contacts or the customers walking in and asking for the service, the focus is on receiving orders from the customer. The new thinking on the service organization should have more customer contacts from personnel initiative, without the customer setting the first contact. (Rubanovitsch & Valovirta 2009, 105.)

Table 1. The transfer from a production unit of the services to an organization offering the services (Rubanovitsch & Valovirta 2009, 105)

Production unit producing the services	Organization offering the services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low quality of the customer meetings.</li> <li>• The customer needs are surveyed with low enthusiasm.</li> <li>• Only the basic product is offered.</li> <li>• When there are enough customers, there will be some apprenticeships gained from these contacts.</li> <li>• The responsibility of the low results is easy to transfer (the management, bad economic situation in Finland etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several customer meetings with better quality.</li> <li>• The customer needs and the customer processes are thoroughly surveyed for the better service offered.</li> <li>• The account managers will have a sufficient packet of services to offer through the customer based surveying of the needs and the processes.</li> <li>• The account managers are responsible for their own customers and the results.</li> </ul>

However, we are talking about an organization as a whole. It is up to a single person and that person's responsibility of itself. The attitude and the approach to the different situations with customers and co-workers are everyone's own responsibility. The positive customer experience cannot be created only by the organization, at the strategy level, but the function ability of the organization is created by single employees working as a team and truly sharing the same values. (Aarnikoivu 2005, 17–19.)

An employee's attitude towards working can be described by three paths: 1. "I just work here." An employee thinks that he is a single person inside an organization, but not a real part of it. 2. An employee is responsible for his actions, attitude and feelings. He respects co-workers and tries to create the positive attitude. He is highly motivated and keen on trying new things. 3. An employee understands its own role as a part of the bigger picture. He understands that everyone's actions are affecting on everything. (Aarnikoivu 2005, 35–36.)

### 2.3.2 The new approach for thinking

The approach to the customer centric thinking comes from the organization and the high motivation of the organization's employees at every level. "Before you can be customer centric, you must be employee centric" (Hyken 2012b). This means that organization and its employees must have an attitude and values ready, before they can call themselves a customer centric organization.

The values of the organization are guiding and motivating the operations. The values must be set to match the reality. If the values of the organization are set to be customer centric, it has to be customer centric in reality. If the

personnel working with the customer does not follow the organization's values, the customer sees that. (Nieminen & Tomperi 2008, 24–25.)

In the Apprenticeship Center, the values of the organization are already set to be customer centric. However, they should be made more visible in the daily operations and in the everyday thinking to achieve the state where the values are truly reality.

A right kind of attitude towards the customer service is the road to success in a service sector organization. The positive attitude with the customers and the co-workers shows. Furthermore, a bad attitude is harmful for the customer relationships and the work community. (Vuorio 2008, 29.)

Nieminen and Tomperi (2008, 29–30) list 17 questions about measuring the attitude of a customer servant.

1. Is the customer a “king”?
2. Do you say hello to a customer when he greets you?
3. Do you always greet the customer friendly?
4. Are you calling the customer with the first name?
5. Is the customer being guided through the different service points or is the first contact handling the whole service?
6. Are you criticizing the customer?
7. Are you humiliating the customer if he is not buying your service?
8. Are you criticizing your fellow employees or managers?
9. Are you really interested in the customer's feedback?
10. Is a speed of the service a value to you?
11. Are you taking the reclamations seriously?
12. Do you understand the meaning of the steady income?
13. Are you talking about money instead of the marketing segments and the customers' names?
14. Are you talking about profitability and understanding the big picture?
15. Are you able to call the customers or fearing the phone?
16. Can you price the product?
17. Are you talking too much and forgetting to listen to the client?

With these question almost everyone can determine his own attitude against working with the different customers. Everyone is able to create a good customer experience, if the attitude set for customer centricity. The good customer experience in most cases requires only paying attention to the customer, listening to him and trying to see things from his point of view, staying contact with the customer at constant bases and answering the questions without a delay. An organization has to be sure that quality is at set level and the promises given are managed. (Fischer & Vainio 2015, 9.)

The customer centricity is almost 100 % coming from the committed organization and personnel's way of thinking. The organization should have an attitude that says “I can do”. Everyone has to be ready to put some extra effort for the customer. The customer centric organization is always ready for listening to the customer. The organization is aware of the customer's requests and need. The organization can be flexible if the customer needs

that, even if it is not in the organization's comfort-zone. The personnel should be able to anticipate the needs of the customer and be able to react. Committing to quick ability to solve customers' problems should be part of organizations values. (Shnall 2015.)

### 2.3.3 Skills and perks needed to be a customer service specialist

When the skills are considered, there must be a basic understanding that being a specialist only in one skill and bad at the others is many times not enough. A good employee must possess many different skills and perks. The basic skills of a customer servant are the same with skills needed in the working life. The interaction skills are important in work as in free time, in writing as in personal contact. The skills for problem solving and ability to handle the different conflict situations are necessary, too. How to organize and to make plans are really important skills. In the busy working schedules the ability to manage time consumption is in big part of the modern working life. (Nieminen & Tomperi 2008, 38–39.)

Being a **professional** is one of the basic perks that every specialist needs. The personnel have to know the substance of the matter, but it also has to know how to apply the knowledge. When an employee is able to understand the customer's needs and find the best solution for the customer and at the same time adding value to the customer through this solution, an employee is a professional. The customership can be called a service relationship, this knowledge of the **service relationship** is one of the needed skills. This perk consists of organizing, arranging schedules, and being able to react fast for the new challenges. Also the empathy and ability to see things from the customer's point of view are increasing the clients trust in person giving him the service. Understanding the **business relationship** means that an employee knows the basics of the sales techniques and sales processes. Being able to create a trust and to fill the expectations created by this trustful relationship is called a skill of the **human relationship**. As a part of this knowledge of the human relationship is to understand the feelings of the customer. This is known as one of the most needed skills for a sales personnel. It can be learned, but most likely it cannot be trained to a person. After all these skills, there is skill of **co-operation** with a client. This means developing the long-term customer relationships and using all the skills above to manage it. (Nieminen & Tomperi 2008, 39-42.)

The account managers must know the customer's trade and the processes good enough to suggests the new ideas and make the change proposals to the customer's processes. These ideas and changes will create value to the customer and the customer will give some of gained value back to the service offering organization by steady income. This requires innovation and wide vision towards the customer. All the perks the customer receives from the new suggestion should be presented to a customer as concrete value. The account managers should get acquainted with the customer value creation. (Arvomyynnillä kasvuun 2004, 19, 24.)

When creating a value for the customers by offering the new ideas to improve the customer's process, the account managers need abilities in different areas: **the knowledge of the value chain, the knowledge of the customer's business, the knowledge of the organisation's own and co-operating partner's resources and skills, identifying the opportunities to develop customer's processes, able to allocate the organization's resources when needed and ability to show the gains from co-operation for the client.** (Arvomyynnillä kasvuun 2004, 73–74.)

The value chain and the understanding about the customer's business requires that the account manager is able to understand the business surroundings of the customer in order to offer customer different solutions to gain competitive advantage against other organizations. This includes knowledge of the customer's markets and the end users of the customer's products or services. The important information about the customer is the customer's vision, goals, strategy, processes, organization, decision making processes, financial situation, financial statistics, feeling on the customer-ship and the users of customer's products or services. (Arvomyynnillä kasvuun 2004, 74–82.)

The Organization's co-operating partners have different services or products to offer to the customer. The account manager should be able to know which are the available services or products and be ready to offer the services from the partners when needed. This also requires more vision and innovative thinking, especially in a large organization where there are many co-operation opportunities. (Arvomyynnillä kasvuun 2004, 82–85.) As an example, the Apprenticeship Center can offer some training from the other training providers than our own vocational colleges, if the training is not available in our own organization. Having a sufficient number of the co-operative partners helps to offer a wider pallet of services to a customer.

“In addition to being good with the customer relationship management, the marketers must also be good at the **partner relationship management**. The major changes occur in how the marketer's partner with the others inside and outside of the company to jointly bring more value to customers.” (Kotler & Armstrong 2011, 19.)

Being aware of the opportunities or the critical moments is one part of an account manager's responsibilities. The opportunity may emerge by the situation of a single person in the customer's organization, the situation in the customer's function or department, the situation in the customer's whole organization, the situation in the customer's industry or the situation in the whole society. The account manager must follow the changes and be ready to predict possibilities and need. (Arvomyynnillä kasvuun 2004, 85–89.)

The gained value is the interest of the customer. When offering personnel training or services to the customer the value in currency may be hard to show to the customer. If it is possible, it must be pointed out and made visible to the customer. If there is not correct financial “value”, the value of co-operation has to be made visible to the customer. This also demands vision and experience, if the amount is not possible to calculate in currency.

If the customer notices the invisible value, it is likely that the customer will choose the providing organization. (Longstaffe 2014.)

The summary of the customer co-operation is that the account manager has to be interested in the customer and co-exist with the client. These can be followed by setting the organization's monitoring processes, but the most of this kind of information comes from the unofficial channels, meetings, press, news and television. The unofficial information can only be gathered by a person's keen interest in the customer, industry and society.

The interest towards the customer co-exists with listening to the customer. If the account manager is able to listen to the customer and give answers as flexible as possible, the customer service can be excellent. This leads to a partnership and enables the state of co-creation. Together with the service offering organization the customers can create a product or services which are correlating their expectations and need. (Juuti 2015, 44–45.)

The problem-based selling process comes from the knowledge and analysis of the customer and the customer's processes, offering the solution to develop the processes and helping the customer to understand the value from this solution. (Kokkonen 2013, 21–29.) Listening to the customer is associated with the problem-based selling process, which is based on the dialogic relationship with the customer. The customer's point of view is analysed based on his factorial and need. The motives of the customer's situation are opened and the solution is pursued. This kind of service requires skill to listen to a client carefully. Listening to the customer is divided on the different levels and shown in the table below. The highest level is customer centric listening and the lowest level is the situation where the customer is not being listened to. (Juuti 2015, 111–112.)

Table 2. The levels of listening to the customer (Juuti 2015, 112)

Customer centric listening	The reality of the customer is tried to understood by looking things from the customer's point of view.
Trying to find solutions	The customer is listened to carefully, that all the correct customer needs can be founded.
Applied listening	The customer is listened to and the interaction with the client can apply based on the founding's from the listening.
Self-centered listening	The customer is listened to and the listener is trying to make claims which would direct customers view to more favourable towards the organization's goals.
Evaluating the customer by listening	The customer and his conversation is evaluated by the organization.
The customer is not listened	The customer and his conversation is dismissed and not noted.



The interaction with the customer does not require anything special compared with a normal interaction with the other people, i.e. honesty and being genuine, trustworthy, approvability, openness, understanding, able to approve different kind of people and showing respect to other people. Mastering these skills at good level of social interaction will gain the customers trust and respect. It has to be noted that this same value of good interaction has to be available with every part of the organization which the customer is interacting. This service level has to correlate with the promises the organization is giving to the customer or the customer may be disappointed with the organization. (Juuti 2015, 110–111.)

These individual skills can be listed, there is an endless amount of sources in internet of good customer service skills. The base of all skills and perks is the attitude to the customer service. Without this all, the special skills are useless and good effort with the right attitude can forgive the lack of skill in some areas. (Deming 2010.)

The customer competence is needed when our employee is interacting with the customers. It means fluency in the co-operation with the customer. It is all about knowing the customer, being reactive and discretion in the customer meetings. (Viitala & Jylhä 2013, 99.)

#### 2.3.4 Service guarantee for the customer

The organization should carefully determine what customers need from the organization and what they gain through services. With this process, the organization is able to develop a pledge of the service guarantee for the customers. That is a kind of promise for service to the certain segment of customers. This guarantee should visualise how the organization is able to give superior value to its customers. The guarantee has to be the organization's main guiding principle for its actions. It will tell the customer the nature of value and what comes with the service. The guarantee has to commit a pledge for all of organizations employees and it has to come from the strategy, business idea, values and success factories. (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 60.)

A service guarantee or a customer promise is an expression of how the organization will promise to create superior value to a customer. This will lead to durable competitive advantage when the organization is constantly able to create for the customer an extra value compared with the competition. (Viitala & Jylhä 2013, 95.)

Stating this service guarantee is based on the need to stand out from the mass of the other service providers in the positive way. It should stand out the good qualities of the products and services. These pledges many times emphasize some good quality of the organization. In the case of municipal service provider, the pledge should state the quality and flexibility of the service given. Rintamäki (2007 via Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 63) states that the good pledge includes:

- Adds customer's experiences of the benefits and decreases the sacrifices.
- Bases on the resources and competences which the organization can utilize better than competitors.
- Stands out the organization from the competitors.
- Leads to the development of competitive advantage.

Table 3. Developing the service guarantee for an customer (Anderson et al. 2006 via Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 61)

<b>Service guarantee</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Favourable differences</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Consist of	All the benefits that the customer receives from a product or a service.	All favourable differences of the product or service. Compared with the second best choice on the market.	One or two favourable differences (or equalities), which can be improved to give for the customer more value in the near future.
Answers to the customer's questions	Why should our organization buy the product or the service from your organization?	Why should our organization buy the product or the service instead of a product or a service which is offered by a rival organization?	Which is the most profitable specification for our organization in your service or product?
Demand	The knowledge of your organization's product or service.	The knowledge of your organization's product or service and the second best choice offered by a rival organization.	The knowledge how your product or service develops superior value to the customer compared with the second best choice offered by rival organization.
Goal	Show the benefits and verify them.	Presumption of the value.	Study and research on the customer's and their needs.

If it is possible to find answers to the questions presented in Table 3, the Apprenticeship Center would be able to focus on actions towards the customer. On the basis of this development, there should be thorough market research of products, services, competition and the customers.

Leading the services through the service guarantee means the guarantee of the skilful employees and the best service in the market. This is the part where apprenticeship organization can make a difference compared with the competition. When using this dimension of the service guarantee an organization should put the focus on these characteristics (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 92–93):

- The leaders should put the focus on the redemption of the guarantee.
- The skilful employees can give a first class customer service.
- The selections of the employees, competitive wages and training of the employees.
- Internal marketing, communicating, motivating and committing the employees.
- Interpreting the customer need and supporting the decision making
- Measuring the customer satisfaction.

The personnel of the organization is in the key role. Can the personnel make the change for the service commitment of this kind? The leaders can set the strategy and show the way to the organization, but the employees make this kind of change possible. In the author's opinion, the change can be made, it would also bring profits through the customer satisfactory. The leaders should commit and find the way to commit the employees. The choosing of the existing personnel is not possible, but the author thinks that each person's abilities should be put in use by their special abilities. Everyone is not a customer servant and does not have the passion for it, but there are other areas in an apprenticeship organization that needs attention.

Even if everyone is not in a direct contact in constant bases with the customer, the communication of the strategy and development of the customer service should reach every level in the organization. Still, the organization could and should develop specialist in the customer service who has the abilities and commitment. Anyway, this model does not include only the sales and marketing personnel. It should be recognized thorough the whole organization and be implemented by the leaders. (Grönroos 20019, 35.) When the strategy is in use, the measuring the customer satisfactory, monitoring the competition and the market has to be in constant bases.

The measuring of the service guarantee is as important as measuring and monitoring everything else. It is often forgotten to examine things from the customer's point of view and it is the best way to evaluate if the service guarantee works as it should. (Rubanovitsch & Aalto 2007, 32.)

### 2.3.5 Plan of the customer relationships

The organization can create a plan for the customer relationships. If the organization decides to create this kind of plan, it is important to know the customers. The organization should be aware of the long term need and requests of the customers and be able to provide the something more than the basic value of the products. The customers are not looking for only products or the services, but the whole concept of the services where they receive all from the advice to a final usage of the products or services. This should be available just on time and with flexibility and a guarantee. (Grönroos 2009, 55.)

This kind of thinking is already in function in the Apprenticeship Center, where every customer has his own service provider, the account manager.

This account manager provides personal service for the customer. The service model was implemented recently and it can be further developed. This development could be made by the plan of the customer relationships.

The sufficient service concept cannot be created by the Apprenticeship Center only. The organization needs a good amount of partners to fill up the whole concept of the services. It could be very costly to have the whole resource and the knowledge inside of the organization. It can be more efficient and cost effective to have specialist partners to provide the service outside the Apprenticeship Center's core know-how. (Grönroos 2009, 58.) Usually, this is available through our mother organization Intermunicipal federation for education in Itä-Uusimaa. This kind of big educational organization provides a good partnership for the customers. Since the Apprenticeship Center is a part of this major organization, there are no competitive issues between the organizations. Some of the basic products, the apprenticeships, still have to be bought from outsider providers. With them, it is important to be able to trust the quality of the partners or the service given. One issue is the fact that many of these partners have the Apprenticeship Center's of their own. If the customer does not receive superior service through the providing Apprenticeship Center, the customer may be tempted to exchange the service provider and get the service directly from the partner organization.

The customer relationships of this kind are based on co-operation with confidence. The organization should be able to know the customers at a really deep level and be able to serve each customer individually. This gives many benefits. Marketing campaigns, sales contacts and possible reclamations can be managed based on the personal relationship. The customer will get the feeling that the company knows them and shows them respect. Meetings should always be personal, individual and on constant intervals, done in person or using it-technology. (Grönroos 2009, 58–59.)

Customer relationships should give the organization a deep understanding about the customer organization's processes. The processes of the customer are set to create value for the customer and the understanding about these processes enables the service offering organization to support the customer. Still, the responsibility for the customership development and the processes are for the service offering organization. (Storbacka & Lehtinen 2005, 20, 29.)

Modern web-based meeting platforms are available and the technology is improving all the time. There are still some technical problems and people are not used to have meetings online. Luckily, the culture is changing. In the Apprenticeship Center, these kind of meetings could add value for some customers. The value comes from time save and reduced traveling costs, for customers and organization, as like in financial sector (see Kietäväinen 2014, 40–44.)

This personal level of the customer relationships is the best when there are an account manager and a customer in contact. In the Apprenticeship Center, there is an account manager responsible for each client. Because of that,

the first-hand information about the customer is always available. In small organizations like the Apprenticeship Center, it is usually possible to get the correct customer correspondent for each client. If the customer's own account manager is not available because of vacations, medical emergencies etc., there should be a backup plan. The customer database is one way to approach this kind of problem. Via this database, the information about the customer and the earlier or the planned future interaction could be shared. (Grönroos 2009, 59.) This kind of database would be beneficial for the customer work. Still, it has one disadvantage. The updating it takes really much work and time. If the information in this kind of database is not 100 % up to date and correct, the database will not be reliable and it will lose its function ability.

The processes creating value for a customer must be planned in a way that customers can be served and the organization can offer the complete service concept. It can be achieved through the service leadership. The perfect service concept consists of the following parts: 1. employees, 2. a customer, 3. technic and 4. time. The technology can be in part with customer interaction, but it has to be designed from the view of the customer. As in many other sources of this thesis, the customer relationships are depended on the employees. If the employees are not ready to commit to customer service, and if they are not motivated to work with customer centricity, the plan will fail. Many of the customers lack time, and when the time is given, the precious time should not be wasted. (Grönroos 2009, 60.)

The customer gains some value from the personal customer relationships of this kind. Gwinner, Gremler & Bitner (1998 via Grönroos 2009, 65) state that the benefits that the customer receives can be divided under three main headlines. The first is **security**. The customer thinks that the service provider can be trusted and the services offered will function perfectly. The second headline is **social benefits**. The employees of the organization know the client and the client and its employees are in good terms with the other organization. Third headline **special treatment** means extra services, special pricing and the customer status over other clients. The most important benefit for the client is the values concerning the security. The best organization providing the customer planning can make the customer feel more secure than getting the same service from a different provider. The social benefits and special treatment are important part of the customer planning. In the Apprenticeship Center, this part has been noticed and the customers already have their own account managers.

In the Apprenticeship Center, the account managers make the customer relationships to the next level by offering a personal contact person. The relationship plan could improve this development even further. It could set the goals for the account managers work and guidelines for addressing the customers.

## 2.4 Implementing and evaluating the services

### 2.4.1 The quality of the service

The services are complex because there are processes where the production and the consumption cannot be seen. In addition, the customer participates in the production process. When making the service processes of this kind, it is important to understand what the customers expect of the service. It is also important to understand how the customers will evaluate the service. If the organization is able to understand how the expectations and evaluations work, it can control and direct the services to the correct path. (Grönroos 2009, 98–99.)

It has to be kept in mind that every customer is different and feels the quality based on their expectations. Because of that, it is difficult to know which values have an effect on each customer. (Fischer & Vainio 2015, 9.) The quality is a word that depends on the experience and how it is valued. Often the quality is all about experience and it is not depending about the specifications of the physical product. The quality is important in a way that customer feels it. (Grönroos 2009, 100.) The overall experience of the customer is setting the quality. Different customers have different criteria for the quality and it depends on the user and his values. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 158.)

The quality and the value will be created in the interaction with the customer. The interaction has an effect on the lifespan of the customer relationship. The service is created with the customer in interaction. If the customer feels the value and the quality by the interaction, it will increase the positive feeling about the organization. Interactions where the customer feels disappointment and does not gain the value he is expecting will affect the sense of the quality negatively. It is the task for the personnel to be able to handle even the most routine interactions with the most professional way, that the customer does not feel the lack of value and quality. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 107–108.)

The critical moments in the customer relationship are the moments where the interaction with the customer is exceptional. Exceptional interactions with the customer will be remembered through the whole relationship. They can be remembered as positive or a negative moment. These moments are usual in the service sector. Many of the interactions can be remembered as a positive moment by the good customer service, and even in the negative case where the customer cannot get the result expected, the after work should be done by that way where the customer thinks that he had good service. This after work has to be done after the positive interactions too. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 109–110.) Not every moment is critical for the customers, so they should be analysed and found before the real contact. The organization could be more prepared for the moments which are considered critical. In banking industry, there is an example moment in the loan negotiations. They are considered critical, because there is a possibility where the customer does not receive the loan and gets disappointed in the bank. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 114.)

These moments can be categorized into three different segments. The first segment consists of the **exceptional moments**, where the customer is ready to make big decisions. These are the rarest moments. The **regular meetings** arrive quarterly or periodically. The **routine meetings** are constant and focused on daily routine matters. The organizations must be able to recognize the exceptional moments, because then the customer is readiest to think the customership matters at a deeper level, and it is the best time to develop the mutual processes. The organization has to be present when the customer is set up to make big decisions. In regular meetings, the customer has prepared for a meeting with the certain agenda and the meeting most likely follows the prepared plan. In routine meetings, participants are prepared to address the routine matters as swiftly as possible and time and resources do not support anything else. The exceptional moments usually appear at the early moments of customership. When the co-operation deepens and prolongs the meetings shift towards routine. (Storbacka & Lehtinen 2005, 81.)

The interactions between the customer and the service providing organization are setting the quality of the service. These moments have an effect on the experience of the quality. There are two dimensions of the quality: **technical** (what) and **processual** (how). In the Apprenticeship Center, it is the process dimension that is important, the experience of the customer in the apprenticeship process. The customer can evaluate the service gained from the view how the service is provided for him: how the personnel of the service providing organization are behaving, how they are performing their tasks and how they are saying their things have effect on the customer. (Grönroos 2009, 101–102.)

The imago of the organization is an important factor that affects the overall experience about the quality. If the customers are thinking in a positive way about the organization, they are more likely to forgive some minor mistakes or faults. If there are many difficulties in the process that are causing mistakes, it will affect the imago of the organization. If the imago is negative, it is likely that every small mistake affects more and causes a lot more damage. Reclamations are always a bad thing and they should not generate. If the situation still emerges, the professional and fast way to handle this situation can be a boost of the relationship. It is a chance to show how good the organization is with solving the customer's problems and by that create added value to the customer. (Leppänen 2007, 101.)



Figure 3. How the imago is effecting the quality (Grönroos 2009, 103)

There are two other dimension that can be added to these two basic dimensions. The third dimension answers the question “where”. The physical surroundings have impact on the customer’s experience of the quality. It can also be called the “serviscape” (Bitner 1992 via Grönroos 2009, 103). The serviscape is the physical landscape, the place of interaction. The quality of the surroundings, the office etc., give the customer the feel of the quality and professionalism. One other dimension is available; economic have an effect on the product or the service. As mentioned earlier, the economics of the apprenticeship services is controlled by the government and every service provider has the same specifications in their products. The “serviscape” does not consist of the physical surroundings alone, but it also includes technical aspects, web-based platforms, phone services etc. (Storbacka & Lehtinen 2005, 79.)

The customer gains the experience of the quality and the value by other immaterial parts. The brand and the reputation of the service providing organization will be in the big part of the value gaining process. When creating new services, the branding will tell the customer that there is something special and better in the new service compared with the others. If the brand is connected with good quality, it will tell the customer that this product can be trusted. The reputation of the organization is supporting the brand. The reputation can be built with communication and advertising or by the organization’s own actions. The personnel is the reputation builder in this interaction. The personnel consist of the professionals, but is also able to solve the customer’s problems. The personnel have to be able to work for the customer’s benefit to gain the customer persistence. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 104–106.)



The reputation of the organization is important when the new clients come in the question. If a customer receives the best possible service, these satisfied customers are working as an advertisement for the new customers. It can be called a positive spiral. (Rubanovitsch & Aalto 2007, 75–77.)

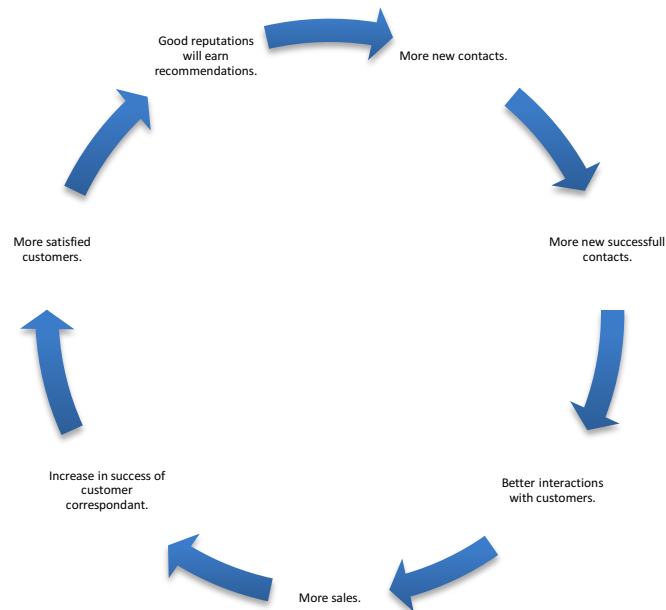


Figure 4. Example of positive spiral (Rubanovitsch & Aalto 2007, 76)

The quality of the service is one of the key factors of the success. The organizations competitive advantage against the other organizations depends on the quality. The services or the product have to be the best quality available and be much better compared with the competitor's services and products. (Grönroos 2009, 104.)

The customer gains the feeling of good quality when the expectations of the customer are filled or exceeded. The customer is expecting the certain amount of the quality and expectations are created through the advertising. When the organization is able to offer a service that is at the same level as has been advertised, the customer will feel the sense of quality. The expected quality and the quality are forming the overall quality and the overall quality has an effect on the image of the organization. The organization has to be careful, because marketing is not promising more than the organization can provide. If the promises are higher than reality, the customer will not get the experience what he was expecting. That has effect on the overall quality of the service. (Grönroos 2009, 106.)

The feeling of the gained value comes to the customer when the customer thinks that he gains more from the service than he has to give to obtain it. The best situation for the customer is when the benefits from the service are exceeding the used resources. Many services are quite similar and when the customer is choosing the service provider, the overall service is weighting more than parts of the service. The customer is still making the choice by expectations of the value, but the value actualizes after the customer has

experienced the whole service process. If the customer thinks that the process is exceeding the expectations, the customer is likely to choose the same service provider again. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 24–26.)

The responsibility comes with the quality. It is not enough that the customers' expectations are filled. The organization has to be responsible to offer the new possibilities to create new value for the customers themselves and help customers to develop their processes further. (Storbacka & Lehtinen 2005, 20.)

#### 2.4.2 Measuring the quality of the service

The measuring the quality is important. When there are constant data available, then there is a possibility to make the corrective actions if necessary. There are two kinds of measuring tools available: **attribute-based tools** and **qualitative measuring tools**. Some examples of these measuring tools are attribute-based service quality elements and the SERVQUAL tool. There are also qualitative tools for measuring the service quality, the critical incident tool. It has been widely used in many occasions when measuring the service sector's quality. (Grönroos 2009, 112–120.)

When using the SERVQUAL tool, the organization asks the customer to think about variable events with the positive and negative interaction. All these events are called critical incidents. After the incidents are found, the customer should describe what happened in detail and why the customer thought that the event is critical. After that, the organization analyses the events and tries to found out why these events occur. This tool is usable, because it often gives good and direct data to be implemented as corrective actions. (Grönroos 2009, 120.)

The good service can be divided into seven sub criteria that are easy to transfer to the Apprenticeship Center. The author thinks that these are descriptive for measuring the service quality.

1. Professionalism and skills: The customer thinks that the service providing organization has the knowledge and skills, processes and resources that they need.
2. Attitude and behaviour: The customer expects that the organization's personnel will give the attention needed and help to find correct solutions for the customer.
3. Easy access and flexibility: The customer thinks that the organization is easy to reach. The service is available when there is a need, the location is easy to access and there is flexibility in the process of organization to adapt for the customer's need.
4. Reliability: The customer trusts that he can depend on the service offering organization in any case.
5. The normalization of the service: The customer knows that in any critical event the provider is ready to take the corrective actions immediately.
6. Serviscape: The physical surroundings of the service are filling the customer's need and expectations.

7. *Imago and credibility*: The service offering organization shares the same values as the customer and the service is matched with the customer's need.

These seven criteria are quite comprehensive, but there can be some other issues effecting the quality, because everything depends on the individual customer's case. (Grönroos 2009, 121–122.)

The measuring of the customer satisfactory is important, but when the value of the customer should be measured, the qualitative measuring is more important than the attribute-based customer satisfactory inquiries. The customers should be surveyed and the value adding factors identified. When the factors are known, these factors can be added to the customer satisfactory inquiries. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 81.)

Tehrani 1992 (via Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 81) states that 75 % of the buying decisions of the clients have the emotional component. When there is some knowledge of the customers gained through surveying, the emotional factors are many times being overlooked. This example comes from the individual private customers, but it can easily be seen in the customer relationships between organisations, and because of that, it cannot be ignored.

The data can be gathered from different sources, and it must be combined. The comprehensive surveying of the customer and especially qualitative surveys, where the customer is viewed in the more personal level, are in the key position. Also the attribute-based surveys are important, but then there must be some knowledge what the questions should be asked. Korkman and Arantola (2009, 90–91) state that the best and the most relevant information cannot be asked from the customer and it has to be apprehended by the other means.

The best qualitative source of information is still the normal customer interaction in any situation where the customer is confronted and it is called silent information. This silent information is easily gathered, but there is a problem of sharing and preserving this information to the benefit of the organisation. Many times the information gained from the customer interaction is possessed only in the minds of the person responsible for this customer. This knowledge has to be stored in the data-banks, CRM etc. If the knowledge obtained is not passed to the rest of the organization, it cannot be exploited later. Even if the information in particular moment does not feel important, it can be important later. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 81–82.)

The decisions about what information can be exploited later and what is irrelevant, has to be made. A customer information data-bank of this kind can be an important tool, but it can also be a source of useless information which leads to the loss of the important data, because it will get lost in overflow of the data.

One of the best measures for the customer satisfactory is the fact if the customer stays (Nieminen & Tomperi 2008, 109). If the customer stays and

wants to continue the relationship, then the customer is most likely satisfied. In the Apprenticeship Center’s case, the same service is available for the customer from other provider if he is not satisfied. The ratio of the customer persistence could be easily measured.

### 2.4.3 The customer enquiries of service

The enquiries and measuring are difficult. There are many different tools and questions for conducting a research and collecting data of this kind. All enquiring should lead to developing procedures and by that creating more value for a customer. Instead of thinking how we can measure it, should be thought how we can produce more value for a customer from the results of the enquiries. If the organization is able to show the customer, that answering enquires will lead something concrete, the customer is more willing to answer. (Korkiakoski & Löytänä 2014.)

The customer satisfactory to the service should be measured constantly by using enquiries. There are some examples of the different questions which can give the good data of the customers satisfactory to the service given.

According to Nieminen and Tomperi (2008, 110), the enquiries of the customer satisfactory will give information about the value produced to the customer. How do the organization manage the customer relationships from the customer’s point of view? Does the sales strategy work as planned? What is the meaning of the customer correspondent in the interaction with the customer and the service offering organization? What is the level of professionalism of the customer correspondent?

Table 4. An example of a customer satisfaction enquire’s questions (Nieminen & Tomperi 2008, 110)

<b>Claim</b>	<b>Know-how</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The skills and the professionalism of the customer correspondents are at high level and it is supporting the co-operation.</li> <li>• The customer correspondent keep their knowledge updated.</li> </ul>	Professionalism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The customer correspondents have a good approach to customer service and the help is easy to obtain.</li> <li>• The reaction time in the customer service is quick when there is need or a problem.</li> </ul>	Service relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think that the organization cares about me and my customership is taken care of.</li> <li>• Our business relationship is in the strong basis and we are willing to continue it in the future.</li> </ul>	Business relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I trust the customer correspondents.</li> <li>• The customer correspondents take notice of me as an individual person.</li> </ul>	Human relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is possible to develop our relationship of co-operation even further.</li> <li>• Customer correspondents are offering new ways to develop our relationship of co-operation.</li> </ul>	Co-operation

The value makes the customers more loyal. That is why the organizations should be more focused on measuring the value. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 121.) The value is also created by the account managers, by their actions towards the customers. This value can be measured by one question: what is the meaning of the account manager in the relationship between the customer's organization and the service offering organization? (Rubanovitsch & Valovirta 2009, 117.)

The measuring the customer value can be done by thinking six different criteria: the time spend on parts of the process (speed and staying within a timetable), producing the correct service for the current situation (rightfulness and flawlessness) and the amount of produced service. (Halonen 2014.)

There are some good questions for the organization to think about the customers' loyalty. By measuring the rate of loyalty the organization is able to take the corrective actions if the customers are looking for the other service providers. Is the customer ready to recommend received service to the other organizations? Is the customer ready to order more the same services from you? Is the customer ready to order other services from your organization? Does the customer think that your service is better compared with the other service providers? Is the customer looking for the other service provider? If there is a problem, does the customer ask you to correct it and not change the service provider? (Ranade 2012.)

A good and rarely used solution for the customer satisfactory is to interview the lost customers. This will tell useful information for improving the customer experience for further development. (Viitala & Jylhä 2013, 95.)

All data from different measures and interviews should be analysed, and if possible, compared with a competing organization. From that information, the organization can determine how well they are performing against others. (Aarnikoivu 2005, 67.)

The measuring the service and the quality through surveys is already done by the Apprenticeship Center at constant bases by surveying customers who have an apprenticeship. The questionnaires are send in the beginning and at the end of the apprenticeship. This questionnaire has some questions which correlate with the theory presented above. In the future, the questions could be modified to focus more of the service quality and the value.

### 3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THE GOALS OF THE THESIS

This chapter focuses on the goals and the questions of the study. The questions of this thesis focus on the increasing number of the qualifications arranged to the customers and gaining the customer persistence by offering them the overall service model by the Apprenticeship Center.

#### 3.1 Goals

The aim of this thesis is to find out how the Apprenticeship Center can improve the service offered for the customers. The Apprenticeship Center works as an education provider. At the moment, the services mostly consist of providing three basic products: the vocational upper secondary qualification, further vocational qualification and specialist vocational qualification. The qualifications are available for many different professions and the total number of qualifications is 370.

The Apprenticeship Center offers some extra services for the customers, but they are not in daily usage and they are mostly done as a kind of trial basis. Only one service is a part of normal routines and works with the regular cycle. It is the mandatory service, where the Apprenticeship Center will train the mentors working with the apprenticeship students. This training is arranged in four modules twice a year. This service is free for our customers.

Gaining more customers and keeping the existing ones is the most important goal for the next years. Finland has suffered from recession for many years and the government is forced to decrease the funding of educational organisations. It is seen that the organisations have to find new approaches to cover the loss of government based funding. For preparation for the future, it has been seen that organisations with the best service models and the healthiest finance will remain profitable. The profitability is best gained through a sufficient number of the customers. The profitable organisations will be less likely closed down or merged to some bigger organisation.

From this point of view, in our organisation has been discussions over what more we can offer for our customers. Can we increase our amount of basic product the qualifications by the customer persistence and satisfactory? The satisfactory could be gained by adding the enhanced or extra services given with qualification. Is there anything else we can offer to gain satisfied customers? Is the value of our service filling up the customer's expectations?

In our discussions, there have been some ideas to give different special services where we have competence. Our employees have been trained to the specialist level in many different areas and our organisation has opportunities to arrange a wide range of service for the customer's need. For the further need, the Apprenticeship Center is part of Intermunicipal federation for education in Itä-Uusimaa, and from this basis the possibilities of the service given could be even more better. These extra services could be offered as free service, or if there is a bigger need, it could be arranged as a sellable product.

### 3.2 Questions

The questions of this research should give information for the creation of the new service products and models. The products and the service models would be created and developed based on the outcome information.

The director of the Apprenticeship Center Hanne Paila (interview on April 15<sup>th</sup> 2016) summarizes the basic questions as follows:

- What kind of products could be sold direct to the Apprenticeship Center's customers? Are there some ready products which we can offer to our customers? The employees of the Apprenticeship Center have some already finished extra products. There are abilities and licenses to offer the Peili-coaching to companies (Peili 2015) and the co-operation coaching (Cooperation). These services are already available for the customers. The Apprenticeship Center can arrange a shorter or longer personnel coaching for the customers by using these products. Is there anything else that would be a vendible extra product for selection?
- What kind of products would add value to our basic products, qualifications by the apprenticeship? Can the Apprenticeship Center offer something extra to the customers, without charge, e.g. a training for mentors? Is it possible to offer long term partnerships with companies with the mutual benefits? Does the Apprenticeship Center have the extra services and competence needed? What are the extra services that customers would need with the qualification by the apprenticeship?
- By what kind of products or services can we improve our sales of the apprenticeships? The basic product is regulated by the laws from the government of Finland and it cannot be changed. Can the Apprenticeship Center offer something more to boost the basic product?
- How can we add some extra value to our customers to gain the customer persistence? The main thing in this highly competitive area of Itä-Uusimaa is to get the customers to stay with one service provider. The same qualifications are offered by many providers, and if the customer is not satisfied with the service, it is easy to change the provider. There are also some customers who get some qualifications from the other provider, e.g. the logistics department and the leaders of the company will have their leadership qualifications from other provider. The aim would be to get the whole customer-ship from the customer. The Apprenticeship Center provides 370 different qualifications as like the competitors, there is no need for the customer to get different qualifications from the other providers.

## 4 METHODS

There are variable methods conducted in this case study. The methods are described in this paragraph. The methods have been chosen to be the most functional in the qualitative research of this kind.

### 4.1 Surveys

The surveys are conducted by the web-based method, using the Webropol-system. The link was sent by the e-mail of the Apprenticeship Center. The survey was sent to all of our customer's organizations and the e-mail list of our potential future customers. In overall, there were 250 e-mail addresses where this survey was sent. The survey had the option to be answered anonymously and no identification data were gathered from the participants of the survey.

Because the study has the qualitative form, the questions are left open. The informant can answer the questions from his own point of view and the answer is not given by check boxes. This will demonstrate what is important from the informant's own point of view. The open questions let the informant express himself by his own words. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 201.) The questionnaire as an appendix 1.

It is recommendable to create questions which are clear, specific, short and without double meanings. In a question form, there should be also a choice for no opinion and the questions should start by more common questions that advance towards questions with more specific meanings. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 202–203.)

This method is cheap and easy to use. It does not take much time to get the questionnaire to multiple people. However, it is known that this kind of research has a disadvantage with the response rate. To counteract that problem, the questionnaire should be sent to the adequate number of answerers. (Electronic Surveys.)

The data gathered by surveys are stored at Webropol system and analysed at Chapter 5.1. The analysis of the data combines with the author's assumptions based on the open answers given in the survey.

### 4.2 Interviews

The interviews are used in this research to bring more depth to data developed through the surveys. The interviews are done personally. This could counteract the problem, where the data of the surveys is not carefully or honestly answered by the interviewees. If the questions are clearly understood by interviewees, the problem does not occur. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 195.)

The best part of the interview is the personal communication and interaction and it will support the surveys by probing for more detailed answers and



seeking more reflection from the answerers. The biggest disadvantage of this method is the cost of this type of research by time consumption. That is why this method is used to only back up the answers from surveys. (Oral Surveys.)

In the current study, the interviews are conducted to five customers from the existing customers of the Apprenticeship Center. The customers have been chosen to represent different lines of the business field to cover as a wide perspective of our customers as possible. None of the chosen customers represents the business of the same kind with the other interviewed customers. All of these interviewed customers were also chosen because they already have used a lot of the Apprenticeship Centers services before and have a good knowledge of the different services available. There are also some interviews from the co-operating training partners of the Apprenticeship Center and the other municipal service providing organizations which are using the services of the Apprenticeship Center.

The interviews were conducted in a form of a semi-structured interview. This method allows the natural flow of the conversation during the interview. Still, the conversation is guided through the base questions of this thesis. In the interview the order of the questions may vary and some new questions can be found in the conversation to cover the whole area of the research. The conversations were recorded for the correct analysis. (See Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 320.)

The interviews are qualitative and non-standardised. This method was chosen by the author in order to be the most effective way to approach the problem of this kind. In the chosen method, the answers may vary and require more helping questions and explaining (Silverman 2007 via Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 324). Non-standardised interviews are also effective when it is known that the subject produces an answer in different directions (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 205).

The quality of the data is the most difficult part in the qualitative and semi-structured interview of this kind. In this case, the quality is not an issue, because the research questions are only feelings and needs of the customer. There are no exact data gathered. Interviewer will should remain neutral and avoid guiding the conversation to serve the personal beliefs and of the author. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 328.)

The data from the interviews will be opened in Chapter 5.2. The interviews were recorded and the data were analysed by the author.

#### 4.3 Participant observation

The participant observation is the method where the author of this study participates to process as a part of it. It makes it possible to have the first-hand data on the analysed matter. The observations in the current study are the author's notes and notifications from the customer interaction during the period of the research, the year 2016. The observations are available in Chapter 5.3.

The participant observation was chosen as a research method because the most useful source of information for the research questions of this thesis is the normal daily interaction with the customers of the Apprenticeship Center. The author works as an account manager in the organization, contacts and has meetings with the customers at daily bases. There is lots of discussion in these interactions considering the many things analysed in this thesis. Many of the ideas for the new products or services come directly from the customers in these meetings. Some ideas for the new ways to give better service have also come directly from the customers without asking.

An observation is a good method of gathering an information about the subject of this kind. However, it has to be remembered that the person making the observations could easily make assumptions based on the data and turn the answers to correlate his own beliefs of the subject. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 217.)

The participation in the current study is called a complete participant, because the researcher is a member of the group and does not tell that he is collecting data. The method could have ethical problems if the researcher gathers data on the informants or their behaviour. In this research, the collected data are normal business discussions which could be written in a memo even without a research and the matter does not have any personal aspect. (Kawulich 2005.)

## 5 DATA, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter summarises the analysis and the results of the data gathered by this study. The survey was effected by the lack of answers, as many other surveys conducted by the e-mail questionnaires.

The survey was send to 250 customers and only 30 answered the survey. The research method of this kind is known to have a poor answering rate, but it has the advantages that it can be send for many informants easily. Still, the answering rate can be considered poor. For the author himself, there are many surveys received in e-mail, at work and on free-time, and many of them are closed because a lack of time and interest to answer them. Maybe there are too many surveys from too many organizations to gain the people's interest.

The author thinks that the form of open questions had an effect on the answering rate. If the questionnaire had been a multi-option form, it would have been more successful. Webropol statistic for this survey shows that 67 informants have opened the questionnaire, and 30 of them provided an answer. 37 informants were looking at the questions, but the form of the open questions were too complex or too time consummating and they closed the survey.

There was also one other aspect which could have an effect on the answering rate. Because of the tight schedule to get the survey conducted, it was send on June 10<sup>th</sup> 2016 and had the time to answer till July 15<sup>th</sup>. This time is already the holiday season in Finland and could have some effect on the lack of the answers.

The answers lacked depth and the questions have found to be too difficult or too complex to get the wanted results. There are still some findings from the questionnaires and they are backed up by the interviews. The interviews were much more useful way to gather information about the research questions, the interviewees spend more time when answering and thinking the questions. The interviewees were able to ask if some questions were too complex or had multiple angles. In the interview discussions, there were also helping questions added to get enough information.

### 5.1 Surveys

#### **The experiences of Itä-uudenmaan apprenticeship Center**

For the question how well are the Apprenticeship Center and its services known in Itä-Uusimaa area (the question *Kuinka tunnettu Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskus ja sen palvelut ovat alueellanne? 1-4?*), most customers answered with numbers 3 and 2. It is easy to claim that the Apprenticeship Center should focus on marketing of their services, even the answers are in the middle of evaluating range. It is alarming that four of the customers thought that the Apprenticeship Center is not known at all, and that demands

a more active role in the marketing. The first questions of surveys were answered by all 30 participants. They were numerical and the range was from one to four.

The second question was how do you feel about the Apprenticeship Center's service level (the question *Minkälaisena koette nykyisen Itä-Uudenmaan Oppisopimuskeskuksen palvelutason? 1-4*). The customers thought that the Apprenticeship Center is not well known. Still, they thought that service gained is really good. Only one customer of 30 answers wrote that service is not good at all. Overall 28 answers were over the positive side of the evaluating range (3 or 4).

In the question of what kind of services your company has gained from the Apprenticeship Center (*Minkälaista palvelua olette saanut meiltä?*) were 29 answers. The answers divided into five categories.

Many of the customers have received vocational training services. Here are some examples of the answers:

*Oppisopimuskoulutusta.*

*Olen saanut palvelua liittyen oppisopimuskoulutuksen järjestämiseen yrityksemme eri tehtävätasolle."*

From the answers above we can observe that the customers have received the vocational qualification by apprenticeship, arranging the apprenticeships for different areas of our company. It is clear that many customers of the The Apprenticeship Center answer that their organization has gained the training service from the Apprenticeship Center. That is the core service and it should be the main agenda in the answers. Though the answer is obvious, it reveals a good point: many of the answers point out that the training is outstanding and flexible.

Seven customers answered that the service is personal, professional, fast and flexible:

*Palvelu on ollut asiantuntevaa ja siitä jäi sellainen käsitys, että virkailija oli oikeasti kiinnostunut oppisopimusopiskelijan edistymisestä ja "projektin" sujuvuudesta.*

*Nopeaa, ystävällistä ja asiantuntevaa.*

The answers also correlate with many of the theoretical sources of this study. The customers expect personal service and quick reactions and when the account manager is truly interested in the customer's case it will create a feeling of good and special service. (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 51.) The customers say that the service is personal, professional, fast and flexible. These values were mentioned as the Apprenticeship Center's key values earlier. The assumption can be made that the Apprenticeship Center's personnel is already at a quite good level in the customer service when consid-

ering the basic interaction with the customers. The level of the personal service is good and the customers also answered that the account manager was really interested in the swift development of the project.

Some of the answers were about giving an information and an advice of the Apprenticeship Center's services:

*Neuvoja sekä opastusta niin opiskelijana kuin työpaikkaohjaajanakin.*

Also the help and the advice during the apprenticeship is a part of the services given and it is a part of the core services of the Apprenticeship Center.

There were two answers with a negative perspective:

*Olemme yrittäneet saada aikaiseksi oppisopimusyhteistyötä, mutta asia ei ole edennyt kolmen vuoden aikana.*

*Olen kouluttaja tutkintokoulutuksissa ja myös opiskelijoiden mentori. Ei varsinaista palvelua opsolta.*

The negative answer where the customer has tried to have a co-operation with the Apprenticeship Center and it has not gone forward in three years leads to a conclusion about the critical moment of our customer service which has been badly concluded. The same answerer has given poor results for the earlier question and for the later ones, too. In the later question, the answer writes that they have not received service at all. This can be analysed that the account manager has denied the apprenticeship from this customer. There can be legislative reasons where the apprenticeship training cannot be arranged. This could be a critical moment with this customer interaction. The theoretical framework presented earlier clarifies that critical moments can be remembered as a good or a bad way, depending on the nature of the interaction. This interaction most likely has not been conducted in the best possible manner, because even the negative situation can leave a positive feeling if it has been correctly managed. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 109–110.) The other negative answer is that one customer even working as a mentor of apprenticeship thinks that he is not linked with the Apprenticeship Center. It is not bad service, but the mentors should be trained by the Apprenticeship Center and after they should be aware of their key position in the interaction with the Apprenticeship Center, the vocational college, the workplace and the student.

Two of the 27 customers answered that they felt like the information services are the most important ones of the current services available. (*Mitä hyvää mielestänne nykyisessä tarjotussa palvelussa on?*) The information services are important for the organization and the amount of the information and advertising has been increased last year.

*Oman kokemukseni mukaan asiat sujuvat nopeasti ja tiedotus on hyvää. Mielenkiintoisia koulutustilaisuuskutsuja olen myös saanut, mutta en ole vielä käyttänyt koulutuspalveluja.*

Many of the answers share the same values that were mentioned earlier concerning the specialists in the customer service. Our employees have to be professional and have skills in the service, business and human relationships. (Nieminen & Tomperi 2008, 39–42.)

*Ammattitaitoista.*

*Vuorovaikutus oppisopimuskeskuksen ja työpaikan välillä.*

*Reagointi, vastausaika mielestäni hyvä.*

*Sovitetaan yrityksemme tarpeisiin opiskelu, myös la lähiope-  
tuspäiviä ja myös ilta-aikoja.*

*Mahdollisuus toteuttaa oppisopimuskoulutus kaikkia osapuolia  
tydyttävällä tavalla.*

*Monipuoliset palvelut.*

The excellent service consists of the different elements. The service is professional, functioning, flexible and supportive. Between the organizations, there is a good interaction and the reaction times are quick. The training organizations working as the partners of the Apprenticeship Center gain some credit with the functioning training programs. That can be interpreted as a professionalism of the Apprenticeship Center. Our organization has selected the best partner organizations to give the customers better training services. The current service selection is found to be versatile. The organization should be able to offer customers a wide range of services and have to have the good co-operating partners to widen the selection of the services offered. (Arvomyynnillä kasvuun 2004, 82–85.)

In the questionnaire, there was a question on the improvement of the current services from the customer's point of view (*Mitä kehitettävää nykyisessä tarjotussa palvelussa on?*) The question was obviously hard to answer and the number of the answers was only 15.

*Ei nyt tule mieleen mitään kehitettävää.*

*En osaa sanoa.*

*Tiedotus.*

*Etäluennot verkossa toimivammaksi, hiukan sekavat sivut net-  
tiportaalissa.*

*Mielestäni oppilaan arviointia voisi edelleen kehittää. Tuntuu  
työnantajana ja kouluttajana hieman turhauttavalta täyttää  
joka kerta samoja asioita arviointikaavakkeeseen.*

There are many answers where the informant cannot evaluate what could be developed. From a few answers which have some information can lead

a few assumptions. The customers want better service, better information communications, easier and clearer student evaluation services and web-based platforms. There are again some development suggestions for the partner organizations considering the training itself, better co-operation with training partners and developing the courses.

### **Free services given with apprenticeship training**

The category of free services given with the apprenticeship training has the first question about developing the current service into the better answer for the customer's need (*Miten voisimme kehittää nykyisen oppisopimuskoulutukseen liittyvän palvelun paremmaksi yrityksellenne?*).

*Pidetään vähintään tämä nykyinen taso. Tiedottaminen erilaisista vaihtoehdoista, sääntöjen, ohjeiden tai esim. lakien muutoksista on tervetullutta.*

*Nettisivusta nopeampi ja helpompi hakuisempi.*

*Hoitoalalla olisi varmasti monia, jotka haluaisivat kouluttautua työn ohella, joten jalkautuminen työpaikoille tai hoitoalan tapahtumiin toisi lisää näkyvyyttä.*

*Parempi vuorovaikutus.*

The question has many aspects. Because of that the informants find it hard to answer. A few customers want more information about services, legislation and better e-services. They hope that the Apprenticeship Center would be more visible in the healthcare sector. The need for better interaction is also mentioned by informants. The interaction is a basis for a good customer service. Even the most routine interactions with the customer must always be handled in the most professional way. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 107–108.)

The current services are easily increased if there is a demand for services of the same kind. In the questionnaire, there was a question for adding more availability for current services (*Haluatteko enemmän nykyisen kaltaisia palveluja, esim. neuvontaa, henkilöstön perehdytystä oppisopimukseen, laajempaa työpaikkakouluttajakoulutusta, esitteitä? Mitkä ovat yrityksellenne tärkeitä palvelumuotoja?*). The question contained examples in order to clarify the meaning.

*Pidän oppisopimusta kaiken kaikkiaan erinomaisena järjestelmänä, jota pitäisi hyödyntää huomattavasti laajemmin Suomessa. Toimin itse myös aktiivisesti yrittäjäjärjestössä ja kaipaisin silloin tällöin sähköpostiini tulevaa aineistoa, jota olisi helppo jakaa edelleen muille yrittäjille. Nuorten oppisopimuskoulutuksen lisäksi tarjottavaa nykyisen henkilökunnan täydennys- ja jatkokoulutusmahdollisuutta oppisopimusmuodossa ei tunneta tarpeeksi ja se ehkä kaipaisi myös lisäkehittelyä.*

*Henkilökohtainen neuvonta ja työpaikkaohjaajien tukeminen ovat ensisijaisen tärkeitä.*

*Työpaikkakouluttaja ja arvioija koulutusta voisi olla enemmän.*

*Hyvät luennot, jotka innostavat uusiin toimintatapoihin, osaamisiin jne.*

The Information services were mentioned in most of the answers. The need for the personal service and support during the apprenticeship is also one of the demands of the current services. Some answers suggested more training to the apprenticeship mentors and small courses for the employee development.

The question on the free extra services (*Haluaisitteko nykyisten palveluiden lisäksi joitain muita oppisopimuskoulutuksen mukana tulevia ilmaisia palveluita?*) did not give exact answers.

*Ei tarvetta.*

This question was hard to answer or there are enough services available. There are only a few answers and most of these say that there is no need for extra free services. The author thinks that the question itself was too much to answer without any support. With help, the informants would easily find some free extra-services.

One of the main questions of this thesis is the added value and which elements would generate the value for the customer (*Millaiset asiat tuottavat teille asiakkaana lisäarvoa palvelukonseptissamme?*). This question on the value gathered many interesting answers.

*Henkilökohtainen palvelu.*

*Yrityskohtaisuus, paikallisuus.*

*Paikallisuus ja paikallistuntemus, miellyttävä ja osaava henkilöstö.*

*Ammattitaitoinen ja motivoitunut henkilöstö.*

In the good customer service, the account managers focus on the customer and offer the personal service. The local and satisfying interaction with the personnel of the Apprenticeship Center. The personnel is motivated and easy to approach. It has been written that personnel should have this right kind of attitude to serving the customers. (Vuorio 2008, 29.)



### **Paid services**

Under the heading of the paid services were three questions on the services which could be sold to a customer (*Minkälaisia lisäpalveluita yrityksenne kaipaisi oppisopimuskeskuksen tuote- ja palveluvalikoimaan? Esim. rekrytointipalveluja?*).

*Ei tarvetta.*

Probably the question was too complex to answer without preparation, since there is lack of answers. There were only a few answers which were based on the options given by the questionnaire in the first questions. Maybe there could be some paid services, but they come on the basis of the need and the customers can not name them in advance. When there is a need, the customers will find the service available. The main thing is that the organization should be able to create the services when the customer informs the Apprenticeship Center about the need.

To the question on willingness to pay for the services (*Mistä tuotteista ja palveluista olisitte valmis maksamaan?*) the informants gave the following answers:

*Kyllähän yritykselle hyödyllistä koulutuksista ollaan valmiita maksamaan, mutta rahallinen määrä on vaikea asettaa, se on tapauskohtaista.*

*Lisäarvoa tuottavista palveluista, palvelun hyöty tulee olla mitattavissa olevaa ja asiakkaan liiketoimintaa hyödyntävää.*

It is impossible to answer the question above, if the service is not clearly visible. There are some needs of the different trainings, but the customer could answer this question if they have a concrete need. One answer still stands out: The customer would be willing to pay for the added value services. The value should be measured and it should support the core business of the customer. That answer includes almost everything. The organization should be able to make the value visible to the customer. (Longstaffe 2014.) The service becomes a value when the customer uses the service and the customer expectations become filled. It is all about the whole experience of the process and the criteria that individual customer is setting for quality of the process. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 158.) The pricing of the services correlates with the same thing; the customer is willing to pay for the services if they see the value of the services supporting their own business. Before the value is seen, the customer cannot answer the questions what would be the right price.

## 5.2 Interviews

In this chapter the interviews of the customers and the partnership organizations are opened. The interview questions are the same questions as in surveys send by e-mail. The interviewer tried to go deeper in the subject in the interviews, by helping the interviewee to open the questions, which has been too complex in the surveys. Still, even if the questions were opened and explained to the interviewees, the nature of the answers did not vary much from the answers to the surveys. The answers were longer and better explained, but the things were in similar.

In the first questions about the knowledge of the Apprenticeship Center and its services in the area of Itä-Uusimaa the interviewees answered 3 or 4 (the scale 1–4). The informants said that at the moment the Apprenticeship Center is a very well-known organization of the area and the organization has increased its appearance during the past few years. One of the interviewees pointed out that the answer is 4, but his organization is already co-operating with the Apprenticeship Center which affects the answer. The other interviewee answered 3 and added that the Apprenticeship Center is not visible everywhere, but the information is really easy and quick to find when the service is needed. None of the interviewees answered 1 or 2, which is a very good result.

The second question was about the level of the service provided by the Apprenticeship Center. The answers were given with numbers 3 or 4. A representative of the other municipal service organization stated the Apprenticeship Center as a very important co-operating partner who has many services to offer, even beyond their capability to use them. The level of the service has increased in the past few years and the amount of information offered has been improved. Two of the answers pointed out the angle of handling things, the ability to see and arrange different services from the customer organization's point of view and quick reactions to a need of a customer.

The co-operation was one of the answers when the interviewees were asked what kind services their organizations have received from the Apprenticeship Center. This answer points out that the persistent long term relationships are the one of the goals in the good customer service. The information services and trying to match possible employers and possible apprenticeship students were together some of the services given. The support and help during the apprenticeships are the values which customer found in the co-operating services. An easy accessibility to the different services is also found to be a good service. "I was positively amazed of easy accessibility of apprenticeship training", states one of the interviewees and points out the flexibility of the Apprenticeship Center.

The good thing in the current services is the reaction time. The interviewees stated that it is one of the best things in our customer service. The service is easy, quick flexible to get. The Apprenticeship Center can also offer different services to make the access to the apprenticeship really easy and again with flexibility. A customer does not to know everything by themselves at

the start of the apprenticeship or during it, but the Apprenticeship Center is able and willing to help at any time during the process.

Every interviewee was asked a question about what could be improved in current service. The information about the apprenticeship is constantly improving among the entrepreneurs of the area, but informing the entrepreneurs about the possibilities of the apprenticeship is one improvement. The Apprenticeship Center already informs in many ways, but still the amount of the information could be increased, because many organizations of the area do not know the apprenticeship. One improvement came from the cooperation partner who matches the service of employees and the employers. This has been done already at a smaller scale, but the Apprenticeship Center should have more apprenticeship openings at their customer organizations. The customer who has already used the Apprenticeship Center's services said that the Apprenticeship Center's partner organizations actions should be more coordinated from the Apprenticeship Center. The customers thought that they have not received timetables etc. from the vocational training organization arranged by the Apprenticeship Center. There are already some ready services at a pilot stage, like the recruiting service. There the service is improved at full functionality: one of the organizations could try the service, but first it should be developed and tested.

The improvement of the free services offered within the apprenticeship is not a simple question. Many of the interviewees could not pinpoint a single service. There was an idea where there should be services, whatever they are they should be thought by the customer organizations point of view and should be retailed for their usage. When there are many different organizations using the same service, the custom service is difficult. The retailing for the business sector could be one possibility in the metal industry, transportation companies, etc. There also could be support services for the customer companies concerning employing new apprenticeship students. With a new employer there is some paperwork in the Apprenticeship Center, TE-palvelut (Finnish employment service), and other organizations. Maybe the Apprenticeship Center could help the customer organization with all this paperwork. The customer organization's employees could also be better trained for receiving an apprenticeship student to a work community. The Apprenticeship Center could offer the training service for this matter.

The answers to the question about increasing the availability of the current services were various. One interviewee answered that the amount is not the key. There are enough services available already, but the services should be retailed for the different types of customers. As an example, if a customer does not like paper brochures or manuals, the information should be available in different ways, video etc. The other interviewee answered that the amount of services is enough, but they should be improved for better usage. Web-based platforms, evaluation surveys etc.

The Apprenticeship Center could offer for the customers as a free service for example personnel coaching or mentoring the new apprenticeship student to be ready for work or even applying for work. This was focused

mostly on young students, who have limited knowledge and skills of working life. The interviewee giving this answer is working with young individuals. One answer was about the need is setting the service. It is difficult to think about these services in advance, because there is no current need. When the organization would have the need, the information of the available services should be easily accessed. The other answerer points out that good service would be a timed newsletter where would be information of currently available services.

The most important question was the value and what generates value for our customers. The quick response rate and reaction to the need of the customer were highly generating values for many informants. Flexibility and the account manager's knowledge were the other values. The customer respects the co-operating organization when the organization understands the business of the customer. Flexibility was pointed out by the other interviewee who states that many times the municipal organization are not considered flexible, but the Apprenticeship Center lacks that inflexibility almost completely. As an organization, the Apprenticeship Center carries out that attitude. Another interviewee thinks that the value is the professionalism of the Apprenticeship Center's personnel. The organization has the knowledge of many things considering education, recruiting people, applying different help for the customer organization or the students. The Apprenticeship Center is considered as a trustworthy and certain organization, which able to serve when needed. This answer does not leave room for interpretation. The good and functioning co-operation and availability of the support are important values for the apprenticeship itself and for the customer organizations.

The paid service was a difficult theme also in the interviews. The informants found the questions hard to answer because there was no current need for any services. The examples of the recruiting services, coaching employees, training for work applying etc. were mentioned as products which could be sold to the customers and to the other municipal organizations. The training for the personnel of the customer organization would be most likely the product which could be sold, and the customer thinks that the big training organization of Intermunicipal federation for education in Itä-Uusimaa would have competence to offer a wide range of the training services. The training should be retailed for the different customers for their need. The bulk product does not fill the needs of the customer. Performing the different tests for recruiting purposes could be one sellable product.

The customers would be ready to pay for services if the service will truly give value for the customer's organization and fill the current need. The prices should be competitive against the other organizations. One of the interviewees thought that in the training services the municipal organizations offers better pricing than some of the private training organizations, and still the product has the same quality. The price itself is hard to determine. How much the customer receives value, the customer is more willing to compensate this value. The prize should be correlating with the value gained.

### 5.3 Observations

This chapter is all about the author's own observations on a normal customer interaction. Many times the discussions touched the area of research questions. This data has not been stored.

The visibility of the Apprenticeship Center in the area of Itä-Uusimaa has been improved from the past. In the few past years, there have been changes in our operations and the new theme has been pro-marketing and many customers think that the Apprenticeship Center is more visible and easier to find than it has been before. The Apprenticeship Center advertises, contacts customers and informs on the new possibilities better. The level of the services for most of the customers is good. In the past, the services were not actively offered to customers and the service was depending on the need and signals from the customers.

There are already different services that the Apprenticeship Center offers to the customers, but some customers do not think that they have received any other service from the Apprenticeship Center than different apprenticeships. The author thinks that it is hard to separate different services from each other, and the customers see that the apprenticeship is the whole service which includes everything. Many times the customers think that the whole service is good and getting more flexible. Many of the customers say that they have received good and professional service. Some negative comments also emerge. Mostly, they concern not having their apprenticeship arranged. This is a malfunction in the customer interaction, because the denial of an apprenticeship is done in purpose, but the criteria for arranging apprenticeship has not been fulfilled. If the critical moment was processed correctly with the customer, maybe he would understand the reason for the denial and the critical moment would not be negative. Maybe the customer would have a proposal for a different resolution for the problem from the account manager.

Our customers point out that the service is good or better than average. The best elements in our customer service are the easy accessibility and the good basic customer service. A small organization has the benefits of personal relationships between the personnel of the organizations and the customers. The customers have received some service from someone that they know and have learned to trust. Usually, the new customers thank for quick answers and help with the process. Many customers also want to improve the amount of paperwork and different bureaucratic parts of the apprenticeship process. The paperwork must be done easier and evaluations should be improved. This is the most common answer from the customers when asked what could be improved in our service.

The need of the new services depends on the customer and the size of the customer's organization. The small businesses do not often need or ask anything else, only the apprenticeship. An organization of a small scale does not want to have help for mentoring and training from the Apprenticeship Center. One service is asked by smaller organizations, too, and that is the information and concrete help for applying the government's financial support and the other parts when employing a new worker. This could be called

a supporting process for the apprenticeship arranging. For the bigger organizations there is a need for the services and they have many variables. The basic need is the supporting and training of the mentors to the apprenticeship students. There is a need for help with recruiting. The author has not found a single outstanding need for a service. The need is variable and depends on the situation of the customer. One thing in common for the customers of big and small organizations and organization in different business sectors: the information about the apprenticeship and its support services. The Apprenticeship Center should be able to inform the customers about different possibilities, so that the customers would know about them when they have a need.

The same thing applies for the paid services. The customers the customers do not want already made products sold to them. The desirable process is that the customer knows that the service offering organization would have different solutions for them. When they have a need, they will contact and ask for the service. The customer wants that the service offering organization listens, finds out the problem and offers a ready plan with a ready prize in order to solve this problem. If the customer's criteria for solution become filled and the price correlates with the expected value, the product is sold. If the solution or the price is not desirable, the customer seeks the answer from somewhere else.

#### 5.4 Results of the research

The surveys, the interviews and the observations offer very similar results.

The visibility of the Apprenticeship Center was good as expected before the research. It has been actively growing in past few years. Many marketing operations which have been set in motion seem to have an effect on visibility. Before the study, it was also assumed that the level of the basic customer service in the Apprenticeship Center is really good, and the Apprenticeship Center has a good reputation within its customers. The reputation of the organization was found to be one of the factors creating value to the customers by Ylikoski and Järvinen (2011, 104–106.)

The customers thought that they have received the services connected with the vocational training and apprenticeships from the Apprenticeship Center. They did not see any other service received from the Apprenticeship Center. Many of these customers have received more than a core service apprenticeship, and when asked, the customers could not separate different parts of service from overall service. This is a good result, because the customer receives the whole service in one packet. Still, this part could be improved by offering these customers the information about different possibilities that the service model of the Apprenticeship Center could give them. Maybe with that the overall service packet would seem more tempting.

Many of the customers also found different angle for approaching this question and stated that the service is good, personal, professional and flexible, and the reaction time to different needs is really good. The co-operation was the best of the results what customers have been receiving. These results

correlate with many sources of the theoretical framework about good customer service being a value to a customer (see e.g. Fischer & Vainio 2015, 9). This is a good result and shows what the customers value offers for the customer service and it verifies the theory.

The customers suggested some improvements to the following issues: the usability of apprenticeship, evaluations and the web-pages, apprenticeship training should go forward fluently by the partner organizations of the Apprenticeship Center etc. This is a useful information and has to be noted and problems corrected. Really important notice was that many of the customers thought that the service does not need any improving. The only thing in the service was the information about apprenticeship. The marketing has been increased, but still it should be taken even further.

There were some ideas for the new free services (the supportive services for recruiting, information etc.) that the Apprenticeship Center could offer to the customers. This question was one reason the research was conducted, but the number of ideas was less what was expected. A few ideas from the answers should be analysed and possible developed as ready services. The overall result of the free services is the retailing. The customers want retailed and focused services that are easily accessible and easy to use. The amount of the services is not a key, but the number of services should be variable enough, that every customer could select the services and the ways they need and value themselves. The customers do not need services all the time, but the personal service should be available when needed.

The most important result of this thesis is the value. The hypothesis was confirmed by the questionnaires and interviews. The most priced value for the customer is the good customer service and the overall experience when they are receiving the apprenticeship. The customer service has to be flexible and the account managers should offer quick and professional solutions to customer's demands. The account managers have to provide the personal overall support to their customers and the Apprenticeship Center has to be a trustworthy co-operative partner to their customers. The personnel of the Apprenticeship Center have an "I can do" attitude, and this attitude should be fortified. The customer's expectations have to become filled by the process when they receive the core service to experience the value. The process has to be supported by extra services and professional customer service to be easily and fluently used. This service should be focused on creating customer value and filling the expectations as Ylikoski and Järvinen (2011, 24–26) state.

The results in the paid services are mostly expected. The customers need some services or products and they are willing to pay for them. The informants could not name these services in advance. They correlate with the need. When there is a need, the Apprenticeship Center should be able to offer the services. The services can be free or they can have a price. The price of these services should equate to an extent of the service and the value the customer is receiving from the service.

From a few critical answers from this study can also be found part of the hypothesis for further improvement. The critical moments emerge, when the customer does not receive the service he is expecting. The account managers should be trained to prepare for these critical moments in a way that customer understand the situation, and feels he has been fairly treated. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 114.)

From these answers and the results compared with the hypothesis, the real contribution of this research can be found. The operation plan for the overall service model has to be made and implemented in daily operations. Even the personnel have good customer service skills, still there is room for improvement and the actions could be more planned. The action plan of the Apprenticeship Center for future years can be made based on the hypothesis.



## 6 DISCUSSION

In this chapter is a discussion about the accuracy of the research and new thoughts which has emerged during the thesis process. In this chapter, there is also a description of the research process itself.

### 6.1 Reliability and validity of research

The reliability of the research is the repeatability of the research. If another person would research the same questions would he have same kind of results from his study. In qualitative research the question of reliability can be an issue, because the two different cases for study does not be exactly same, which would have an effect in results. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 231–232.)

The reliability of the study can be considered accurate. The author thinks that even someone else would study the same questions the results would be quite the same. The answers of the same kind from questionnaires, interviews and observations also proof this statement and the hypothesis correlates with the results of the research. The author also thinks that the results of same kind would be offered by the customers of any other business sector if it would be researched.

The customer value is based on the specifications of the same kind everywhere and the results can be found also in the hypothesis. The only thing could be more specific in the other business areas are the new products, if there were a research on products or services of the new kind like in this study. The customers of some other kind of organization could possible name more specific products or services they would need as free or paid services. As an example, the customers of the cellular phone company could possible name a specific product they want for free or as paid products than the municipal organization offering immaterial services.

Did the questions of this research offer enough and accurate data is the validity of the research? The question can be unclear when there is an issue of qualitative research. The same question does not work in all situations with customers of different kind, because every situation is different and it is evaluated by the researcher. The author's task is to make assumptions of the answer in a neutral way, without letting his own thoughts to disrupt the research. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 231–233.)

The validity of the research is based on the research questions. They could have been modified to give more specific answers in the questionnaire. Afterwards the conclusion was that the questions had too many meanings and had too many different angles to approach. The questionnaire with open answers was found as too hard to answer, which was shown by the big amount of customers whom had opened the questionnaire and only small percentage was able to complete the questionnaire. With more specific questionnaires, the results could be more valid and offer more data.

The validity of this research is still confirmed, the answers in questionnaires lacked depth and specific points. They were completed with the help of the interviews and observations. In the interviews, the author could ask to reinforce questions in order to gain more specific answers to these questions. The observation on the daily customer interaction was able to back up the data gained from the questionnaires and interviews. The data from the questionnaires, interviews and observations gave similar answers. This tells that data are not corrupted.

The questions of the surveys were in too big pieces to give specific answers. Some questions of the products and price did not give all the answers needed. The questions of the value to the customers offered fine data correlative with the hypothesis. The product is based on a current need of a customer and the real value can be assessed after the product is in the use.

## 6.2 The thesis process and what was created

The actual process was the most useful and it was easy to conduct. The theoretical investigation brought up many thoughts during the process. The employer was supporting the process excellently. The author was able to have continuous conversation with his superior about different parts of this thesis. There were actual moments of enthusiasm when some new thoughts came up to mind and they had immediately to be discussed with work community. Many of the things of this study have already become in action during the process in our work community. Many things have been discussed for the later use.

The process started in the spring 2016 with the observations, the creation of research questions. The questionnaires were send at the start of summer 2016. During the spring and summer the author was familiarizing with the hypothesis and at the end of the summer the interviews and analysing the questionnaires took place. The observations were made of the customer interaction constantly during the process. The thesis process was finalized in October 2016.

This study was not able to create the new theories of the customer value and it was not the goal of this thesis. The benefit is to bring the theories in practical use. This part of the thesis was succeeded over the expectations of the author. Many theories found are implemented in the daily actions of the Apprenticeship Center as the future development plan of the personnel and customer service of the Apprenticeship Center. Many parts of the theory were implemented during the process from the discussions between the author and the supervisor. This part gave some extra boost for the process itself, when it was seen that the results of the research are actualizing and does not end only as a research in paper.

The development plan created based on this thesis theories will offer benefits to customer organizations of the Apprenticeship Center by creating value and quality through overall and better customer service. There is more discussion of development plan itself at chapter 7 of this thesis.

### 6.3 What could be done in the next research

This study focuses only on the customer organizations of the Apprenticeship Center. The students were left out of this study completely. If there would be continuing of this research the next study could concentrate to the student customers of the Apprenticeship Center.

The study left some extra questions for the future research. I would be important to find out how the student customers would benefit from this customer service model? Did this customer service model open up more possibilities for apprenticeship students to find an employer in our area? What are customer values from the apprenticeship student's point of view?

As an indirect result all the things studied and created in this study should open up more possibilities for the new apprenticeship students. If the customer work was done correctly, the customers of the Apprenticeship Center would be more likely to train more employees by using the apprenticeship. The students should also benefit better from the customer service directly by receiving better and more personal service.

The second question for the research in the future is to study how this study affects the customer's satisfaction of the Apprenticeship Center. The results should be seen in the customer enquires send during the apprenticeship process. In the new enquiry there could be parts of the value creating services and processes divided as single parts and evaluated as a part of the process. For example, did the account manager take the keen and personal interest of your business? This was the one value which was stated in this study and should be implemented in the customer development plan of the Apprenticeship Center.

## 7 CONTRIBUTION

The actual contribution of this study for the workplace is described in this chapter. The research has many different usages in the work community and it actualized by some parts already during the apprenticeship process. Some parts of the thesis will be implemented later. The focus is in finding the new ways to the daily operations to create a value to the customers in different ways mentioned in this thesis. The development has to be constant and this thesis will give a good basis for further ideas.

### 7.1 What is the contribution of the study to the workplace?

The goal in the big picture was to find out what more the Apprenticeship Center can offer to its customers to create a customer value, gain the customer persistence and figure out how it could be done in reality. This thesis had many ideas which came from the theory and some of them from customers as the results of the research about what can be implemented as ready services or products. Some parts of the improvements started before and during this thesis process, but for them the thesis brought more depth and innovations for the later improvement.

The study offers following answers for the research questions presented in chapter 3.2:

The study did not find out any ready-made products directly sold for the customers. However, some answers for the research questions on the value adding products and the improvement of our products will be discussed in chapter 7.2.

Instead of the ready-made products, it is relevant to have retailed products available when ever a customer has a need. The retailed products given free or sold to the customers, will be retailed trough the excellent customer service to reply for specific needs in order to solve a customer's current problem. When the customer comes up with a need, the Apprenticeship Center should be ready to provide solutions and define whether the service is free or with charge. In any case, the customer's expectations should be fulfilled. The target is to keep the customer satisfied, i.e. the customer feels that he has gained quality and added value.

As found in the research the Apprenticeship Center already has a good customer relationships and a good level of the customer service which is a value by itself. As a municipal organization there are some parts left from the old behaviour model where the service is not actively offered to the customers, it had to be asked by the customers. This was mostly shown in minimal marketing of the services and in the service model where the customer makes the first contact. The new model is that the Apprenticeship Center should have more active role to establishing the customer contact and offering them services.

Grönroos (2009, 484–485) states that municipal organizations have strong bureaucratic issues. In the Apprenticeship Center, the culture has been

flexible and pro-customer in issues considering bureaucracy and it is a good basis to build up more customer centric values. The work of the Apprenticeship Center is bureaucratic in nature, but the employers of the Apprenticeship Center were able to make this issue more easily approached for the customers. The customers found this flexibility as a value and that value creation process should be more fortified in the future planning of the services.

The improvements have already started before this thesis, as a more active advertising, offering services, marketing of apprenticeship directly to the customer, recruiting services, offering them their own account managers etc. The Apprenticeship Center has been really active in its actions for past two years. Also the new working imago has been launched by the whole visual makeover. This correlates with physical surroundings to be able to create a value to the service using customer as an “serviscape” (Bitner 1992 via Grönroos 2009, 103). All these actions will support the further development of the existing processes and creating the new ones.

This thesis will lead to the concrete development plan in the Apprenticeship Center, which will consist of many parts from this thesis. The plan is going to be customer centric and it focuses on creating a value, quality and filling the expectations and need of the customer as mentioned in 2.1.1. When the plan is implemented, the customer gets the personal and flexible service without a delay. This development plan is going to be made by the team of the Apprenticeship Center in November 2016. The actualization of this development plan is going to be monitored constantly and corrective actions will take place if needed.

The first part of the development would be the defining the service model. The team should visualize and find out what the core services and the actual product are and define the enhanced product based on Chapter 2.1. The team must define what is the concrete customer from the beginning and think how they could offer an enhanced service for the customers. The core and actual product already existed at the Apprenticeship Center. There was no enhanced service or product available. Philip Kotler (via Eliasson 2012, 25) defines that the product will generate value to a customer. In Kotler’s definition, product value consists of 1) core product, 2) actual product and 3) enhanced product. The Apprenticeship Center will focus on creating the third level to the product to give more value to its services.

The second part of this development is to plan how to commit to this new services model. This is the most difficult part. Every time there is a new way for working, it is easy to go back to the old routines. When the team makes the plan themselves, it is easier to commit to the new ways. The most important in this commitment is the participation in the whole process, from the analysis down to the ideation and to the implementation the process. The motivation can be found when the personnel understands the benefits of the process, and everybody can have an effect on the final results. The most important part is that the process has to lead to concrete actions. (Bassi 2016.)

As it was stated, the Apprenticeship Center has a good and solid ground to improve the service, because the employers are already at the good level at customer work. This second stage will take that the customer work even further and more planned. The customer work has been good in the past few years, but there has not been an actual plan. Thorough the planning of customer work, the organization can offer better quality and value.

The second phase should start by setting the values of the organization to be as a guideline to the employees. Basically, the operation is to transfer from the unit producing services to organization offering the services. (Rubanovitsch & Valovirta 2009, 105.) The values will be defined in the development plan of the Apprenticeship Center. These new values are more customer centric and actualize in the daily operations of the organization.

The attitude against customer work is already good, and as one of the Apprenticeship Center's customers stated that the personnel has an 'I can do' attitude. This attitude towards the customer work is important when the organization is trying to create value in the customer work and it will be visible to the customers. (Vuorio 2008, 29.) The attitude has to be adjusted to be focused on right goals based on the plan and values and it goes even closer to a customer. The account managers should define the customer work and be ready to work more in the customer borderline. These goals for the customer work are also going to be set at the team's development plan.

The new services based on the development plan, what the Apprenticeship Center can offer for the customer, are the further co-operation and problem solving. The goal is to have account managers who are able to listen to the customers, analyse their need and actively offer different solutions to them. These solutions should help the customers to adjust their own processes to create value by themselves. (Storbacka et al. 1999, 21.)

The service guarantee is going to be set for the customers. This service guarantee plan is going to be made to active use during before the year 2017. The Apprenticeship Center should be able to make a promise to their customers of what the customer will gain when they are co-operating with the Apprenticeship Center. This guarantee is also going to be actively marketed and the actualization constantly monitored. If the guarantee does not work and the promises to the customers filled, it has to be corrected to be realistic and working promise. The guarantee created will visualize to the customer the value which can be obtained by using the services of the Apprenticeship Center. (Kuusela & Neilimo 2010, 60.)

After the service guarantee is set and the steps above has been made, it could be called a service model and it is actual a working plan. The plan states how and when the customer relationships should be managed. All the processes of the Apprenticeship Center have to be able to create a value to their customers and being able to offer the guarantee of certain quality.

For the quality, the final part is the training. The actual training for the account managers to the customer centric operations. The training should be set for creating a value and able to create the quality to the customers. As in the theoretical frameworks, the quality of the different customers is depending on different aspects and the account managers should be able to show the quality and the value for the customer have gained from the process of co-operation with the Apprenticeship Center. The account managers should make the process filling the expectations of the customers.

The other part of the training should be the critical moments of the customers. How they have to be identified and managed in a way that customer does not feel the lack of service or that he is being badly treated? It is the daily work of the account managers to decide whether a customer has an apprenticeship training or not. Sometimes there are situations when the apprenticeship ends for some reason etc. These moments are negative by their nature. Instead of saying 'no' to the customer, the account managers should be able to offer new solutions for the customer.

Every situation has to be handled that the customer thinks that he has received good service, as Ylikoski and Järvinen (2011, 109–110) state. If the apprenticeship is not the solution for this customer, then the customer must understand why this is happening. The account manager should be able to show the other possibilities he can offer and where and how the customer can be acquiring them. In the best scenario, the customer is escorted to the next step, where the moment is no longer negative and the customer has had the service.

The last development task is to measure the quality and service of the Apprenticeship Center. The service is already measured constantly, but the meters and questions must be thanked to be able to measure more of the customer value. Maybe the basic questions will remain the same, but some questions can be added which could measure the new services and feeling of the value. These questions will be created by the team. As mentioned earlier, the actualizing of the new services will also be monitored by active surveying and interviewing the customers.

### 7.2 New procedures?

**The new products and services:** There are only a few products and services created during this thesis process. Some services will be created based on the ideas collected from the questionnaires and the interviews.

**Retailing the apprenticeships and different services:** This procedure is a trend of today, and the hypothesis was confirmed by this development. The customers do not want a single ready product or service, but the product has to be retailed personally for the customer's usage. The retailing of the apprenticeships for the customers has been in active use and the retailing of different services with the apprenticeships will become a daily procedure for the Apprenticeship Center. This retailing is done by the account managers to find the best possible solution for the customers. Account managers must find out the needs of the customer, and offer the best solution which

is possible considering the resources and legislative orders. This process of retailing can only by itself already create a value to the customer.

Marketing of the apprenticeships and the services of the Apprenticeship Center is actively increasing and this development already shown in the questionnaires when asked about the visibility of the Apprenticeship Center in our area. The organizations imago will be rebuilt to offer customers the professional servscape. This new service plan and the guarantee will also be actively advertised to the customers after the development plan has been actualized.

The recruiting service is one of the actual services already in action. The services were launched during the thesis process. Even the recruiting service idea started before the thesis process, it is benefited from the questionnaires and the interviews. The recruiting services will be actively piloted with a few of our customers and developed during the trials. The value behind this service is to help the customer in parts of their own processes and co-exist in the daily operations of the customers.

The process in basic is working when the customer gives an assignment to the Apprenticeship Center where he wants to have an apprenticeship student or students. The account manager finds out with the customer what are the need of the customer and what kind of different qualification possibilities there are in the customer's organization. After that the customer gives specifications what kind of students he needs based on the attributes of the apprenticeship work itself. After the student profile is defined the Apprenticeship Center will try to find the suitable student for the customer organization, interview and introduce the possible candidates to the customer organization. The customer will interview the possible candidates and make the selection. The account manager will help them to employ this person, and possibly arrange a pre-apprenticeship training period. In the interviews and the introductions, there are modern web-based technologies, the videos of the interviews etc. To make the usage of the service really easy to the customer organization.

The web-services will be taken in the consideration based on many customer feedbacks during the thesis process. It is not yet sure how they can be improved to be more easily usable, but they have to be analysed more thoroughly. The other aspect in web-services is the evaluations which was another thing pointed by the customers in the interviews. The good and easy to use web-services is part of the servscape, and by that creating a feeling of overall quality. (Ylikoski & Järvinen 2011, 27.)

The evaluations have been constantly developed nationwide with the mutual operations of the Apprenticeship Centers in Finland. This development is continuous, and based on the government orders of the evaluations of the apprenticeship training.

Different extra services studied in this thesis the Apprenticeship Center will continue to develop for current products or services. There was not one certain service that customers would need. As mentioned before in this thesis,



there should be sufficient amount of services available to satisfy different customer needs, and the more complex services have to be retailed when the customer needs them. The account managers will be trained to offer these services actively.

## SOURCES

- Aarnikoivu, H. 2005. Onnistu asiakaspalvelussa. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Arvomyynnillä kasvuun. 2004. Edited by Kaario, K., Pennanen, R., Storbacka, K. & Mäkinen, H.-L. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Bassi, A. 2016. 3 askelta henkilöstön sitouttamiseksi suurissa organisaatioissa. Blog. Webropol. Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016. <http://webropol.fi/blogi-henkiloston-sitouttaminen/>
- Cooperation. Helsinki Brief Therapy Institute. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> April 2016. [http://www.lti.fi/kauppa/product\\_details.php?p=76](http://www.lti.fi/kauppa/product_details.php?p=76)
- Deming, V. 2010. What Customer Service Skills Are Most Valuable. MHI Global, Inc. Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> August 2016. [https://www.mhiglobal.com/blog/customer-experience/may-2015-\(1\)/what-customer-service-skills-are-most-valuable](https://www.mhiglobal.com/blog/customer-experience/may-2015-(1)/what-customer-service-skills-are-most-valuable)
- Drucker, P. 2008. Voittoa tavoittelemattoman organisaation johtaminen. Käytäntö ja periaatteet. First published "Managing the Non-profit Organization" in 1990. Helsinki: Talentum.
- Electronic Surveys. Colorado State University. Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/page.cfm?pageid=1406&guideid=68>
- Eliasson, B. 2012. Value Selling. Värdebaserad försäljning från start till resultat. Malmö: Liber AB.
- Fischer, M. & Vainio, S. 2015. Potkua palvelubisnekseen. Asiakaskokemus luodaan yhdessä. Helsinki: Talentum Pro.
- Grönroos, C. 2009. Palvelujen johtaminen ja markkinointi. Helsinki: Talentum.
- Halonen, M. 2014. Tehokas kannustinjärjestelmä palkitsee asiakaskokemuksesta. Markkinointi-instituutti. Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> August 2016. <https://www.markinst.fi/muutoksen-ammattilaiset/tehokas-kannustinjarjestelma-palkitsee-asiakaskokemuksesta>
- Heikkilä, L., Haasis, H., Meyer, J. & Saurama, A. 2006. Analysis of VAS Driven Potentials And Elaboration Of Strategic Approaches. Interrg III B Project "Log VAS". Accessed 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016. [http://www.logvas.com/fileadmin/Logvas/Final\\_Reports\\_06/1\\_VAS\\_Driven\\_potentials\\_01.pdf](http://www.logvas.com/fileadmin/Logvas/Final_Reports_06/1_VAS_Driven_potentials_01.pdf)
- Hirsjärvi, S., Remes, P. & Sajavaara, P. 2013. Tutki ja kirjoita. Helsinki: Tammi.

Hirvonen, T. 2009. Asiakkaalle tuotettava lisäarvo perustettavan tilitoimiston kilpailutekijänä. Bachelor's thesis. Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Business administration degree programme.

Hyken, S. 2012a. Quick response provides a customer service advantage. Shep Hyken's customer service blog. Accessed 4th June 2016. <http://hyken.com/customer-service-strategies/quick-response-provides-a-customer-service-advantage/>

Hyken, S. 2012b. Before you can be customer centric, you must be employee centric. Shep Hyken's customer service blog. Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> August 2016. <http://hyken.com/internal-customers/before-you-can-be-customer-centric-you-must-be-employee-centric/>

Hynynen, J. 2013. Ilmaa hintoihin. Ipr ja aineeton lisäarvo. Jyväskylä: Kirjakaari.

Itä-Uudenmaan koulutuskuntayhtymä. 2016. Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> August 2016. <http://www.iukky.fi/fi/>

Itä-Uudenmaan maakuntasuunnitelma 2040. Luonnos 15.6.2009. 2009. Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> August 2016. [http://www.hel.fi/static/helsinki/paatosasiakirjat/Kh2009/Esityslista29/liitteet/Ita-Uudenmaan\\_maakuntasuunnitelma\\_2040\\_luonnos\\_15.6.2009.pdf?Action=sd&id=%7BC743132A-A78C-400A-877C-F67C3F1EF2B6%7D](http://www.hel.fi/static/helsinki/paatosasiakirjat/Kh2009/Esityslista29/liitteet/Ita-Uudenmaan_maakuntasuunnitelma_2040_luonnos_15.6.2009.pdf?Action=sd&id=%7BC743132A-A78C-400A-877C-F67C3F1EF2B6%7D)

Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskus. 2016. Tervetuloa tutustumaan oppisopimuskoulutukseen. Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> August 2016. <http://www.opso.fi/oppisopimuskoulutus/>

Juuti, P. 2015. Johda henkilöstö asiakaskeskeisyyteen. Jyväskylä: PS-Kustannus.

Kaplan, R S. & Norton, D P. 2004. Strategiakartat. Aineettoman pääoman muuttaminen mitattaviksi tuloiksi. Helsinki: Talentum.

Kaplan, R S. & Norton, D P. 2009. Strategiaverkko. Helsinki: Talentum.

Kawulich, B. 2005. FQS Forum: Qualitative social research. Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method. Accessed 11th August 2016. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/466/996>

Kietäväinen, H. 2014. Verkkoneuvottelu. Uudenlaista asiakaspalvelua finanssialan yrityksessä. Savonia University of Applied Sciences. Yhteiskuntatieteiden, liiketalouden ja hallinnon ala. Bachelor's thesis.

Kilpilahti. 2016. Wikipedia. Accessed 29th August 2016. <https://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kilpilahti>

Kokkonen, A. 2013. Solution-Oriented Business Development in Specialist Organization. Karelia University of Applied Sciences. Technology competence management. Master's thesis.

Korkiakoski, K. & Löytämä, J. 2014. Näkökulmia asiakaskokemusten mittaamiseen. Suomen Asiakkuusmarkkinointiliitto ry. Accessed 7th August 2016. <http://www.asml.fi/blogi/nakokulmia-asiakaskokemuksen-mittamiseen/>

Korkman, O. & Arantola, H. 2009. Arki. Eväitä uuteen asiakaslähtöisyyteen. Helsinki: WSOY pro.

Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. 2011. Principles of marketing. 14th edition. Pearson Prentice Hall. Accessed 2nd August 2016. [http://www.academia.edu/6890710/Philip\\_Kotler\\_Gary\\_Armstrong\\_Principles\\_of\\_Marketing\\_14th\\_Edition\\_2011](http://www.academia.edu/6890710/Philip_Kotler_Gary_Armstrong_Principles_of_Marketing_14th_Edition_2011)

Kuusela, H. & Neilimo, K. 2010. Kaupan strategiosaaminen. Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy.

Leppänen, E. 2007. Asiakaslähtöinen myynti. Helsinki: Yrityskirjat Oy.

Longstaffe, C. 2014. How can you make value visible. Integratis blog. Accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014. <http://www.integratis.com/blog/how-can-you-make-value-visible>

Mansukoski, S. 2008. Talouselämän klassikot -esipuhe. In Drucker, P. F. 2008, Voittoa tavoittelemattoman organisaation johtaminen. Käytäntö ja periaatteet. Helsinki: Talentum, pp. 7–10.

Nieminen, T. & Tomperi, S. 2008. Myynnin johtamisen uusi aika. Helsinki: Wsoy Pro.

Opetushallitus. 2016. Oppisopimuskoulutus. Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> August 2016. [http://www.oph.fi/koulutus\\_ja\\_tutkinnot/ammattikoulutus/oppisopimuskoulutus](http://www.oph.fi/koulutus_ja_tutkinnot/ammattikoulutus/oppisopimuskoulutus)

Oral Surveys. Colorado State University. Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/page.cfm?pageid=1405&guideid=68>

Paila, H. 2015. Apprenticeship director. Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskampus. Interview 15.4.2016.

Peili. 2015. Integro Oy. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> April 2016. <http://www.peiliconsulting.fi/>

Ranade, K. 2012. Customer loyalty – What is it? How Can You Measure and Manage It? Loyalty Research Center. Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> August 2016. <http://www.loyaltyresearch.com/insights/customer-loyalty-what-is-it-how-can-you-measure-and-manage-it/>

Rope, T. & Pöllänen, J. 1998. Asiakastyytyväisyysjohtaminen. Helsinki: WSOY.

Rubanovitsch, M. D. & Aalto, E. 2007. Haasteena myynnin johtaminen. Helsinki: Libris Oy.

Rubanovitsch, M. D. & Valorinta, V. 2009. Älykäs myynnin ohjaaminen. Johtajatiimi.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. 2009. Research Methods for Business Students. Fifth edition. Harlow: Pearson education limited.

Shnall, T. 2015. Five characteristics of customer-centric employees! Accessed 7th August 2016. <http://leadershiphospitality.com/3515/five-characteristics-of-customer-centric-employees/>

Storbacka, K., Blomqvist, R., Dahl, J. & Haeger, T. 1999. Asiakkuuden arvon lähteillä. WSOY.

Storbacka, K. & Lehtinen, J. R. 2005. Asiakkuuden ehdoilla. Asiakkaiden armoilla. 6th edition. Helsinki: WSOY.

Viitala, R. & Jylhä, E. 2013. Liiketoimintaosaaminen. Menestyvän yritystoiminnan perusta. Helsinki: Edita.

Vuokko, P. 2009. Nonprofit-organisaatioiden markkinointi. Helsinki: WSOYpro Oy.

Vuorio, P. 2008. Myyntitaidon käsikirja. Puhetaito ja tahtotila myyntityössä. Helsinki: Yrityskirjat Oy.

Ylikoski, T. & Järvinen, R. 2011. Asiakkaan kokema arvo kilpailutekijänä finanssialalla. Helsinki: Finva Oy.

## THE SURVEY QUESTIONS

### **Kokemuksenne oppisopimuskeskuksesta.**

Your experience of the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-uudenmaa?

1. **Kuinka tunnettu Itä-Uudenmaan oppisopimuskeskus ja sen palvelut ovat alueellanne? 1-4?** How well known the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa and its services are in your area?
2. **Minkälaisena koette nykyisen Itä-Uudenmaan Oppisopimuskeskuksen palvelutason? Arvio 1-4 Välttävä - Erinomainen** How do you feel that the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa level of service is? 1-4 Mediocre – Outstanding
3. **Minkälaista palvelua olette saanut meiltä?** What kind of services your company has gained from the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa?
4. **Mitä hyvää mielestänne nykyisessä tarjotussa palvelussa on?** What good aspects there are in the services given?
5. **Mitä kehitettävää nykyisessä tarjotussa palvelussa on?** What need for improvement there is in the services given?

### **Oppisopimuskoulutukseen liittyvät ilmaispalvelut**

Free services given with apprenticeship training

6. **Miten voisimme kehittää nykyisen oppisopimuskoulutukseen liittyvän palvelun paremmaksi yrityksellenne?** How can we improve our services given with the apprenticeship training to your company?
7. **Haluatteko enemmän nykyisen kaltaisia palveluja, esim. neuvontaa, henkilöstön perehdytystä oppisopimukseen, laajempaa työpaikkakoulutajakoulutusta, esitteitä? Mitkä ovat yrityksellenne tärkeitä palvelumuotoja?** Do you want more services besides the existing ones? Guidance, personnel familiarization to apprenticeship, mentor training, brochures etc. Which of the existing services are important for you?
8. **Haluaisitteko nykyisten palveluiden lisäksi joitain muita oppisopimuskoulutuksen mukana tulevia ilmaisia palveluita?** Do you want more free services with the apprenticeship training than existing ones?
9. **Millaiset asiat tuottavat teille asiakkaana lisäarvoa palvelukonseptissamme?** Which facts will give you added value as a customer in our existing service concept?

### **Maksulliset palvelut. Paid services**

10. **Minkälaisia lisäpalveluita yrityksenne kaipaisi oppisopimuskeskuksen tuote- ja palveluvalikoimaan? Esim. rekryointipalveluja?** What kind of paid extra services your company wants to the service selection of the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa?
11. **Olisitteko valmis maksamaan haluamistanne tuotteista ja palveluista? Mistä tuotteista ja palveluista olisitte valmis maksamaan?** Are you willing to pay for the extra services? Which products or services?
12. **Mikä olisi mielestänne sopiva hinta palvelulle?** What would be the right price for the services given from your own opinion?

### **Yhteystiedot ja arvonta. Contact information and lottery**

- **Haluaisitteko, että teihin otetaan yhteyttä Oppisopimuskeskuksesta?** Would you like to be contacted by the Apprenticeship Center of Itä-Uusimaa?
- **Jätä yhteystiedot (vapaaehtoinen) ja osallistu 50 €:n lahjakortin arvontaan.** Leave your contact information (optional) and participate in lottery of 50 € gift voucher.
- **Rasti ruutuun ”En halua yhteydenottoa ja osallistun vain arvontaan”.** Selection box, ‘I do not want to be contacted, but I will participate in lottery’.

